

**PSYCHEDELIC ORIENTALISM: REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIA IN THE MUSIC OF  
THE BEATLES**

by

**Trent Cunningham**

Bachelor of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh, 2011

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
the University of Pittsburgh in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH  
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

This thesis was presented

by

Trent Cunningham

It was defended on

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011

and approved by

Neepa Majumdar, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh

Deane Root, Professor, University of Pittsburgh

Gordon Thompson, Professor, Skidmore College

Thesis Director: Andrew Weintraub, Professor, University of Pittsburgh

Copyright © by Trent Cunningham

2011

**PSYCHEDELIC ORIENTALISM: REPRESENTATIONS OF INDIA IN THE MUSIC  
OF THE BEATLES**

Trent Cunningham

University of Pittsburgh, 2011

In 1960s Britain and America, a mystical Orientalist view of India held sway: India was seen as a land of trippy gurus holding secret, ancient, psychedelic wisdom that could liberate the young hippie from the system of stuffy, bourgeois Western values. There was of course no ethnographic basis to this view – Indian philosophers, intellectuals, and musicians in the West resented the association with drugs – but mystical India was a powerful symbol nevertheless. The Beatles’ “Tomorrow Never Knows” was one of the earliest and most potent manifestations of what I will call “psychedelic orientalism” within rock music. A close look at this song, and others like it from the Beatles’ middle period, will reveal some of the functions of this construction, as well as some of the motivations behind it. Studying the Beatles’ music in a historical and cultural context will uncover certain dynamics of power, themes of appropriation and cultural hegemony. These songs were written by young musicians who came of age during the last days of the British Empire, and in writing them they were enacting a musical relationship with their former colony. A close analytical look at the unique stylistic divergences of these songs, understood through Timothy Leary’s manual *The Psychedelic Experience* and Ravi Shankar’s tutelage of George Harrison, as well as through sociological perspectives on the drug-induced experience, will reveal the role that Indian musical elements (and the ancient Oriental wisdom they reportedly represented) were made to play. Finally, the perspectives of postcolonial

criticism will show how that role given to India was a subordinate one, built upon an attitude of power that characterized the Empire.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE.....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>1.0 ORIENTALISM IN A PSYCHEDELIC GUISE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 ORIENTALISM AS CONSTRAINT AND CONTROL.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 AUTHORIZING THE ORIENT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3 AUTHORIZING THE ORIENT AS ESCAPE, ELSEWHERE.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 PSYCHEDELIC ORIENTALISM AS A NEW MANIFESTATION.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.0 POSITIONING INDIA.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.1 JOHN LENNON, THE BEATLES PERSONA, AND “NORWEGIAN WOOD” .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2.2 GEORGE HARRISON, THE CHEEKY FAÇADE, AND “IF I NEEDED SOMEONE”.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>3.0 AFFECT AND APPROPRIATION IN “TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS” .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>3.1 A USER’S MANUAL FOR PSYCHEDELIA.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.2 PSYCHEDELIC ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.3 GROTESQUE ANALYSIS.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.0 PSYCHEDELIA AND INDIAN TRADITION IN “WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU” .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>4.1 SHANKAR AND DEFINING INDIAN MUSIC.....</b>	<b>44</b>

<b>4.2</b>	<b>“WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU” .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>FASHIONING THE INDIAN AS A PSYCHEDELIC MIMIC .....</b>	<b>52</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>62</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Lyrics of “Tomorrow Never Knows” and an excerpt from Leary’s “Instructions for Use During a Psychedelic Session” .....	31
---	----

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Subphrases in the “Norwegian Wood” melody.....	18
Figure 2. Lead guitar and bass ostinato from the verse of “If I Needed Someone” .....	23
Figure 3. Vocal melody and accompaniment in “Tomorrow Never Knows” .....	35
Figure 4. Sentence structure in “Within You Without You” .....	49

## **PREFACE**

I have had two excellent mentors for this project. Ivan Jimenez worked generously with me in Summer 2009 on a project analyzing Beatles songs, teaching me how to make music analysis into a creative endeavor as we carried out the work. Andrew Weintraub did likewise in Summer 2011, as I expanded my project beyond music analysis – he introduced me to wide swaths of literature on cultural criticism, and guided me carefully through my first attempts to write in this vein. Andrew has also been tremendously supportive as an editor of this thesis, equally encouraging and critical.

This project would not have been possible without an abundance of helpful input from Jocelyn Monahan, and I would also like to thank Deane Root and Anna Nisnevich for their helpful comments in the early stages. In the final stages, I would like to thank Deane Root, Neepa Majumdar, and Gordon Thompson for their enthusiasm and thoughtful critiques at my defense.

The University of Pittsburgh Honors College has supported this project generously, with two Brackenridge Research Fellowships (Summer and Fall 2011) and full tuition funding for the Fall 2011 semester. My work with Ivan Jimenez was supported by a Summer Undergraduate Research Award from the School of Arts and Sciences. Of course my first and greatest support has come from my parents, Robert and Pegi Cunningham.

## 1.0 ORIENTALISM IN A PSYCHEDELIC GUISE

In the summer of 1965, John and George lay blissed out by the pool, enjoying what George described as a “very concentrated version of the best feeling I’d ever had” (Spitz 2005: 360). They were on their second acid trip, the first they took wittingly, and on the stereo was a Ravi Shankar recording of Hindustani classical music. The two Beatles listened to the tambura drone, tabla drumming, and elaborate sitar phrasings – what must have sounded endlessly exotic and intoxicating – in order to give their trip a suitably otherworldly soundtrack. In the following years, after this cohabitation of Indian sounds and drug effects found its way into Beatles songs, the grouping together of psychedelic drugs and Indian music would be solidified in the British and American popular imagination. In 1966 the song “Tomorrow Never Knows,” a progenitor of psychedelic rock, blended the Indian drone with the sound of a wild drug-induced state, and the two seemed to belong together. Some forty years later, Ian Macdonald, author of the best-selling *Revolution in the Head*, must have thought likewise when he made this untroubled connection: “[Tomorrow Never Knows] simultaneously draws attention to mind-altering drugs and the ancient religious philosophies of the Orient” (Macdonald 2008: 190).

In 1960s Britain and America, a mystical Orientalist view of India held sway: India was seen as a land of trippy gurus holding secret, ancient, psychedelic wisdom that could liberate the

young hippie from the system of stuffy, bourgeois Western values.<sup>1</sup> There was of course no ethnographic basis to this view – as we will see, Indian philosophers, intellectuals, and musicians in the West resented the association with drugs – but mystical India was a powerful symbol nevertheless. The Beatles’ “Tomorrow Never Knows” was one of the earliest and most potent manifestations of what I will call “psychedelic orientalism” within rock music. A close look at this song, and others like it from the Beatles’ middle period, will reveal some of the *functions* of this construction, as well as some of the motivations behind it. Studying the Beatles’ music in a historical and cultural context will uncover certain dynamics of power, themes of appropriation and cultural hegemony. These songs were written by young musicians who came of age during the last days of the British Empire, and in writing them they were enacting a musical relationship with their former colony. A close analytical look at the unique stylistic divergences of these songs, understood through Timothy Leary’s manual *The Psychedelic Experience* and Ravi Shankar’s tutelage of George Harrison, as well as through sociological perspectives on the drug-induced experience, will reveal the role that Indian musical elements (and the ancient Oriental wisdom they reportedly represented) were made to play. Finally, the perspectives of postcolonial criticism will show how that role given to India was a subordinate one, built upon an attitude of power that characterized the Empire.

Musicologist Jonathan Bellman observes that The Beatles’ Indian-styled songs were for many listeners a first encounter of any kind with Indian culture: “For the public at large, an awareness of Indian culture occurred neither before nor in tandem with these widely-disseminated musical experiments; it lagged behind. Yet, a clear connection developed between

---

<sup>1</sup> In an interview circa 1968 (shown in the 2011 Martin Scorsese film *George Harrison: Living in the Material World*), George was asked about his interest in “mysticism” (his interest in Hinduism, meditation, and Hare Krishna). He replied that what he studied was not “mysticism” at all because it was available to everyone.

cultural and musical worlds. The main publicists for Indian culture (however imperfectly understood) were the Beatles” (1997: 125). I will argue that the Indian-styled songs “Tomorrow Never Knows” and “Within You Without You” articulate Indian music and spirituality with *psychedelia*. Timothy Leary will serve as the primary spokesman for psychedelia in this thesis, because his book *The Psychedelic Experience* was a powerful influence on Lennon and Harrison. Leary extends drug use to an entire worldview based on freeing the senses and liberating the mind from the oppression of “The System” of mainstream cultural values. For such otherworldly ideas as “liberating the mind,” he enlists the language of Tibetan Buddhism to reinforce his ideas. I will argue that, in so doing, he creates a representation of Indian spirituality that claims completeness: not only does his brand of LSD use achieve all the goals and functions of Indian spirituality; it actually produces what he believed to be the true, hidden meaning of Indian spirituality, finally made accessible to all through LSD.<sup>2</sup> I will show how “Tomorrow Never Knows” and “Within You Without You,” written by Lennon and Harrison respectively after reading *The Psychedelic Experience*, adopt Leary’s view and make use of Indian music in much the same way Leary makes use of Indian spirituality. Finally, I will argue that this entire treatment of India is informed by the Orientalist system – it constitutes a set of constraints on the possibilities of what Indian music and spirituality can signify.

---

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper I will refer to “Indian spirituality” in a way that elides Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism into a manufactured whole. This is in response to the Beatles’ own language – they do not recognize the rather wide separation between these traditions, but rather engage both of them in terms of their Indian otherness. A telling example of this attitude can be heard in the song “The Inner Light,” the B-side to the “Lady Madonna” single by The Beatles: the song sets a Chinese Taoist text to a style of music derived from Hindustani (North Indian) music, but was performed by South Indian musicians.

## 1.1 ORIENTALISM AS CONSTRAINT AND CONTROL

The nature of Orientalism as constraint and power is laid out most famously by Edward Said (1978). Said points toward a *structure of thought* that makes essentializing definitions like “Arab society” (or “Indian spirituality”) a reality to Europeans (and one that makes sense to them). This is also a structure of knowing: knowledge about people (“Orientals”) is produced in a few particular, standardized forms that circulate throughout Western culture until they become the dominant way to know about the Orient. The form Said attends to most is essentializing knowledge of the mind of the Oriental, “what Arabs, if one peels off all the outer nonsense, are really like” (Said 1975: 90).

Psychological portraits of entire races, then, are the outcome of this kind of thought. We can observe Orientalism at work in music, when British musicians judged and evaluated Indian music in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, the composer Cyril Scott evoked India in compositions with such exotic titles as *Lotus Land* (1905), *Snake Charmer* (1922), and *Dancing Girls* (1922). He used nonstandard musical devices like drone/static harmony, ostinato bass, and lack of motivic development, which, in his mind, suggested “the languorousness of the Orient . . . the legendary land of the lotus-eaters and their perpetual afternoon” (Gwynne 2003: 30). With clear ties to the rhetoric of empire, he claimed that such musical elements characterized Indian people: “Inasmuch as their music lacked variety, lacked energy, lacked power, so have the Indians themselves as a race remained one-sided, inert and unequally balanced in character . . . the bulk of the people are dreamy, meditative, and given over in excess to the things of the spirit” (Gwynne 2003: 30-1). There is no necessary link between those musical devices and imbalances of character, of course, and no objective or empirical connection. But this interpretation made sense to Scott because of the Orientalist

structure of thought he had learned and internalized: it is a Westerner's role to investigate Orientals and their peculiar behavior, and find the root cause of their differences. Remarkably, we will find the same musical devices Scott used at work in The Beatles' Indian-styled songs, but given a rather different interpretation.

Said points to *basic oppositions* as laying the conditions of possibility for such outrageous observations as Scott's. In each of these oppositions, the West is active and structuring while the Orient is passive and disorganized. The West writes, and the Orient is written about; the West investigates, because the Orient needs investigation; the West has knowledge and produces knowledge, and the Orient is raw data waiting to be shaped into knowledge. The Oriental lacks knowledge of himself, and needs it, and can only obtain it from the structuring Western mind. It is easy to interpret such knowledge in terms of power (Foucault's "power/knowledge"): the West "eradicate[s] the plurality of differences among the Arabs . . . in the interest of one difference," the fundamental binary of West and Orient, so that "as a subject matter for study and analysis they can be *controlled* more readily" (Said 1975: 93). This knowledge frames Orientals' definitions of the world as deviant, false, symptomatic of the one root difference that defines the Orient.

## 1.2 AUTHORIZING THE ORIENT

There is authority implicit in the production of Orientalist knowledge. Writers like Cyril Scott (and Timothy Leary, as we will see) were able to assume some authority to structure the Orient as they saw fit, to say how it works. Said observes how in much Orientalist prose, "Verbs like demonstrate, reveal, and show are used without an object: to whom are the Arabs revealing,

demonstrating, showing? To no one in particular, obviously, but to everyone in general. This is another way of saying that these truths are self-evident only to a privileged or initiated observer” (1975: 94). This observer is in no way detached; he “is able to define not only his own position, but the Arab’s as well” (ibid.). Requiring the Orient to demonstrate, reveal, and show is a method for applying constraints. It places the Orient in a passive, subordinate position relative to a dominant West, on the basis of those basic oppositions.

The dominant-subordinate power structure can work explicitly or implicitly, but in either case, it is a real presence within such knowledge. Said discusses the system of Orientalism as a *mythology*, in which symbolic meanings repeatedly used in discourse are taken for granted, assumed to be true, and come to seem natural (Barthes 1957). “As with all mythologies [Orientalism] is a structure built around a set of simple oppositions,” which in time become a tradition where “what is said is about as controversial amongst Orientalists as the multiplication table” (Said 1975: 92). “Mythic language is discourse,” he observes, and “it cannot be anything but systematic; one does not really make discourse at will . . . without first belonging – in some cases unconsciously, but at any rate involuntarily – to the ideology and institutions that guarantee its existence” (1975: 100). On the level of mythology or tradition this system becomes “naturalized, modernized, and laicized” into a general cultural awareness (1978: 122). The establishment of the “figure of the Orientalist as central authority *for* the Orient, put into cultural circulation a form of discursive currency by whose presence the Orient would henceforth be *spoken for*” (1978: 123). Hence, decades later, figures like Timothy Leary can speak on behalf of Indian spirituality, making it psychedelic; Lennon and Harrison can do likewise in their music. India, as an Oriental land, was already positioned for such use by the Orientalist tradition and mythology; the mythology already solved that problem for them. “For a myth does not analyze

or solve problems. It represents them as already analyzed and solved; that is, it presents them as already assembled images, in the way a scarecrow is assembled bric-a-brac and then made to stand for a man” (1975: 100-1).

### 1.3 AUTHORIZING THE ORIENT AS ESCAPE, ELSEWHERE

In the work of Flaubert, Said observes the Orient functioning as “a world elsewhere, apart from the ordinary attachments, sentiments, and values of *our* world in the West” (1978: 190). Specifically he observes the “escapism of sexual fantasy” and the “freedom of licentious sex,” as a way for readers to achieve “what in their drab (or harried) bourgeois lives they do not have” (ibid.). Said observes that “Just as the various colonial possessions . . . were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, so the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe” (1978: 191). Such a construction, though, is built on the authority to define the Orient, which we can understand as a symptom of the Orientalist structure of thought. It is founded on the “almost total absence in contemporary Western culture of the Orient as a genuinely felt and experienced force” (ibid.). When Westerners do not visit Oriental lands or experience those cultures firsthand, then those cultures become “silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him” (ibid.). A similar Orientalist literary usage was also present in the Beatles’ own cultural milieu. As the British Empire collapsed in the 1950s there was a flood of immigrants to the British Isles, former colonized claiming their legal right to British citizenship. Indians were included among the influx that changed the face of everyday life in the United Kingdom – British commercials, popular music, and films like *Help!* (The Beatles’ second feature film,

which will be analyzed in the next chapter), began to reflect a growing awareness of the close presence of India (Thompson 2008: 33). This awareness grew at the same time as India-exoticizing literature like *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* was present in British primary school curricula.

A value-escapism similar to Flaubert's is at the core of psychedelic orientalism. There are places where The Beatles represent India as a site of sexual fantasy, as we will see. More importantly, though, India represents the ultimate escape from drab bourgeois lives: harried by Beatlemania, wanting a freedom they cannot have under intense media scrutiny, Lennon and Harrison construct a mystical escape in their psychedelic view of India. I will argue that Lennon and Harrison constructed India as a place to find drug-induced freedom unobtainable in their own society. I will examine which Orientalist works animated India for The Beatles, and then examine how The Beatles animated India themselves.

#### **1.4 PSYCHEDELIC ORIENTALISM AS A NEW MANIFESTATION**

There are significant differences between how Orientalism is made manifest in psychedelia and in Flaubert, however. Said observes an Orient entirely "denatured, that is, without human potency," but this does not describe the psychedelic view of India: a source of transcendental wisdom, of superior understanding, of needed change and escape. There is a real veneration involved in saying the Maharishi "turned us on" that is not compatible with the idea

of the lowly primitive.<sup>3</sup> What I am concerned with, though, is whether this change challenges the Orientalist structure of thought, from the kind of authoring that assumes the Orient can and should be spoken for. As I analyze these songs and the mythologies surrounding them, I will find ways in which the psychedelic veneration of India is still built on binary oppositions. This structure of thought still locates Indian spirituality and music on a rigidly-defined grid of knowledge, and still constitutes a set of constraints on what India could signify. India is discussed differently – a different view of India is produced in psychedelic discourse – but India still occupies a subordinate position.

Four songs written between 1964 and 1967, from their “experimental middle period” spanning the albums *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, and *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, bear unmistakable marks of influence from Hindustani classical music as well as the idea of mystical psychedelic India. The Beatles were not the only pop/rock artists of the time to write such songs – the short-lived genre of “raga rock” has been discussed elsewhere (Bellman 1997; Lavezzoli 2006) – but these songs deserve special attention. As Beatles songs they achieved a special kind of ubiquity: the popularity of The Beatles disseminated these songs not only throughout Europe and America, but throughout any part of the world where radio waves were received. The popularity of this music crossed numerous boundaries of nationality, race, gender, class, and age. In addition, John Lennon and George Harrison made especially serious engagements with Indian spirituality. George spent six weeks studying with sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar in India, and became a devoted student of Hinduism; John received Indian ideas only through Leary’s *Psychedelic Experience*, but was captivated by what he read. Both were affected enough to

---

<sup>3</sup> Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1917-2005), creator of the Transcendental Meditation movement, was a spiritual leader who trained the Beatles to meditate during a visit to his Rishikesh ashram in 1968. The Beatles’ encounter with him occurred after the songs analyzed in this thesis were written (1965-67). One of my purposes is to show how the experiences informing these songs also set the conditions in which the Rishikesh visit took place.

refashion themselves, their identities, in song: John as the Dalai Lama on a mountaintop, and George as a wise guru advising troubled Westerners.<sup>4</sup>

That refashioning of identities is central to my analysis. The Beatles did not represent India in abstract tone poems or character pieces as Cyril Scott did. There is no distance between composer and composed subject in Beatles songs. John and George were musicians first, and when these songs were written they had just been awakened to the idea of a song as a confessional, an unburdening, a deeply personal expression.<sup>5</sup> The Indian Other is represented on the self, projected onto the self, through mimicry. This mimicry has musical and social dimensions. Musically, I look for the new sounds and effects that The Beatles code as Indian, and interpret them in light of the psychedelic notions they draw on. Socially, I look for the functions this mimesis might have played in their lives. What does the manner in which the Beatles imitate Indian-ness reveal about their view of India? And how can we understand the implicit authority at work here, the right they assume to have, to be able to fashion masks and label them as Indian? John and George both enter mimesis following mentors: Timothy Leary places India on the grid of psychedelia for John, and Ravi Shankar positions India as purifying and correcting for George. These relationships, as well as the relationships of all four individuals -- John Lennon, George Harrison, Timothy Leary, and George Harrison -- to some idea of a “West” and of India, will shed light on my questions. Is the mimesis an acceptance or celebration of India? Or does it reinscribe the same hegemonic system in a new guise?

---

<sup>4</sup> George Martin recalls that on “Tomorrow Never Knows,” John “wanted his voice to sound like the Dalai Lama chanting from a hilltop” (Spitz 2005: 605). The lyrics to “Within You Without You” were written by George Harrison after a passionate conversation with a friend about problems in his society, and how the Indian spiritual perspective he had just learned from Ravi Shankar could be the needed corrective (Macdonald 2008: 214).

<sup>5</sup> Their conversion to this kind of songwriting is discussed in chapter 2. It was largely a response to both Bob Dylan and a growing dissatisfaction with the limited expressive range of their own songs (adolescent love themes only).

It is possible to study these questions entirely through biography, interviews, and press quotations, but I believe the music deserves a special focus. The four songs I have chosen for this thesis, written into that particular context, share peculiar features of musical construction that mark them off from the rest of the Beatles corpus. I will analyze them to place their peculiarities on the map of psychedelia, Indian influence, and the lives of the songwriters. These approaches end in a surprising place: a musical system where Indian classical music is made subordinate to psychedelic forces, as if in direct analogy to the subordinating system of Orientalism.

## 2.0 POSITIONING INDIA

The cover of the Beatles' fourth studio album, *Beatles for Sale* (Figure 1), reflects their mood in late 1964: exhausted and extremely stifled. Beatlemania kept them locked in hotel rooms for their own safety, lest they be torn limb from limb by fans who had “lost all ability to think” (Spitz 2005: 524, 576). Even on stage their music was drowned out by the crowd; where they were once in their element, performing with skills hard-earned in Reeperbahn night clubs, they now “relished an early escape” from the stage (Spitz 2005: 526). The Beatles increasingly felt stifled in their personal expression, as well. They were becoming “role models for a restless generation” and an inspiration for “young people struggling – often chaotically – to find a means of self-expression,” but they themselves could not freely take part in that expression (Spitz 2005: 570). Their manager forbade them from speaking out on any kind of political or social topic, thinking that such issues were inappropriate for pop musicians, and fearful of media backlash (ibid.).

This stifled feeling was made all the more frustrating by what the Beatles heard in Bob Dylan. His album *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* (1963) was playing in the endless succession of hotel rooms, and they must have heard many qualities that they dearly desired. Here was a young person singing boldly with a powerful and intensely personal voice, not afraid to passionately express his views. He employed that passion not for commercially-driven clichés; rather, he moved freely between the vulnerable self-expression of “Girl from the North Country” and the

strident, unabashed social conscience of “Masters of War.” Dylan gave expression to things potently meaningful for young people of this time and place: challenges to the old authority and concern for social justice.<sup>6</sup> The freedom with which he challenged authority, and the success he found in doing so, deeply affected the Beatles. They grew dissatisfied with the music they had been turning out: endless made-to-order love songs, or what Paul called “the moon and June stuff . . . fare-thee-well lyrics in a neat two-and-a-half minute frame” (Spitz 2005: 538-9).

The Beatles were deeply unhappy suffering under the weight of their pop star personas. They felt a great need for some escape or release from this stifling pressure, and it came appropriately enough from meeting Dylan on tour, when he introduced them to marijuana. Their reaction to the drug was ecstatic and euphoric: bouncing off the walls and aching from laughter, writing down profound thoughts.<sup>7</sup> There was a battalion of policemen guarding the hall outside, but within their sealed rooms, the Beatles had found a much-needed way to escape their confines and flout the weight of their media identities.

Not long after being turned on, The Beatles encountered Indian music and culture on the set of their second feature film *Help!* As the British Empire collapsed in the 1950s there was a flood of immigrants to the British Isles, former colonized claiming their legal right to British citizenship. Indians were included among the influx that changed the face of everyday life in the United Kingdom – British commercials, popular music, and films like *Help!* began to reflect a growing awareness of the close presence of India (Thompson 2008: 33). The film *Help!* was a James Bond parody with abundant Orientalist themes: an “Eastern cult” led by a bloodthirsty

---

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Janet Kafka for this understanding of Dylan’s impact. See also Spitz 2005: 534.

<sup>7</sup> Spitz 2005: 535 reports on one amusing marijuana-induced evening: “For a period of time [Paul] frantically crisscrossed the suite in search of pencil and paper to capture the profundities that were leapfrogging across his brain. ... the next morning, when Paul read [his notes] aloud to the other Beatles, they said: ‘There are seven levels,’ nothing more, which amused everyone to no end.”

swami wants to offer Ringo as human sacrifice to their eight-armed goddess Kaeli (a blunt corruption of the Hindu goddess Kali).<sup>8</sup> The script labels India as the “Mystic East” as the Beatles seek out the “nearest Oriental” from whom to learn about their plight. This leads them to an Indian restaurant, where sitar and tambura players set the soundtrack for Middle Eastern belly dancing, ascetic monks lying on beds of nails, and acts of violence – all typical essentializing signifiers for any part of the Orient. The cultists use Indian music in an attempt to hypnotize Ringo to sleep over the phone, playing on an old trope where Indian music is monotonous and soporific (what Cyril Scott called “the languorousness of the Orient”; Gwynne 2003:30-31). Of course, the film was not a documentary and everything in *Help!* was plainly absurd: mad scientists, constant clowning, recording sessions held in a field surrounded by a battalion of tanks. Regardless, the Orientalist structure of thought is at work in this portrayal of India. It is the same attitude Said observes in Flaubert: the West has control over the means of representation, and is able to portray the Orient in any terms it finds useful, for escape or vicarious living or simple comic effect. Relations of power are implicit, with India in the subordinate position, because the West is active and structuring while the Orient is passive and disorganized; the West writes, and the Orient is written about.

The Beatles had no part in writing the *Help!* script – they simply arrived on set and read their lines – but they did absorb that portrayal of India and its implicit structures. Working on the film colored a crucial early encounter with Indian music and spirituality. Between takes of the scene set in an Indian restaurant, a sitar caught George’s eye; this was the first episode that sparked George’s interest in Indian music. Later in the shooting, in what Beatles biographer Bob

---

<sup>88</sup> Musicologist Ralph Locke observes similar themes in the opera *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saens and its treatment of the Philistines, and he identifies the functions of these themes within an Orientalist structure of thought (2001: 264).

Spitz describes as a “constantly pot-addled state,” The Beatles’ second glimpse of Indian culture was suitably surreal: a swami approached them on a bicycle and presented them with Hindu devotional pamphlets (Spitz 2005: 501). India was thus positioned in their minds as the source of both mysticism and ancient wisdom, even as the *Help!* script positioned India in the subordinate, colonized role.

It was not long after these first Indian encounters that the Beatles encountered LSD. The drug was first synthesized by a Swiss pharmacist in 1943, and marketed to American and British psychiatrists for possible therapeutic uses. Once it was understood to have psychoactive effects, the drug quickly spread from those psychiatrists to a wide net of artists and intellectuals. John and George received it first from a dentist, a casual acquaintance, who slipped it into their after-dinner coffee on sugar cubes. When the dentist admitted what he had done, the two Beatles immediately and angrily left the party on foot, walking to a familiar nightclub, which turned out to be a big mistake – the noises and lights of the street made that part of their first trip a hellish experience (Spitz 2005: 565). Once they reached home, though, they were able to calm themselves and enjoy the drug enough to interest them in a second trip. They took that second trip on their next tour of America, on a rare day off from performing, as they relaxed at a secluded villa in California. The power of these LSD experiences awakened all manner of profound questions in The Beatles’ minds – it “possessed an undeniable power – a spiritual power – that forced them to look inside themselves” (Spitz 2005: 566). Even as those thoughts arose, the music of Ravi Shankar was there to further position India as a source of mystic ancient wisdom (Everett 2006: 307), as the Beatles learned to view it during *Help!* This trip further sparked George’s interest in Indian music, and at the next opportunity he bought a sitar and

began meeting with the Indian Musical Circle in London, an organization dedicated to the study of Indian music, where he would eventually meet Ravi Shankar.

## **2.1 JOHN LENNON, THE BEATLES PERSONA, AND “NORWEGIAN WOOD”**

John began feeling especially stifled in 1965. His social conscience began to grow around this time, and he wanted to use his fame to speak out (for example, against the Vietnam War), but Beatles manager Brian Epstein forbade him. The one time John transgressed this order, the backlash was crushing: a comment to the effect that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus sparked a massive media ordeal, with condemnations and Beatles records burned in bonfires, that only ended when John offered a formal pseudo-apology. Following these experiences, John especially felt pressure to measure up artistically to Dylan, to move away from the “mush he’d worked on with Paul,” towards a darker and more introspective self-expression (Spitz 2005: 538). And even back at home he was trapped in an unhappy marriage that “felt confining and oppressive” (Spitz 2005: 548). Both of these pressures find release in the song “Norwegian Wood: This Bird Has Flown” on the album *Rubber Soul* (1965). Macdonald points to the lyrics’ “enigmatic women and hints of menace” as a response to Bob Dylan (2008: 164), and the song certainly functions as the kind of new, dark, introspective writing that Lennon wanted: it replaces “yeah yeah yeahs” and reconciled lovers with a story much murkier and much more cynical. And as it turns out, in this song John was “trying to write about an affair without letting my wife know” (Everett 2006: 330). At the same time, this is the first rock song to feature the sitar – and in the process, it was the first to invoke India as a locale of escape and freedom, specifically from these pressures John was feeling. There is certainly a difference in the degree of “Indianness” of

this song, much less than that of “Tomorrow Never Knows” or “Within You Without You,” but the presence of Indian-styled elements will become significant in my analysis.

“Norwegian Wood” begins with a verse that sustains a single tonic chord for its entire duration. This is already unusual: earlier Beatles songs are remarkable for just how many chord changes they fit into their three-minute durations. Jonathan Bellman has observed the same harmonic stasis in other raga rock songs from this time (1997: 125), and especially in the Beatles’ case there is evidence that this quality was inspired by Indian classical music:

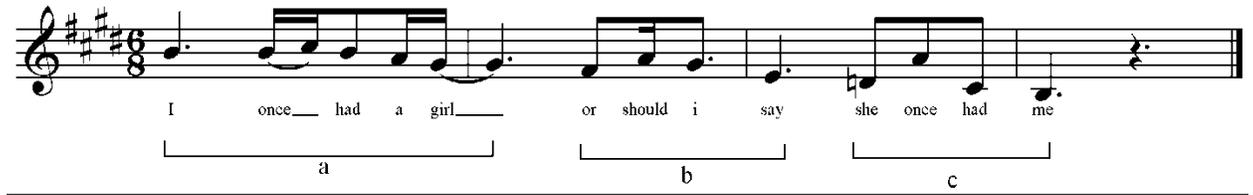
We would be sitting around and at the end of an Indian album we'd go, 'Did anyone realise they didn't change chords?' It would be like 'Shit, it was all in E! Wow, man, that's pretty far out.' So we began to sponge up a few of these nice ideas. (Miles 1997: 290-91)

Harmonic stasis is braced by the sitar’s presence on this song. It introduces the verse melody which the voice then takes up and repeats endlessly, without variation – another marker of stasis like in the harmony. This melody spans an octave and covers the song’s entire pitch collection, which is Mixolydian. Lowering the leading tone has a significant effect on the harmony of this song: by removing this source of tension that is fundamental to dominant harmony, to the push and pull of harmonic progressions, the b7 creates an even deeper stasis. There is no directionality to this verse in the conventional sense, no tension and release between chords, but rather a sense of deep-rooted stillness that could repeat indefinitely. In this way the harmony can be understood as the Beatles’ mimicry of the drone in Indian music. The guitar’s sustained tonic replaces the *tambura* as a drone instrument.

In spite of the harmonic stasis, it would be wrong to call this music static. There is a great deal of activity in other dimensions: the bass makes a skipping rhythmic figure, the vocal melody is marked by frequent leaps, the lead guitar plays these same leaps, and the supporting guitar plays a lilting, dancelike 6/8 rhythm. This juxtaposition of a deep-rooted stasis to a greatly-active

surface – which I will call *dynamic stasis* – is a quality we will find in each song I analyze. It is not hard to imagine how this quality could be a mimicry of the sound of Indian classical music, which is constantly active with rapid drumming and melodic flights, but does not make use of harmonic motion in a way Western listeners are accustomed to.

There is another dimension of motion in the main melody: an expanding or swelling quality. As shown in Figure 2, the melody consists of three subphrases, each of a similar profile: a skip upwards, and two or three steps downwards. Subphrase a (9 beats) is longer than subphrases b and c (each 6 beats). Each subphrase plots a downward contour built on a tonic triad (another sign of harmonic stasis). But they differ in two peculiar ways. First, each subphrase covers a wider intervallic range than the last: a minor third in subphrase a, a perfect fourth in subphrase b, and a minor seventh in subphrase c. Second, there is a “slowing down” effect as each subphrase uses fewer 16<sup>th</sup> notes. Two 16<sup>th</sup> notes in subphrase a create rapid, energetic figures in anticipation of the beat; one of these anticipations is removed from subphrase b, and both are removed from subphrase c. The melody expands in intervallic structure as it relaxes in rhythm. This expansion/relaxation, together with the overall downward contour, creates a kind of sinking or melting quality: something that spreads out as it moves downwards. The phrase seems to lose energy or tightness as it expands in size. The sinking or melting quality is reinforced in several ways. First, the melody is repeated many times. Second, the harmony is static so as to not distract from this motion. Third, the melody is always doubled, never sounding alone. Whether in voice or sitar, the melody is always reinforced by the heterophony of the rhythm guitar, picking out melody notes as it strums. Heterophonic doubling is a way of adding to or amplifying a single melodic line, giving it a greater visceral impact, and here, reinforcing the impact of this sinking or melting quality. This quality appears again in the other Lennon song



**Figure 1.** Subphrases in the “Norwegian Wood” melody

analyzed in this thesis, “Tomorrow Never Knows,” where its inspiration will be made clear: not directly a mimicry of Indian music, but of the altered sensations of LSD.

“Norwegian Wood” reflects Lennon’s exposure to Indian music and his reaction to Bob Dylan. The song is an escape in more than one way: from stifling marriage and restrictive Beatles persona, into a freer and more exotic place. That place is freer *because* it is exotic – the Indian style of this song does not coincide with these personal-expressive elements, but is deeply connected with them. Indian style functions here as a *carnavalesque mask* of the kind Bakhtin observes: mediievally it began as “a violation of natural boundaries . . . a merry negation of uniformity and similarity,” but after the Romantic era it acquires “a somber hue . . . it hides something, keeps a secret, deceives” (1984: 39-40). But even this shadier mask still serves to “liberate from the prevailing points of view of the world, from conventions and established truths, from clichés, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted” (1984: 34). Jonathan Bellman observes this very process in “See My Friends” by The Kinks, another drone-based, Indianized rock song from 1964. Ray Davies wrote many veiled references to homosexuality and his own sexual confusion into the lyrics of that song: a thoroughly taboo topic in rock of the time, in which gender roles were rigidly defined (Thompson 2008: 31). But taking up the Indian identity as a mask allows Ray Davies a freer expression: the exotic musical language can “show us the inner man, carefully and successfully self-protected” (Bellman 1997: 133).

This form of masquerade is not so much a covering-up or hiding of something – “The mask does not hide the face, it *is* the face” (Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 117). It is instead a performative space, and an especially permissive one, where something ordinarily taboo and unsanctioned is allowed to find expression. Some part of the self that is usually restricted is given free reign, because at the end of the carnival, that part can be attributed to the mask and the mask can be put away. A form of taboo sexuality is given expression in “Norwegian Wood” under the safety of an Indian mask. This becomes problematic when we consider how India was positioned for such a usage, though. Sexual escapism is something Said observed in Flaubert, and the same implications of power structure apply here: implicit authority to define the Orient, to represent it at will, because the West is active and structuring while the Orient is discursively produced as passive and disorganized.

With regard to sexuality, Said described the feminization of the Oriental in the Orientalist structure of thought as follows:

the relation between the Middle East and the West is really defined as sexual. The Middle East is resistant, as any virgin would be, but the male-scholar wins the prize by bursting open, penetrating through the Gordian knot (the hymen, clearly), despite the taxing task (energetic foreplay?). ‘Harmony’ is the result of the conquest of maidenly coyness; it is not by any means the coexistence of equals. The underlying power relation between scholar and subject-matter is never once altered: it is uniformly favorable to the Orientalist. (1975: 93)

This gendering is an embellishment on the basic oppositions: the Orient is feminine because it is passively defined and structured; the West is masculine because it takes action and has control. Musicologist Ralph Locke has observed this gendering of the binary portrayed in the opera *Samson et Dalila* (1877), where the Oriental feminine is a threat to Western rationality and control. Dalila is a figure both Orientalized and hypersexualized, and when she tempts Samson

away from the path God had set for him, she reinforces “the opera’s underlying binary opposition between a morally superior ‘us’ . . . and an appealing but dangerous ‘them’ . . . who come close to causing ‘our’ downfall” (2001: 263).

It is remarkable, then, that “Norwegian Wood” employs its Indian style in the portrayal of a woman whose control of sexuality is threatening to the narrator. “This Bird Has Flown” was the original title of the song, sketched first in 1964, and very first lyrics written were “I once had a girl, or should I say, she once had me”; the song ends with “the ‘twist’ that has the narrator burn down the girl’s house ‘because she wouldn’t let him have it’” (Everett 2001: 313). David Reck, an early scholar of the exchange between rock music and Indian music, gives a memorable account of how such a woman might come to be Orientalized:

In our mind’s eye we (at least anyone who has lived through the 1960s) can almost imagine a video to the song: the ‘bird’ with long straight hair a la Joan Baez, black turtleneck, mini skirt; the pickup at a club fuelled by Lennon’s storied gift of the gab . . . turning the key to the girl’s ‘pad’ . . . the sharing of a joint, the obligatory Buddhist-Hindu-existentialist philosophical pre-coital dialogue . . . And on the stereo we imagine . . . a recording of Ravi Shankar with Alla Rakha pattering away on the tabla. (2008: 63)

It is the interrupted promise of that pre-coital dialogue that constitutes the threat of the feminine in this song. The exchange gives her room with the Norwegian wood furniture a dangerous negative charge. In portraying that room and that woman, Lennon uses an exotic Indian style. In so doing he makes use of a well-established trope, one which carries implications of the Orientalist system of thought: the Orientalized voice in this song, which does not speak, is the feminine figure whereas the structuring voice, who has agency to speak, is the male figure. India’s role in “Norwegian Wood” demonstrates that, before Lennon’s full immersion in psychedelia, India had been positioned as passive, feminine, and available for structuring into

meaning. In the next chapter I will observe the consequences of this positioning when India is brought into full-blown contact with the psychedelic.

## 2.2 GEORGE HARRISON, THE CHEEKY FAÇADE, AND “IF I NEEDED SOMEONE”

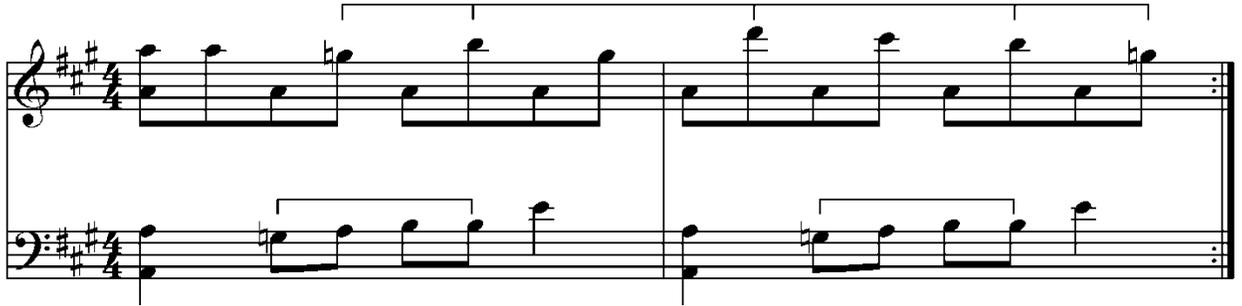
“For the final year of touring, George had actively hated his Beatle existence” (Norman 2005: 309). He felt the pressures of Beatlemania acutely, but even at the best of times he was plagued by feelings of alienation and insecurity within the group. In his autobiography he highlights the “years of misfit indifference to school and the alienation it generated” (Spitz 2005: 566) – unsuccessful in classes, unfulfilled in working life, and even in the Beatles confined to the role of the quiet one. “The cheeky façade . . . collapsed behind the scenes in the auras of Lennon and McCartney, exposing the gawky, awestricken boy who used to trail behind his mentors in Liverpool” (Spitz 2005: 566). Even outside of touring, his Beatle life “bristled with snubs and slights – the patronizing air of George Martin in the studio, the overwhelming brilliance of John and Paul” (Norman 2005: 309).

George was able to find escape from these pressures in two ways. In LSD, George discovered “something like a very concentrated version of the best feeling I’d ever had,” and it “possessed an undeniable power – a *spiritual* power – that drove him towards ‘enlightenment’” (Spitz 2005: 565-56). The drug caused a tremendous emotional upheaval which shook George out of his rut. At the same time, India and its religions had just been positioned on the *Help!* set as a source of alternative, renewing wisdom. George himself seems to acknowledge feeling a connection between the upheaval of LSD and the promise of Indian spirituality in 1965:

LSD was just like opening the door – and before, you didn't even know that there was a door there . . . I had this lingering thought that just stayed with me after that, and that thought was “Yogis of the Himalayas.” I don't know why – I'd never thought about them for the rest of my life, but suddenly this thought was in the back of my consciousness. It was like someone was whispering to me: “Yogis of the Himalayas.” (Harrison 2011: 190)

Spitz observes that “Like many others who flirted with mysticism, it gave [George] a sense of authority and confidence” which he had sorely lacked (Spitz 2005: 567). We will see this theme develop throughout George's engagement with India. Indian music was George's other source of escape, and also connected with authority and confidence. He had been bossed around in the studio, but his use of the sitar on *Rubber Soul* gave him “something he had never had before – a definite and distinctive contribution to what the Beatles did in the studio” (Norman 2005: 310). By becoming the Beatles' Indian specialist he was able to draw strength in his alienation: “Henceforth it was realized that when a group of Indians walked in and squatted down . . . that was when George took over and gave orders” (Norman 2005: 310).

In 1965 George wrote “If I Needed Someone” for *Rubber Soul*. The song is not overtly Indian in style (the sitar is not used), but it was written around the same time as “Norwegian Wood,” and uses a very similar musical language. This song's verse has a sustained tonic chord, and one altered greatly by Mixolydian color. The bass plays an ostinato that repeatedly sounds the b7 moving to 1. The lead guitar, which according to Macdonald sounds like a “high register tambura” (2005: 169), plays a figure that superimposes a bVII triad on a tonic chord, and the bass does as well (Figure 3). When the vocal harmony enters, it too sounds the b7 moving to 1. Direction and tension are neutralized by the use of the Mixolydian mode, and deep stillness permeates. This quality reaches to the melody, which is especially subdued: a chant-like stepwise motion that spans only a fourth. But there is constant motion against this stasis, again, from the steady pulse of voice and guitar, the low throb of the bass, and the endlessly spinning out lines of



**Figure 2.** Lead guitar and bass ostinato from the verse of “If I Needed Someone.” Superimposed bVII triads are bracketed.

the lead guitar. The resonant jangly guitar part picks up on harmonic overtones or sympathetic vibrations, much like the drone strings on a sitar. Dynamic stasis, then, is achieved in much the same way as in “Norwegian Wood.”

This dynamic stasis is marked by a special heaviness, brought about through doublings. The lead guitar heterophonically doubles the vocal melody, adding the fuzz tone as well as a pedal-point drone. The rhythm guitar matches its strum to the vocal part, adding more impact to each note. And the vocal harmony, close-voiced triads formed on each note of the melody, is peculiar even for a Beatles song. Other songs feature extensive harmonizing, and three-part harmonies, but here it is extended in a special way: filling every bridge and every verse after the first. Here it contributes to an especially thick, heavy texture. And along this dimension of heaviness there is an expanding quality – different from “Norwegian Wood,” unfolding along a longer arc. There is a deliberate building from nothing to something quite massive: First there is a single guitar, then the rhythm section enters, then George begins singing, and then John and Paul join him. The process breaks for the first refrain. When the verse returns there is a “stretching” effect – the gap between melodic subphrases in the return of the verse disappears, creating a single, smooth line. Finally the melody dissolves into a single “Ah.” The texture

expands, spreads out, and sinks in with considerable heaviness. This dimension of development replaces directed harmony in the verse.

The peculiarities of this dynamic stasis and expansion into heaviness in the verses become especially clear when compared with the song's refrains. There is a clear shift in texture: the lead guitar disappears, the bass drops to a single pulsing root note, and the rhythm guitar plays functional chord changes. The voice begins to leap and make appoggiaturas, creating tension to match the newly introduced dominant harmony. The song shifts to a more typical rock style and the tension in this section stand in contrast to the heavy, deep-rooted calm of the verses.

There is a similar quality in the lyrics, as well. The verses are profoundly unattached and unbothered. The narrator is so far away from needing anything or anybody that he can only speculate ("if") as to what it would be like. The refrains shift in tone, with a note of anxiety: "it might not have been like this." But any trace of anxiety is submerged in the return to the verse's calm detachment and dynamic stasis. Remarkably, the unattached quality is something Ravi Shankar would later attribute to Indian influence in George's life:

George had something which we call in our language *tyagi*, which means the feeling of unattachment. He had everything – all the wealth, all the fame, whatever he wanted. But he was not attached to it. It didn't seem to matter much to him, because he was searching for something much higher, much deeper. It does seem like he already had some Indian background in him. Otherwise, it's hard to explain how, from Liverpool, with his background, and then becoming so famous, what reason did he have to get so attracted to a particular type of life and philosophy, even religion? It seems very strange really. Unless you believe in reincarnation. (Harrison 2011: 244)

If there is an Indian presence in this song, it is achieved musically in a way very similar to "Norwegian Wood." It could serve a similar expressive purpose as well: there is escape from a painful, oppressive circumstance into a vision of India. Here India is not so much permissive, but rather calm, peaceful, and affirming. It is the polar opposite of what is troubling George, much like how John used a vision of India. The way verse and refrain are opposed to each other in this

song, with dynamic stasis defusing a tension accumulated in a more typical rock-song section, suggests a binary opposition where India is the spiritually-renewing opposite of Western society. This is a theme that we will find in George's later engagements with India. And while there is no overt exoticizing, the idea of the mask could still be useful here, for allowing something different to find expression: a sense of peace by removal to India. By identifying with the ascetic, one can achieve ascendancy over stressful circumstances. It is interesting to note that there is a certain feminization of the Indian voice in this song too: the spiritual rewards of India take the place of a sexual or romantic partner. Portraying India as the spiritually-renewing opposite appears positive and affirming on the surface, certainly much more so than the portrayals in *Help!* and "Norwegian Wood," but it can still reflect the Orientalist structure of thought insofar as it is still defining the Orient and placing it in a decidedly nineteenth-century-feminine role. The West is active and structuring, and India-as-renewing is structured in terms of the West; it performs a role that serves the West and it assumes a definition that requires the West in order to make sense of it or have any purpose for being.

### 3.0 AFFECT AND APPROPRIATION IN “TOMORROW NEVER KNOWS”

According to John’s then-wife Cynthia, LSD helped John “escape from the imprisonment which fame had entailed. [It made him] like a little boy again . . . his enthusiasm for life and love reached a new peak” (Everett 2006: 330). After *Rubber Soul* there was a few months’ break from touring in which each of the Beatles pursued individual interests, and John further explored the acid trip. The effect LSD had on him was intensely disorienting, though, and he looked for some kind of help or guidance. As there was not yet an LSD-using culture in London, he found guidance instead in a book by Timothy Leary called *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964) (Macdonald 2008: 188). Timothy Leary was a passionate exponent of LSD use who believed that the mind- and life-altering experiences the drug produced could cure society’s ills, and he wrote *The Psychedelic Experience* to help spread this message. The book promises liberation from “games,” the burdensome social structures forced upon us, which dictate to us “behavioral sequences defined by roles, rules, [and] rituals” (1964: 13). Leary himself found this liberation in psychedelics, as he explains in his autobiography *Flashbacks* (1994). His first psychedelic trip is described in the chapter “Sacred Mushrooms of Mexico,” and he is careful to position mushrooms as an ancient Aztec secret, banned by the medieval Church and kept hidden from Westerners by the oppressive bourgeois System. Another chapter is full of tales from his upbringing, where he was subjected to “funless, unhealthy virtue” (1994: 25) and demands to conform to the standards of a dominant Protestant society (1994: 28). The drugs are set up as an

escape from all that is stuffy, uniform, and oppressive. Later chapters continue these juxtapositions, showing first an episode from Leary's life in the Army, and then a psychedelic episode that works against the damage of military discipline. It is easy to see how this manner of liberation, preached in PE, would have appealed deeply to John as well. John, too, had felt stifled, oppressed, and held down by a system.

With the "Sacred Mushrooms of Mexico" Leary first transcended the System through recourse to the exotic and Other. He does likewise in *The Psychedelic Experience*, which is a *Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*, i.e. based on a collection of writings in a Buddhist/Hindu tradition meant to be whispered into the ears of the dying to prepare them for reincarnation. Leary describes himself as "translating the Book of the Dead from Anglo-Buddhist to American psychedelia" (1994: 140), which reveals much about the treatment this text has received. The "original" *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a hodgepodge of disparate sources, selected for their exotic peculiarity. It thus represents a restructuring like that of Flaubert or the *Help!* script, to suit the British taste for mysticism in its Indian subjects. A friend of Leary's introduced him to the text, suggesting "psychedelic implications" (1990:140), and Leary's engagement with the text would constitute a second restructuring as he reinterpreted it for the purposes of psychedelia. *The Psychedelic Experience* is framed as "Buddhist mystical doctrines," secret teachings that lamas and gurus have "kept a closely guarded secret for many centuries" (1964: 12). Leary learned from fellow popularizer of Eastern philosophy Alan Watts that "Hindu gurus and swamis" were essentially "humorless, authoritarian" (1994: 149) –i.e. parallel to the System – so in *The Psychedelic Experience* Leary beat them at their own game, positioning himself as a sort of master guru and uncovering the psychedelic meanings behind these teachings, meanings that even the original Indian authors were unaware of. Game

liberation adopts the language of Buddhism: “Realization of the Voidness, the Unbecome, the Unborn, the Unmade, the Unformed, implies Buddhahood, Perfect Enlightenment” (1964: 36) It did not matter that LSD was utterly foreign to the Buddhist practitioners who defined that enlightenment. Here we see the same Orientalist structure of thought as in *Help!*: Indian spirituality exists in a subordinate position, and is passive to Western representation, so it can be freely taken and structured as Leary sees fit.

The India of *The Psychedelic Experience* was built largely from the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and as we will see, the India of “Tomorrow Never Knows” is built largely from *The Psychedelic Experience*. Lennon’s relationship with India is powerfully informed by this book, so much so that he too positions himself as a master guru. George Martin recalls that “He wanted his voice to sound like the Dalai Lama chanting from a hilltop . . . he struggled to create some kind of Tibetan influence or effect in the studio” (Spitz 2005: 601).

### 3.1 A USER’S MANUAL FOR PSYCHEDELIA

*The Psychedelic Experience* is primarily a manual or guidebook for the acid trip – it tells new users what to expect, what sensations will be felt, and how these sensations should be interpreted. In the early 1960s Leary worked as a psychologist at Harvard, and conducted experiments on the effects of psychedelic drugs. The practice of preparing the new user for a trip had its origins in Leary’s experiments: “We spend considerable time before the drug session training our subjects, alerting them to what they can expect” (1994: 52). Such training sessions were inspired by the Peruvian *curanderos*, shamans who guided users of the psychoactive Ayahuasca vine. The *curanderos* underwent a period of intensive training in which they ate the

vine every day while thoroughly exploring the altered experience. They returned from this training period equipped to talk new users through their own first trips. Leary read about this practice, and claimed to have read about similar practices in “all the eastern yogic texts” (1994: 53). These texts inspired him to become a similar kind of psychedelic guide or guru.

That goal is achieved in *The Psychedelic Experience* most directly through the *guiding passages* that make up nearly half of the book. These are verses written in an especially weighty lyric-poetic style which are “suitable for reading during the session” (1964: 97) to tell the new user how to react to and interpret the strange new sensations as they occur. Leary suggests that “one may wish to pre-record selected passages and simply flick on the recorder when desired” (1964: 97). That is precisely what Lennon did for his Leary-structured LSD trips. “Rushing home [from the bookstore], John dropped acid according to Leary’s instructions. ‘I did it just like he said in the book,’ John recalled” (Spitz 2005: 600). And that practice influenced “Tomorrow Never Knows” in a significant way – the lyrics mimic the style of these guiding passages. The lyrics imitate this part of *The Psychedelic Experience* where Leary is most explicitly acting as guide and guru.

The practice of preparing and guiding the new user is remarkable in light of a certain sociological perspective on drug-induced states, first articulated by Howard S Becker (1953). Becker identifies the powerful ways in which cultural discourse can shape, alter, and even construct the drug experience. This perspective distinguishes the physical symptoms of a drug, which can be traced directly to physiological/pharmacological causes, from the subjective experience of a consciousness altered by these symptoms. The first can be measured objectively, but the second only by asking the user what he or she is feeling. The experience, the altered state or “high,” is built on an active *interpretation* of the ways in which consciousness is altered, and

Becker stresses how that interpretation is mediated by culture. To have a high, the user must learn to single out particular drug alterations, to identify them and engage with them. Becker identifies certain first-time marijuana users who did not realize the drug had affected them at all, even though they had measurable symptoms and observable changes in behavior, and so had no drug *experience* to speak of. The frequent user, on the other hand, is one who develops a connoisseur's taste for subtle changes from the normal subjective state, learns to identify particular effects of the drug, to label them and engage with them. And once particular changes are singled out, ongoing drug use entails an ongoing effort to give each drug effect a stable interpretation or definition: "The user examines succeeding experiences closely, looking for new effects, making sure the old ones are still there. Out of this there grows a stable set of categories for experiencing the drug's effects" (1953: 239). A powerful hermeneutic is created where the verbal descriptions of drug effects become literal categories for experience – the experience is shaped or constructed by that discourse.

Becker also claims that for lone users, in the absence of a drug culture, literary sources can serve as "some of the substance out of which a user may develop his own definition" of a drug effect (1967: 170). Such is the explicit purpose of PE. The definition/construction begins when LSD is described as "brain-unlocking," continues into the detailed descriptions of possible LSD trips, and culminates in the guiding passages. "Tomorrow Never Knows" mimics the most explicitly experience-constructing portion of *The Psychedelic Experience* (Figure 4)– this suggests a new method for interpretation of the song. If drug use entails ongoing efforts to define drug effects, then we can hear "Tomorrow Never Knows" as an instance of this experience-defining activity. The song *is* one of Lennon's efforts to shape his drug experience, expressed in music rather than words, through whatever effect the music has on the listener's affect. Leary

**Table 1.** Lyrics of “Tomorrow Never Knows” and an excerpt from Leary’s “Instructions for Use During a Psychedelic Session”

<b>Tomorrow Never Knows</b>	<b>First Bardo Instructions</b>
Turn off your mind, Relax and float down stream It is not dying	O (name), Try to reach and keep the experience of the Clear Light. Remember:
Lay down all thought Surrender to the void It is shining	The light is the life energy. The endless flame of life. An ever-changing surging turmoil of color may engulf your vision. This is the ceaseless transformation of energy.
That you may see The meaning of within It is being	The life process. Do not fear it. Surrender to it. Join it.
That love is all And love is everyone It is knowing	It is a part of you. You are a part of it. Remember also:
That ignorance and hate May mourn the dead It is believing	Beyond the restless flowing electricity of life is the ultimate reality – The Void.
But listen to the color of your dreams It is not living	
Or play the game existence to the end Of the beginning	

noted that “Reading this manual is extremely useful, but no words can communicate experience” (44), which John could have taken as an invitation for music to fill this void.

Using music to influence affect, to define a physical state or create an embodied experience, would have been natural to John: this is precisely how The Beatles’ earlier music was received, within the context of twist and shake clubs. A Cambridge student in 1964, hearing The Beatles for the first time, felt that “it is a relief to lose oneself in the unconscious hypnotic euphoria of the music” (Marwick 1998: 71). Transformed embodied state was also noted by an Aberdeen student, who related it to music in a more technical way: “you can really feel the music and I find that the insistent beat results in a feeling very like being drunk” (Marwick 1998: 72).

The beat of The Beatles, that vigorous rock rhythm, was not entirely a product of the drum set – it was also formed by the pulsing bass, the strum of the rhythm guitar, and between these two, the steady harmonic rhythm. I will demonstrate that “Tomorrow Never Knows” is radically altered from rock-song conventions of the period in precisely these dimensions. As he wrote songs, John was likely sensitive to the fact that listeners would experience his music in the body through an altered physical state. If “Tomorrow Never Knows” radically alters so many of the musical elements that define the usual rock-listening state – and does so at the same time that John was working with *The Psychedelic Experience* to define and shape the LSD trip – then the song can be understood as a musical effort to create a new, radically altered embodied experience that makes the body cooperate with LSD in the ways Leary directs. Popular music critic Jim DeRogatis seems to agree with this interpretation in his overview of psychedelic rock, *Turn On Your Mind* (2003). He claims that the subculture of psychedelic rock (part of what Becker would call the drug-using culture) could make even non drug-users think that they knew what a trip was like: it “told them everything they needed to know to sound authentic” (2003: 12). It used sonic cues in music to define the trip, so that the songs “not only enhanced psychedelic experiences, but . . . helped [users] to process and relive them long after the drugs wore off” (2003: 12).

Part of what the trip is like, according to DeRogatis, is “ecstasy – literally, ‘standing outside’ routine ways of feeling, perceiving and acting” (2003: 15). According to Becker, the drug-induced state must be recognized as different, marked off from everyday experience, before the drug experience can be constructed. We have seen Leary give the trip a sense of ex-stasis through the exotic frame of reference – recall the Sacred Mushrooms of Mexico – and *The Psychedelic Experience* does the same by using an Indian frame of reference. This usage passes

on to Lennon: the *tambura* drone is the first cue of radical alterity in “Tomorrow Never Knows,” the first signal of a “new spiritual frequency tuning in” (Macdonald 2008: 192). But before we can understand precisely how the Indian frame of reference functions symbolically in this song, and how that function is informed by Leary, we need to analyze the song from this new psychedelically-informed perspective.

### 3.2 PSYCHEDELIC ANALYSIS

The first thing to note in TNK is a radical and deliberate alterity. Most conventions of the rock song style are deliberately subverted. Verse/refrain song form is replaced by two small cycles: the one-bar drum pattern with a jolting syncopation, and the brief eight-bar melody that repeats continuously without variation. The expected rock texture is shocked by a wash of strange, disorienting tape loop sounds. The alterity is stated emphatically right at the beginning of the song, in the *tambura drone* – the sound that Macdonald likened to a “new spiritual frequency tuning in.” It invokes Indian classical music and its mystical and exotic connotations, and it also establishes a harmonic stasis that sets the song’s musical language apart from conventional rock songs of the period. And the alterity is furthered by the song’s unique drum sound: slackened toms drenched heavily in reverb, a powerful low rumble that Macdonald likens to “tabla played by a Vedic deity riding in a storm-cloud” (2008: 192). But this alterity is most viscerally felt in the song’s one “chord change”: a bVII triad sounding over the tonic drone (mm. 1-5), and moving to I (measure 5), that punctuates the end of the melody (Figure 5). The bVII over drone tonic creates a very strange sonority, one which the Beatles themselves described as such in the lyrics to another song: “If you’re listening to this song, you may think the chords are

going *wrong*, but they're not, he just wrote it like that" with the bVII/1 entering on the word "wrong."<sup>9</sup> The Beatles understood this effect as disorienting, an unsteady and nauseating oscillation, and in "Tomorrow Never Knows" this effect gives a visceral, bodily dimension to the strangeness and alterity of the soundscape. This alterity is significant in a psychedelic reading of "Tomorrow Never Knows": as Becker establishes, the drug experience must first be recognized and understood as *different from* the normal state before a high can be constructed (i.e. what separates the first-time user unaware that he's high from the more experienced user with a stable set of categories). "Tomorrow Never Knows" works especially hard to shake the listener out of the normal subjective state and into a strange new one, marked by disorienting harmony, cyclic time, and exotic Indian sounds.

The most prominent and active of these psychedelic effects is the *tape loop texture*. This was a technique with which Paul had been experimenting in the months before the *Revolver* project, inspired by Stockhausen and the avant garde. Paul would cut up small samples of taped sounds, glue them together, and run them through a tape machine with the eraser head removed. This allowed new sounds to be recorded over old ones, creating novel textures. Varispeeding this tape while recording onto another tape machine allowed for even stranger manipulations of sound (Miles 1997: 219-20). There was a strong artistic purpose behind this experimentation, as Paul described in his biography: "to see the potential in it all. To take a note and wreck it and see in that note what else there is in it, that a simple act like distorting it has caused" (Everett 2006: 33). He had a musical preoccupation with *sense impressions*, a Cage-like fixation on the qualities of discreet sound events rather than their placement in a larger formal structure.

---

<sup>9</sup> "Only A Northern Song," recorded during the *Sgt. Pepper* project in 1967, rejected for that album, and eventually released on the *Yellow Submarine* soundtrack in 1968.

The image displays a musical score for the song "Tomorrow Never Knows". It is organized into two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Voice, Organ (labeled as Tambura), and Drum Set. The voice part begins with a triplet of eighth notes followed by a quarter note, then a triplet of quarter notes. The lyrics are: "Turn off your mind, re - lax and float down - stream it is not". The organ part consists of sustained chords. The drum set part shows a regular beat pattern. The first system ends at measure 4. The second system starts at measure 5 and includes staves for Voice, Org., and Dr. The voice part continues with the lyrics: "dy - ing\_ it is not dy - ing\_". The organ part consists of sustained chords. The drum set part shows a regular beat pattern. The second system ends at measure 8.

**Figure 3.** Vocal melody and accompaniment in “Tomorrow Never Knows”

“Tomorrow Never Knows” is marked by the same fixation. The unusual texture separates into discrete sound events: the regular beat and recurring melody, the ever-present tambura, and most of all the tape loops that enter and exit continuously and unpredictably, surging and swelling about the melody. The lack of verse/refrain form in the song places the listener’s full attention on the individual events, and not on large form. The constant activity of tape loops are this song’s source of dynamic stasis: the song is still and deeply rooted harmonically in the drone, but simultaneously is ceaselessly moving and swelling sonically in another dimension. The unfolding of this dynamic stasis shapes the song’s growth. The tape sounds *accumulate* as the song progresses, thickening the texture from a few sounds in early verses to a continuous

stream later, building to a breaking point where the 1920s-carnival tack piano intercedes to break the endless cycle and end the song. All these qualities of the texture are informed by Leary's description of *auditory hallucinations* in PE. Leary describes perceptions of "clicking, thudding, clashing, [coughing], ringing, tapping, moaning, shrill whistles" (1964: 55), and Everett observes the same in the tape loop texture. Leary calls the hallucinations "direct sensations unencumbered by mental concepts" (1964: 55), and TNK is likewise unencumbered – it elevates the sense impression over the formal principle. Leary also warns that the hallucinations "[fill] (with music) the whole world-systems and caus[e] them to vibrate, to quake and tremble with sounds so mighty as to daze [overwhelm] one's brain" (1964: 55), and much the same happens in TNK. The tape sounds accumulate and overwhelm the texture.

Leary cites "direct sensations" as a way to emphasize the radical alterity of the LSD-altered state, and Lennon uses them in the same way to establish alterity in TNK. But Leary no sooner establishes this alterity than he stresses the importance of *passive integration*. He urges the reader not to resist the strangeness of the experience, hold herself apart from it, or try to regain a sense of normalcy; rather, the reader must "turn off the fidgety, rationalizing mind" (1964: 47). *Ego loss* is one effect of LSD. The perceived borders of the ego break down, and the user identifies with and experiences a sense of oneness with colors and sounds and shapes and perceptions. Leary encourages that effect when he stresses that "the key is inaction: passive integration with all that occurs around you." The texture and backing track of TNK manifest the "all that occurs around you" (1964: 47), and in the vocal melody we will find the manifestation of a LSD user surrendering to the experience.

The melody inserts a human presence into this song's psychedelic sound-world. The brief eight-bar mantra is built in three parts: (1) a command or invocation from the guru; (2) words

that guide the reader/listener into the experience, explaining what happens when the invocation is followed; and (3) a reaction to the experience. The first lines of the song provide a good example: (a) “Turn off your mind”; (b) “relax and float downstream” (what happens when you turn off your mind); (c) “it is not dying” (a further interpretation of that downstream floating). The melody of (a) is especially *forceful*: repeated pitches in a high, intense register, fitting for a command. But it also uses a rhythmic triplet figure, which detaches this part of the melody from the driving, repeating drum pattern – the singer/listener/tripper is not yet integrated into the experience. The (b) melody represents the integration and surrender, with its downward contour, expanding intervals, and slower rhythms in sympathy with the beat. There is a special resonance in (b) with Leary’s descriptions of *bodily sensations* brought on by LSD, feelings of “bodily pressure . . . earth-sinking-into-water” and “feelings of the body melting or flowing as in wax” (1964: 38). It is interesting to map a melting, flowing sensation onto (b): the melody descends from on high, expanding in pitch interval as if spreads downward, slowing as it progresses – the very same quality found in “Norwegian Wood.” This relaxation into notes of longer duration that lock with the drum beat represents a merger with the experience. At the end of this relaxed downstream floating, the (c) melody gives an echo of that forceful triplet, but its intensity is now gone representing a further sign of surrender and integration. There is some significance in the melody’s b7, beyond an exotic Mixolydian mode: that note brings the melody into harmony with the chord change, with that especially disorienting oscillation of bVII to I over the drone.

*Merging* is a major theme in *The Psychedelic Experience*, explained at length every time an effect of the drug is described. The reader is urged to notice the drug effects and “accept them, merge with them, engage them” (38), allowing ego loss to take place. In TNK we find a psychedelic sound-world in the texture and backing track, and a human presence inserted into

that world through the melody. The melody and texture merge, just as the tripper and his experience are instructed to merge. This is visible first in the dynamic stasis: the texture is drone-based, harmonically static, but constantly active in another dimension. The melody takes that quality itself, restricting its pitches to a  $Ib7$  but constantly moving in rhythm and register. Merging is visible in the quality of accumulation as well. The tape loops swell and expand throughout the song by their accumulation, and the melody takes expansion into itself with its wedge shape in tonal contour and its expanding rhythms and intervals. Finally, merging is visible in the sense of tonal disorientation: the texture contains that shock and disorientation of the  $bVII$ ; the melody is initially tense as if in response (in the high triplet figure), but after floating downstream, it takes  $b7$  into itself at the moment where that tense triplet is loosened and reconciled. TNK thus contains polarized elements of melody and texture working towards a state of union or merger, just as Leary instructs the tripper to do with her altered environment. This is not just a musical metaphor; it is important to remember that this song takes the place of Leary's guiding passages, to be listened to while using LSD to actively shape and define a trip. The LSD-listener experiences oneness with the vocal melody; when the melody becomes one with its sound-world, the listener does so as well. The song models the merging that the tripper must engage in, and guides him into it.

In this section I have shown how "Tomorrow Never Knows" establishes a radically altered sound-world, and a singer/listener/tripper within that world, and brings the two towards a merging as Leary directs. The musical technique of merging is built on a tapestry of psychedelic elements that coexist, collide, and merge – and the Indian becomes one psychedelic effect among many. With this understanding of how the Indian presence functions within TNK, we can now critically examine the role in which the Indian presence is cast in this music.

### 3.3 GROTESQUE APPROPRIATION

Leary's incorporation of Indian spirituality into a Western view of the world had an important precedent in the Theosophical Society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century British Raj. This group sought an alternative to the corrupted, stultified Anglican church of their time, and they located their escape from that church in an embrace of Indian spirituality. Gauri Viswanathan observes how this escape "merged with the tendencies of Orientalism, which looked to the East as the fountainhead of spiritual knowledge yet did not necessarily privilege the people who were conduits of that knowledge" (2000: 3). The purpose of the Theosophical Society was to make Indian spiritual knowledge available and accessible to the British, and to that end, the Society's documents portray Indian spiritual "masters" leading Englishmen into "unseen phenomena, which remained the uncolonized space resisting the bureaucratic compulsions of colonial management" (2000:3). The spiritual realm had resisted appropriation, but the Society in the end was able to colonize it by *normalizing* the spiritual as a kind of professional knowledge or a religion "conceived as a science with its own laws and principles" (2000: 6). When the Indian masters transmit their teachings, those "hidden cosmic mysteries enter a professionalized bureaucratic apparatus" like all the rest of the Raj (2000: 7). The routinizing and disenchanting "reality effect" of this transformation is most evident in the character of Master Koot Hoomi. This character is a purely literary invention, but the leader of the Society portrayed him in publications as an actual Indian religious figure. Even as Hoomi expounds Oriental wisdom, he "spoof[s] himself as a native clerk ... as a Micawber-like, Dickensian office worker [rather] than an august representative of the Mahatma (great soul) order" (2000: 10).

Viswanathan observes that "Theosophy's mixture of mysticism and worldliness will strike some critics as quaint, even *grotesquely* amusing" (2000:7, emphasis added). The

reference is to Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism, an element of carnivalesque expression. In grotesque realism, all that is high, spiritual, or intellectual is brought down to the *lower bodily stratum*, to the level of the physical, carnal, or corporeal: corpulent cherubs in church decorations, clown-priests preaching the values of lust and gluttony. Viswanathan is suggesting something grotesque in the way Indian spirituality and transcendental wisdom is "brought down" to a lower linguistic stratum. Hoomi "alternately teases, cajoles, abuses, flatters, and pleads with his (potentially skeptical) reader to believe that the secrets of the universe are part of the ordinary, workaday world" of professional Western knowledge (2000: 10). The mystical Indian secrets are reduced to something earthly, physical, and mundane. They are brought out of the mystical, unseen, uncolonized space and into the reach of appropriation. The grotesque functions here as a method for appropriation.<sup>10</sup>

The Bakhtinian grotesque serves precisely that same function in *The Psychedelic Experience*. The lower stratum is prominent in Leary's writing, with its abundant descriptions of physical, bodily effects and experiences. But those descriptions are also presented as the hidden psychedelic truth of the Buddhist mystical doctrines. Tibetan Buddhism is thus reduced, or brought down, from the mystical realm to the sum of bodily effects – from transcendental wisdom to the effects of a drug, of something ingested into the body. Like the Theosophists, Leary brings Oriental wisdom down to a place where it can be institutionalized and pressed into service.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> A similar use of the grotesque could be located in the 20<sup>th</sup> century New Age genre of channeling books, which occupy a milieu much closer to 1960s psychedelia. One potent example is *The Third Eye* (1956) by British author Cyril Hoskin, who wrote under the identity of a Tibetan monk named Tuesday Lobsang Rampa. Hoskin claimed his body was possessed by the spirit of this monk, and in the novel, the monk has a third eye physically drilled into his forehead in order to enhance his spiritual abilities.

<sup>11</sup> This is of course a thoroughly nineteenth-century Westernized way of thinking, to conceptualize an embodied or physically-constituted spirituality as lower, or inferior, or easier to appropriate because it does not occupy a

This grotesque treatment of the Indian passes on to Lennon, who elaborates it in several distinctly Bakhtinian ways. Bakhtin identifies in carnival-grotesque literature a sense of *terror*: “All that is ordinary, commonplace, belonging to everyday life, and recognized by all suddenly becomes meaningless, dubious and hostile. Our own world becomes an *alien world*” (1984:39, emphasis added). This could very well describe the beginning of “Tomorrow Never Knows”: harmony, form, and texture are radically distorted and disorienting at every level, and there is some menace in the onslaught of tape loops and their nefarious laughter. The loops are blunt and forceful, hostile even, until the listener learns to relax and merge as the lyrics direct. And with the Indian presence of the tambura and faux-tabla, the song’s soundscape is literally an “alien world.” Bakhtin discusses the terrifying carnival-grotesque as an escape into *madness*, a madness that “makes men look at the world with different eyes, not dimmed by the ‘normal,’ that is by commonplace ideas and judgments” (1984: 39). That is certainly true of TNK, with its radical transformation of every rock song convention into the madness of LSD – and the Indian, in the process, becomes an element of madness.

There is also the *mask* which, as discussed earlier, displaces taboo expressions onto an exotic Indian persona. LSD is both taboo and very personally meaningful to John, so the Indian mask bears the weight of the social transgression, as it did in “Norwegian Wood.” The Indian mask also performs an important psychedelic function, creating the sense of difference from everyday reality that a trip requires. That mask in TNK is built musically from the tambura drone and “masked” faux-tabla drums, which signify the presence of Indian classical music and its connection with the psychedelic. This effectively *reduces* Indian classical music to sense

---

“purely spiritual” position. In the traditions of both Hinduism and Tibetan Hinduism, this dualism between the physical and the spiritual does not exist. But this Westernization is consistent with the use of the grotesque for appropriation: Indian spirituality is judged against the standards of Western spirituality.

impressions – brings it down from cultivated raga and tala into the “lower stratum” of sound events and the purely sensual. These sound events become two among many in a psychedelic tapestry. We can see the consequences of this reduction in Macdonald: when he likens the tambura drone to a “new spiritual frequency tuning in,” he observes the mysticality of Indian classical music brought down to the lower, purely sensory stratum. And the preoccupation of TNK with discrete sense impressions, here and in the tape loops, also has grotesque implications: the transcendental, spiritual, Oriental message of the lyrics is illustrated or brought to beat in a musical process centered on sense impressions, on immediate sonic events. It is important to note that, for many listeners, TNK was their first exposure to Indian classical music. For Lennon and the other Beatles, songs like TNK serve as a consolidation of their understanding of Indian classical music. Reduction to the sensory stratum, in that case, must necessarily have affected how listeners understood and interpreted actual Indian classical music – and, as we will see in chapter 4, how they interpreted actual Indian spirituality as well.

#### 4.0 PSYCHEDELIA AND INDIAN TRADITION IN “WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU”

In mid-1966, George was becoming a more careful student of India, driven forward by his LSD experiences. By late 1966, “[T]he skinny, pale boy with big ears and no ambition, the dropout burdened with intellectual insecurity, who used to follow half a block behind John Lennon, had developed into a grimly optimistic, pensive young man clamoring for ‘the meaning of it all.’ LSD had jolted George awake” (Spitz 2005: 644). He began to think spiritually, and in a remarkably *embodied* way: “he experienced frightening flashes of ‘divine awareness,’ during which ‘a feeling would begin to vibrate right through me . . . so fast it was mind boggling” (Spitz 2005: 644). Sensations like these drove George to “struggle with the concept of a greater power”(ibid.). These concepts inevitably came from Indian spirituality, which the swami on the *Help!* set had brought mysteriously into his life. But he also would have read *The Psychedelic Experience* around the same time as John. The language in the above quotations certainly reflects the *grotesque appropriation* we found in Leary, encountering Indian divinity in the body, through the senses; bringing that mysticism down to the lower bodily stratum where it is accessible to psychedelic redefining. Such experiences gave George his initial push towards India, and eventually, toward the tutelage of Pandit Ravi Shankar.

#### 4.1 SHANKAR AND DEFINING INDIAN MUSIC

Shankar was the most famous Indian musician in the West during the 1960s, and he is the only person involved in this narrative with any claim to being “authentically Indian.” Authenticity is in fact something he was concerned with from his very first musical experiences in his older brother Uday’s dance troupe. “The most remarkable quality in Uday was the infinite amount of Indian-ness in all his creations,” Shankar wrote in his 1968 autobiography. “Uday’s imaginative genius created a completely new, very pure and beautiful but still totally Indian style” (1968: 75). Uday Shankar was especially concerned with displaying Indian tradition to the West: “Slowly a dream took shape in Uday’s heart – to take a whole troupe of Indian dancers and musicians, representatives of our musical heritage, to the West” (ibid.). To that end, he “made a large collection of musical instruments, especially drums, from every region of India,” and toured Europe performing with his troupe (1968: 76). The Shankars were aware of how India had been misrepresented in the displays of the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial era – particularly the “living exhibits” where Indians were placed on stage to “demonstrate, reveal, and show” before Western audiences – and they wanted to correct and revise ideas about India for the West.

Ravi Shankar was still a child during the tour and attended school in Paris. This educational experience did not leave Shankar with favorable impressions. “I fancied myself far more cultured than any of my schoolmates, and in many ways I really was. The way European children were brought up to behave was so unlike our Indian customs” (Shankar 1968: 76). Worse than the culture shock were the visits from Western musicians who “expressed their views on Indian music” using such terms as “monotonous, grating, not pleasing to the ear” (Shankar 1968: 78-9). Shankar reacted to these subordinating opinions by devoting himself to the study of Indian traditions. “Through [classic texts] I learned all our beloved customs and traditions, and as

I sat and read in our house in Paris, I could feel myself grow ever closer to India and her ways” (Shankar 1968: 76).

Indian ways come into this story though a binary opposition – something defined against the less cultured West, but simultaneously needing recognition from the West. This opposition was reinforced by Shankar’s guru, Allauddin Khan, who complained that Shankar was “wasting [his] musical talent and living in glitter and luxury,” and maintained that Shankar needed to “abandon [his] fancy ways” in the West to gain proper mastery of Indian music (Shankar 1968: 81). Shankar did just that, returning to India and spending two months living in austerity as a Brahmin initiate. “I felt I was atoning for my eight years of materialistic living in the West,” he said of this time, and by the end, “I had changed myself to the opposite extreme from the boy [Khan] had known in Europe” (1968: 84). Through experiences like these, India and the West become further opposed: spiritual and ancient versus materialistic and corrupting.

Shankar’s early work as a professional musician was centered on defining an Indian identity in music. In 1948 he began working for the External Services Division of All-India Radio, which broadcasted across Europe, Asia, and Africa. “I was determined to experiment further in composition of a predominantly Indian nature” (Shankar 1968: 93). In the 1950s he began touring Europe to “try to give Westerners some insight into our vast musical heritage.” He claims he was motivated partly by those Western musicians from his childhood: “I wanted to correct their impressions and help Western listeners understand what we played . . . I came to better understand the Western mind and the kinds of explanations it required” (1968: 96). In America he located the need for his instruction in the very same kind of *purifying* he had achieved by returning to India: “after achieving tremendous affluence, they have had more than their fill of material things now,” so they are “more than anyone else . . . ready for this kind of

discipline now” (1968: 98). He saw this need for purification especially relevant for “young people”: “Theirs seems to be a revolt against the Western way of life, but I find they are good at adapting to other customs, and the traditions of India seem more attractive to them now” (1968: 98). India is positioned as the corrective or purifying force, useful to the West for its renewing power. So even though Shankar states that his goal is “to go to the West with my music and try to promote a better understanding between the two musical heritages” (1968: 97), the meeting is not necessarily equal. Western knowledge and Western ways of living are in need of correction, and Shankar positions India as the answer to these needs. In this way, Shankar’s attempts to define the authentic Indian culture begin to slip in to self-Orientalizing.<sup>12</sup> The positioning of India is built on top of binary opposition – specifically, India is different from the West in precisely the same way that “young people” mark themselves as different, and Shankar positions Indian spiritual traditions as the best possible realization of their goals. George Harrison, one of these young people, positioned India in precisely the same way in his song “If I Needed Someone.” This shared view of the value of Indian spirituality and culture would become the basis of Shankar’s relationship with Harrison.

George met Ravi Shankar at a meeting of the Asian Music Circle in London in 1964. They only had time for a quick discussion and a few pointers on playing posture for sitar, but when Shankar recognized George’s interest in the instrument, he arranged for George to visit him in India for more intensive instruction. That visit took place in the summer of 1966 and lasted for six weeks. According to Spitz, “George presented himself as a student, Shankar’s ‘disciple’” (2005: 645). Shankar aimed to help George understand the discipline involved in sitar study, not just technical but spiritual (1968: 101). Secluded in the countryside outside Bombay

---

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Slawek explores the role of Ravi Shankar in depicting Indian music as exotic in his article “Ravi Shankar as Mediator between a Traditional Music and Modernity” (1993).

to escape Beatlemania (even in rural India), George learned the rudiments of sitar technique along with a whole system of traditions and Hindu beliefs. He recalls reading books “by various holy men and mystics,” practicing meditation and yoga, and “discussing the mystical enthusiasms necessary for ‘harmonizing with a greater power’” (Spitz 2005: 645). The latter description is reminiscent of George’s LSD experiences, and Philip Norman reminds us that George was still using LSD around this time, the drug bringing him to “the India of mystic sounds and mystic beings, able to levitate or lie on spikes or bury themselves; the India that, in sight and touch and voice and clamor and calm, was the furthest distance you could go from being a Beatle, wearing a suit, and singing “Yeah, yeah, yeah” (2005: 310). The conditions of his visit to India were largely shaped by psychedelia, especially the notion of escaping from the West and achieving spiritual renewal. But once in India, that ideology of escape and renewal came into contact with Shankar’s vision of India. There is a similarity in that vision – India opposes the West and answers all its spiritual shortcomings – but a major difference insofar as Indian culture is valuable for its own sake, and not placed subordinate to psychedelia. I will elaborate on this vision through an analysis of “Within You Without You.” George wrote this song on his return from India, in an especially wistful mood. The lyrics followed a passionate conversation with a friend about the ills of Western society and the alternatives Indian spirituality offered, and he traced the tonal material of the song directly to sitar exercises Ravi had given him.

## 4.2 “WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU”

There are a few immediate similarities between “Within You Without You” and “Tomorrow Never Knows.” Both songs dwell on the tambura drone, and both break conventions of the rock song. “Within You Without You” replaces the rock band with a Hindustani ensemble, exchanges the drum set with tabla, and substitutes chords with the drone. It follows no familiar verse/refrain song form. There is an element of disorientation as well, similar to the effect of the bVII/1 in “Tomorrow Never Knows,” but it is accomplished melodically rather than harmonically. The song opens with a brief melody on the dilruba, a sinuous melodic sweep upwards that unmistakably signaled exoticism to the Western rock audience. Melodic portamenti such as these come to permeate the song: in the vocal melody, doubled closely by the dilruba, and in the Western strings that enter later to thicken the texture. In the absence of harmonic structure, and in the presence of an unusual scale form and an otherworldly drone timbre, and magnified several times by the string section’s doubling, these exaggerated slides create a peculiar effect. This effect can be described in physical terms: swooping, sliding, churning and perhaps “floating downstream” or “melting as in wax” (Leary 1964). The slides are predominantly downwards in pitch, as if they are little microcosms of the long downward arch from the melody of “Tomorrow Never Knows.”

There is a similar downward-flowing quality in the song’s main melody, which consists of long flowing arcs that end primarily in lower registers. The lowest note of the song is reserved for the last note of the melody. And that is not the only point of structural refinement in this song. The melody is shaped by a *sentence* structure: a phrase (a) which is repeated (a’) and followed by new material that moves towards a cadence (b) (Schoenberg 1970: 20, 58). In “Within You Without You” this structure is long and sprawling, but the melody is still finely

ordered (Figure 6). “We were talking about the space between us all” is the first phrase (a); “And the people who hide themselves behind a wall” is its repeat (a’). The (b) section, as shown in Figure 6, ends with “when they pass away,” and this cadence is marked by a low-register

The image shows a musical score for the song "Within You Without You" by Sly and the Family Stone. It consists of four staves of music in treble clef, with lyrics written below the notes. The first staff is labeled 'a' and contains the lyrics: "We were talk - ing a - bout the space be - tween us". The second staff is labeled 'a (repeats)' and contains the lyrics: "all and the peo - ple who find them - selves be - hind a". The third staff is labeled 'b (movement toward cadence)' and contains the lyrics: "wall of il - lu - sion ne - ver glimpse the truth 'til it's far too late". The fourth staff is labeled '19' and contains the lyrics: "when they pass a - way". The music is in 4/4 time and ends with a double bar line.

**Figure 4.** Sentence structure in “Within You Without You.” On the next higher level, this entire excerpt is an A section which is repeated (A’) and followed by an extended motion to a cadence (B), forming a larger sentence structure.

alternation of E and F. When this entire sentence structure repeats it forms another, larger-level sentence structure. On the next level all of the preceding becomes an A. It is repeated, but the final cadence is varied (A’): “if they only knew” uses a high-register alternation of Eb and F. Subsequently, a new melody (B) cadences on the low D, which is reserved for this final cadence.

Despite similarities in exoticism and melodic contour, this song differs tremendously from “Tomorrow Never Knows” in its form. Whereas “Tomorrow Never Knows” followed Leary’s instruction to be “unencumbered by mental concepts” in its form, and instead elevated the sense impression over the formal principle, “Within You Without You” reflects a high degree

of formal order. The effect is rhetorical, as this song does not instruct the listener to turn off his mind or free herself from mental concepts; rather it is designed to deliver very specific concepts of Hindu cosmology.

At the same time as the formal plan unfolds, though, there are a number of textural effects that recall the affect-driven psychedelic style of “Tomorrow Never Knows.” Dynamic stasis is one shared feature of these songs. In “Within You Without You” the drone replaces any kind of harmonic motion, and long drawn-out tones characterize the sedate, chant-like melody, but the tabla drum patterns inject an active rhythmic motion. This use of the tabla is another instance of what I called “grotesque appropriation” in “Tomorrow Never Knows.” Ethnomusicologist Gerry Farrell observed that it “serves no structural purpose, as the melody is not shaped around the cycle of beats” (1988: 186). It becomes instead a “rhythmic texture on tabla, rather than a metrical device for ordering the melodic flow” (1988: 186-7). The tala (rhythmic cycle realized sonically by the tabla) is reduced to a textural effect, then – mystical elevatedness of Indian classical music brought down to the lower, purely sensory stratum, in a maneuver that imitates Leary’s treatment of Indian spirituality. Tabla drumming becomes an element of affect contributing to the same dynamic stasis found in “Tomorrow Never Knows,” in which motion and action are set against a sense of deep-rootedness or sinking.

Exaggerated slides in the exotic soundscape of “Within You Without You” play a role similar to that of tape loops in “Tomorrow Never Knows.” Paul created tape loops in order to “take a note and wreck it and see in that note what else there is in it, that a simple act like distorting it has caused” (Everett 2006: 33), and Lennon located this discovery-through-distortion in the psychedelically altered perceptive world. In “Within You Without You” the exaggerated slides distort single tones so far as to create a synaesthetic effect – the sound creates

a visceral association with texture or physical shape. A similar association is brought about by the heterophony in this song, which resembles that of “If I Needed Someone.” After the first cadence, Western strings begin to antiphonally double the melody’s contour. After the second cadence, more strings enter and pulse in rhythmic unison with the voice. This accumulating texture leads to the climactic instrumental section, where a call-and-response takes place between sitar and strings – adding even more voices onto the melodic contour. After the B section there is a dramatic clearing, a reduction to just the drone, as if this song had reached its critical mass. At that moment of clearing, the effect of that accumulating texture is most obvious: it was a movement towards *heaviness*, an expansion in the same dimension as that noted in the verses of “If I Needed Someone.” That expansion towards critical mass is remarkably similar to the ending of “Tomorrow Never Knows.” In “Within You Without You” as well, there are sounds that “[fill] (with music) the whole world-systems and caus[e] them to vibrate, to quake and tremble with sounds so mighty as to daze [overwhelm] one’s brain” (Leary 1964: 55).

The psychedelic, Leary-informed style of “Tomorrow Never Knows” would appear to be at work in “Within You Without You” as well. This means that Leary’s idea of *merging* can be brought to bear on this song as well. The result of such a reading is remarkable in light of Harrison’s experiences, prior to writing this song, of attempting to cross the Western-Indian binary and merge himself with Indian culture specifically through the bodily disciplines of meditation and sitar practice.<sup>13</sup> In the song, Western voice and Indian dilruba merge together into one melodic stream; Western strings and Indian sitar as well merge heterophonically into the

---

<sup>13</sup> In his autobiography, when Harrison discusses his time in India with Shankar, he emphasizes more than anything else the physical demands of sitar study, the pain he had to endure in stretching exercises, and the subordination of his body in this first discipline of his life. (*I don’t have the book with me right now but a citation will go here tomorrow.*)

melody; and all move together towards a point of climax. The climax is formal – the “development section” of a large ABA form – but it is equally textural, physical, and embodied.

Physical affect plays a prominent role in “Within You Without You,” then, but its role is not quite the same as it was in “Tomorrow Never Knows.” “Tomorrow Never Knows” places Indian music in a subordinate position, as only one element in a psychedelic tapestry; India is reduced via grotesque appropriation to something entirely bodily and visceral, exotic sound and intoxicating feeling. In “Within You Without You,” however, direct sensation is not elevated above all else – the textural / physical climax is part of a formal and rhetorical plan. Indian music is directly imitated in this song in a way that is not subordinating; rather it is put on display as Ravi sought to do, and lovingly so, as a cultural artifact valuable entirely in itself. Where “Tomorrow Never Knows” used Indian style to portray psychedelic experiences, “Within You Without You” uses psychedelic style to portray Indian wisdom. The reversal is significant. The merging of Western and Indian in this song may still take place along the line of flight set by Leary – much like George’s own personal revelatory experience in India had done – but the result of that merging creates a more affirming space where a view of India is celebrated.

## 5.0 FASHIONING THE INDIAN AS A PSYCHEDELIC MIMIC

The Beatles spent about a month in Rishikesh, India in 1968, two years after “Tomorrow Never Knows” was released. But what India did they experience? Judging from quotes by the Beatles themselves, it was a thoroughly mystical India infused by drugs. Even as they left LSD behind for the greater wisdom of Transcendental Meditation, the Beatles continued to discuss Indian spirituality in drug-related terms. George remarked that LSD “enabled people to see a bit more, but when you really get hip, you don’t need it,” and Paul felt similarly: “We think we’re finding other ways of getting there” (Bellman 1997: 167). This is, as Bellman remarks, “placing TM on the same vector as drugs, if a little further along” (ibid.). Indian spirituality was another route to the same place – the same Western, Leary-informed, psychedelic end – to which drugs led. The view of psychedelic India represented in both “Within You Without You” and “Tomorrow Never Knows,” as well as in *The Psychedelic Experience*, seems to have become a reality for The Beatles. Publications for Transcendental Meditation in the West picked up on this language with slogans like “Beyond Pot and LSD” and “He Turned Us On!” (this time referring to the Maharishi), in spite of objections from prominent Indian figures in the Western world. Ravi Shankar complained about false associations between Indian music and drugs: “I found many people who were ‘high’; sitting in the front rows of the hall, they were altogether in another world. . . . Their conduct disgusted me” (Shankar 1968: 96). Gerry Farrell reported similar confusion among other Indian classical musicians, who were puzzled and disappointed

by their audiences spacing out, turning off their minds, and completely missing the melodic nuance that was the heart of the music (Farrell 1988: 192). Krishna Singh was plagued by the same false assumptions about TM being connected with psychedelic drugs (Bellman 1997: 125). Bellman calls this proof that “Certain westerners were perceiving a connection they wanted to exist” (ibid.).

There was a remarkable *ambivalence* in the desire for a connection between Indian spirituality and drugs. The westerners wanted something markedly different, an Indian alterity, but it had to be similar enough to speak the same familiar psychedelic language. We see this ambivalent desire in songs and books that fashion the Indian as a *mimic* of the Western trippy-transcendent LSD user. Homi K. Bhabha draws attention to mimicry in earlier British colonial discourse, in plans for a partial diffusion of Christianity among Indians or for a class of interpreters who are Anglicized but not made full English citizens (1994: 85-92). These policies fashioned the Indian as “almost-but-not-quite white.” This is an ambivalence of desire for a subject of difference, an Other, but one “reformed” and recognizable in Western terms (even if not given dignity). In fact the “slippage” between almost-the-same and not-quite, between Anglicized and English, becomes a pretext to withhold dignity. Bhabha calls that slippage the “strategic failure” of the mimic-making process, because he understands mimic-making as something intended to fail. Strategically failing at mimic-making is a way of *manufacturing* difference, of articulating some perceived essential difference between the British and Indian, but in an underhanded way (1994: 90). Ostensibly the colonizers wanted to reform and reeducate the colonized, to pursue the Civilizing Mission – but they never wanted to reform the Indian enough that the Indian actually becomes white. They did not want to eliminate the difference that was the basis of their power and authority, but at the same time, they needed to perform some kind of

reforming activity in order to justify their domination. When they discussed why the colonized were not already civilized or were not suitable for civilizing, they found a way to articulate the essential differences they desired, while maintaining an appearance of benevolence.

In the mimic-making discourse, India has what Bhabha calls a *partial presence*. The Indian is “dressed up” via mimicry until he resembles the British man much more closely. When this is done, all that is visible of the Indian is slippage, manufactured difference, the “inappropriateness” of the mimesis when a faux-British guise does not fit onto the Indian body. This manufactured difference thus becomes the whole sum total of India’s representation in the discourse – a presence for which “partial” is a generous term. Partial presence sets the conditions in which *metonymies of presence* can arise. Manufactured differences, when they are all that is visible of the Indian, can “stand in” for the Indian. The difference that keeps India from fitting the faux-British guise *becomes* what it is to be Indian, and it follows that anything Indian is seen as a symbol of that difference. This is the final sign of appropriation, as the whole Indian identity is replaced by manufactured differences.

Bhabha’s understanding of mimicry sheds a useful light on the mimicry that occurs in psychedelic orientalism. There is an ambivalence of desire for a subject of difference, of Indianness, that speaks the recognizable psychedelic language. Talk of “Buddhist mystical doctrines” and the secret psychedelia of “lamas and gurus” then becomes a way of dressing up the Indian in a psychedelic guise, and of fashioning the Indian as a mimic of the psychedelic Westerner (a guise that Shankar and Singh resented). Grotesque appropriation, reducing Indian classical music to the sensory stratum, serves the same purpose: the sounds that represent Indian music are fashioned as psychedelic. There is one apparent difference in the case of psychedelic orientalism: Leary and Lennon perform a mimicry of their own, imitating Indian figures, Leary

as a guru and Lennon as the Dalai Lama. It is unthinkable that Raj administrators would have altered themselves in any way to resemble the interpreter class. But we must remember that Leary and Lennon already understood *themselves* as different from the dominant Western society because of their drug activities. Adopting an Indian mask, then, is a sign that the India has been fashioned as different from Western society in *precisely the same ways* that psychedelia is. India is still made mimic. Leary and Lennon act out an ambiguity of desire for an Indian alterity, a subject of difference, but only a specific kind of difference that they have known and experienced themselves.

Because psychedelia claims Indian difference as its own difference, in psychedelic orientalism there is no strategic failure. No slippage is sought after, because slippage would defeat the purpose of this construction. The rhetorical power of psychedelic India depends on there being no difference understood between psychedelia and Indian spirituality. Rather than disavowing the essential difference of the Indian from the Western dominant culture, Leary, Lennon, and Harrison celebrate exotic differences and identify with them as signs of their own difference.

But what exactly does psychedelic orientalism celebrate, when it points out these differences? If mimic-making is a way of manufacturing difference, then nothing in that difference could be called essential to Indianness. In the mimicry there is only the partial presence of the Indian, dressed-up-as-psychedelic guise. India can only be represented in psychedelic discourse by the differences it is made to have from Western mainstream society. This constraint on representation gives rise to a metonymy, just as Bhabha observes, where Indian spirituality and music stand in for the psychedelic. Anything “mind-expanding” or game-liberating can be given an Indian identity, because India is dressed up with the very same

difference that psychedelia possesses. Indian musicians and spiritual leaders felt the weight of this metonymy when their disciplines and traditions were understood as symbols for psychedelia: Shankar made no mention of drugs at his concerts, but listeners would still “turn off their minds.”

We have seen this metonymy at work in the music as well. In “Tomorrow Never Knows,” Indian classical music is brought down to the sensory stratum and made into one sound event among many in a psychedelic tapestry. This opens the door for any element of radical alterity in “Tomorrow Never Knows” to stand in for Indianness. Hence Macdonald can claim that the odd formal plan of the song is a “mystic negation of all progressive intellectual enterprise” (2008: 190). Similarly, Everett can claim that the behavior of tape loops displays an Indian understanding of reincarnation (2006: 38). Neither of these musical elements are objectively Indian, or in any way essential to Indian classical music – in fact they’re markedly foreign to it – but the psychedelic discourse fashions the Indian as a metonym for anything counter-cultural, counter-structural, or counter-traditional. This is why Shankar’s young listeners would “turn off their minds”: “Tomorrow Never Knows” had already established the symbolic meaning of Indian music within psychedelia.

Shankar was given an opportunity to counterbalance this symbolic action, though, when he became George Harrison’s mentor. There is a give and take between Indian and Westerner in this relationship that was absent in Leary and Lennon. Unlike the monologic relationship between Leary/Lennon and India, in which the Orient is entirely passive and the West is the only source of structuring, Ravi and George’s relationship is dialogic enough that structuring activity can be shared. George’s use of Indian classical music becomes part of Ravi Shankar’s project, where he appropriates the authority to set the terms in which Indian music is known in the West.

Shankar used that authority to position India as the ancient, spiritual, renewing force that the decadent West was in need of, and it was along this ideological line of flight that he met Harrison. In Harrison's case, Orientalist structures of thought positioned India as an escape. This set the conditions in which Harrison received Shankar's positioning of India, and experienced his own trip to India. Further, the psychedelic metonymy achieved in "Tomorrow Never Knows" informed the kind of enlightenment Harrison expected to receive – what he would "see a bit more" of after studying in India. Both men saw India as different from Western culture, then, and in comparable ways.

The dialogue, however, consists of giving Shankar a structuring voice in the way India is constructed. Where Leary's position could be summarized as "There is secret wisdom in Indian spirituality, but only the psychedelicist can access it," Shankar's could be summarized as "There is secret wisdom that the West needs, and is looking for through psychedelia, but only India possesses it." Psychedelia may set the conditions in which Harrison experiences India, but Shankar works within these conditions to place India in the center of gravity rather than psychedelia. "Within You Without You," the expressive outcome of this dialogue, reflects this shift; the song differs from "Tomorrow Never Knows" in the same way that Shankar's position differs from Leary's. "Tomorrow Never Knows" is a psychedelic soundworld with an Indian element subordinated to the madness; "Within You Without You" is an Indian soundworld (or as close a mimicry as is possible) in which psychedelic elements are at work. The relationship is still metonymic, but reversed: the psychedelic now stand is for India; it is made to point back to Indian spirituality. But this is not necessarily an improved position. In this metonymy India is "another way of getting there"; the drugs are removed, but the thought structure of psychedelia is

still in place. Indian spirituality exists in this discourse as the locale of exotic escape, of something unattainable in the West, and specifically of something defined in psychedelic terms.

Bhabha observes these metonymies as a kind of appropriation in which the Indian is “dressed up” to suit the desires of the colonizer. In this way, Indian identity is entirely replaced by the costume. In “Tomorrow Never Knows” Indianness is reduced to an exotic symbol of otherworldliness which can be exchanged with any other element of psychedelia, and in “Within You Without You” psychedelic enlightenment becomes the end goal of Indian spirituality. Bakhtin observes the mask as a way to “empower the eccentric individual against a repressive society,” and Leary and Lennon certainly felt they were repressed. They found themselves at odds with The System and bourgeois society, and, as I have shown, they adopted the exotic Indian mask as a means to power and ascendancy over that society. Their mode of power is not political or military, but cultural or rhetorical. They validate their ideas by recourse to ancient Oriental authority. Celebrating this representation/mode of “Indianness,” then, amounts to celebrating Western empire. Mimic-making and grotesque appropriation are colonizing activities in the cultural realm, if not the political. Leary and Lennon adopt guruhood to *assert power*. The Indian mask is a tool for transcending bourgeois society, for exercising their own authority in a psychedelic discourse. They gain power through recourse to the Indian as a rhetorical tool, when they bring Indian spirituality down to a lower stratum and appropriate it as a metonym for the psychedelic message. In this way, these two disenfranchised Westerners locate a sense of authority and power in the colonial Orient, as Western society was well used to doing, and as popular exoticisms like *Help!* gave them tacit approval to do.

In these Indian-styled songs we can see how psychedelia altered the surface of the way Orientalist thought manifested in 1960s rock. India is celebrated for its ancient psychedelic

wisdom, and for the escapist potential this holds for like-minded Westerners. This would appear to be a far cry from labeling Indians as primitives; instead India seems to be elevated in esteem. But that seeming elevation is still built on deep-seated structures of Orientalist thought that psychedelia leaves intact. The binary opposition in which the West is active and the Orient is passive, and waiting to be studied and defined, is the most basic condition allowing Indian spirituality and music to become symbols for mind-expansion. The freedom of the West to author the Orient in whatever manner it finds most useful, even if that manner seems affirming, is still based on a structure of power where the Orient is subordinate. These structures of thought were present in the Beatles early encounters with Indian spirituality and music. India was positioned for use by the *Help!* script, and the Beatles used India for escapism. When drug use entered their lives at the same time as India was positioned as a source of exotic, alternative wisdom, the door was open for Indian difference to be appropriated for use by psychedelia. That difference allowed the Beatles to masquerade as Indian Others in order to empower themselves, and the mask-making process resulted in a metonymy that claimed the entire Indian identity.

By locating where that metonymy is brought about in the music, I approach the music as symbolic activity: the place where Lennon and Harrison each, as a musician, would most visibly work out the role of India in his own awareness (Feld 1984: 383). Taking this approach entailed the building of a bricolage approach from biography, historical analysis, sociology of drug use, and critical theory of postcolonialism, in order to trace as many of the threads interwoven in the symbolic realm of this music as possible. In music analysis specifically, this approach required looking specifically at the constructedness of style. Other music scholars writing about these songs have looked for correspondences between their musical construction and the musical conventions of Hindustani classical music (Farrell 1998, Bellman 1997) or for possible

ideological correspondences that those musical similarities might mark (Everett 2006). Because the Beatles were never formally trained in those compositional methods, however, I chose not to take that approach. Instead I look for what new musical elements the Beatles create themselves and code as Indian: the set of musical effects such as dynamic stasis or accumulating heaviness which are marked off from the typical style, set aside for this special purpose. As new constructions, not merely importations from another musical tradition, we can look for how they were shaped by a multiplicity of social forces, as well as how they might have fed back into the Beatles' perceptions and meanings connected to India.

An essential element of that analysis is the physicality of psychedelia, and how that physicality becomes a framework in which Indian spirituality and music are encountered. Reading *The Psychedelic Experience* along with these songs reveals a new way to approach the music as a guiding force, as something that works on the listener by manipulating the listener's physical affect. And it is this activity that constitutes much of the appropriation in psychedelic orientalism. Turning the esoteric, mysterious spirituality of India into something ingestible, something that can be encountered bodily as sensation and sound, can be understood as a subordinating act: Indian spirituality is entirely restructured, and placed entirely within reach of psychedelia, available for use. The new method of musical analysis suggested by *The Psychedelic Experience* thus reveals new ways to understand the symbolic use of Indian sounds in these songs. As a result we can understand this portion of Beatles history, the "raga rock" period, in a new way. Psychedelia sought a form of escapism in India, or rather in a particular constructed vision of India. In doing so psychedelia built its view of India upon Orientalist thought.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Becker, Howard S. "Becoming a Marijuana User." *American Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 3 (1953).
- . "History, Culture and Subjective Experience: An Exploration of the Social Bases of Drug-Induced Experiences." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 8, no. 3 (1967).
- Bellman, Jonathan. "Indian Resonances in the British Invasion, 1975-1968." *Journal of Musicology* 15, no 1 (1997): 116-136.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
- DeRogatis, Jim. *Turn On Your Mind: Four Decades of Great Psychedelic Rock*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003.
- Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: The Quarry Men through Rubber Soul*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- . *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Farrell, Gerry. "Reflecting Surfaces: The Use of Elements from Indian Music in Popular Music and Jazz." *Popular Music* 7, no. 2 (1988): 189 – 205.
- Feld, Steven. "Sound Structure as Social Structure." *Ethnomusicology* 28, no. 3 (1984): 383-409.
- Gwynne, Anna Nalini. *India in the British Musical Imagination, 1890-1940*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California at Berkeley, 2003.
- Harrison, Olivia. *George Harrison: Living in the Material World*. New York: Abrams, 2011.
- Lavezzoli, Peter. *The Dawn of Indian Music in the West*. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Leary, Timothy, et al. *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*. New York: University Books, 1964.

- . *Flashbacks: A Personal and Cultural History of an Era*. LA: Jeremy P Tarcher, Inc., 1994.
- Locke, Ralph. "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saens's *Samson et Dalila*." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3 (1991): 261-302.
- Macdonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties*. Third Revised Edition. London: Vintage Books, 2008.
- Marwick, Arthur. *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-1974*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Miles, Barry. *Paul McCartney: Many Years from Now*. New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1997.
- Norman, Philip. *Shout! The Beatles in their Generation*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005.
- Reck, David. "The Beatles and Indian Music." In *Sgt. Pepper and The Beatles: It Was Forty Years Ago Today*, ed. Olivier Julien, 63 – 74. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.
- Said, Edward. "Shattered Myths." In *Middle East Crucible*, ed. Naseer H. Aruri, 410-27. Wilmette, IL: Medina University Press, 1975.
- . *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon books, 1978.
- Schoenberg, Arnold. *Fundamentals of Music Composition*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1970.
- Slawek, Stephen. "Ravi Shankar as Mediator between a Traditional Music and Modernity." In *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, eds. Stephen Blum et al., 161-180. Illini Books, 1993.
- Shankar, Ravi. *My Music, My Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968.
- Spitz, Bob. *The Beatles: The Biography*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2005.
- Thompson, Gordon. *Please Please Me: Sixties British Pop, Inside Out*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. "The Ordinary Business of Occultism." *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 1 (2000): 1 – 20.