‘Every Sound There Is’:

The Beatles’ *Revolver* and the transformation of rock and roll

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Chapter 14

‘It is not dying’: Revolver and the birth of psychedelic sound
Russell Reising

He fumbles at your Soul
As Players at the Keys
Before they drop full Music on—
He stuns you by degrees—
— Emily Dickinson, 1862

Like Herman Melville, who dated the beginning of his actual life at age twenty-five, the beginning of his career as a writer, I date my alternative nativity, the transformative moment in my life, from my first encounter with Revolver. More specifically, the first time I heard ‘Love You To’, I knew something heavy had been dropped on me (long before I had ‘dropped’ anything heavy); the record introduced me to ‘another kind of mind there’ in that sound. As soon as the cut had finished playing, I called my two best friends and played it to them over the phone. Probably thinking I was mad, one of them responded with disturbing indifference and the other by turning me on to a cut from the latest Ventures album. That was dying.\(^1\) The acoustics of our conversation weren’t all that inferior to my primitive ‘hi-fi’, so I’ve never believed that the song lost enough in telephonic translation to warrant the frigid reception from my two ex-best friends. That first encounter with Revolver revolutionized both my social priorities and my entire outlook on life, broke down something within me and ushered me into another kind of something there, something new, something exciting, something heavy, something I would spend an inordinate amount of the next three decades of my life enjoying and thinking about. That was not dying, but rather being reborn into some world I, along with millions of other music lovers, could barely fathom at the time. Whether my doors of perception had been cleansed or I had broken on through to the other side, I had, in short, departed the comfortable world of Anglo-American pop music and entered the brave new world of psychedelia.

Revolver’s impact on me cannot be attributed merely to some crisis in my own adolescence during which I was ripe for any kind of transformative experience.\(^2\) In fact, this album invented musical expressions and initiated trends and motifs that would chart the path not only of the Beatles and a cultural epoch, but of the subsequent history of rock and roll as well. Let me requote the remark accompanying the VH1 ranking of Revolver as the Greatest Album of All Time: ‘If pop music were destroyed tomorrow, we could re-create it from this album alone.’ As I also note in my introduction and as many of the chapters in this volume demonstrate, Revolver introduced many conceptual and technical innovations to Anglo-American popular music, the significance and influence of which are still being felt and appreciated. For me, Revolver’s breakthroughs and the sources of its greatest impact reside in two distinct areas, both of which are central to the emergence and evolution of psychedelic music.

First, Revolver performs and elaborates on a complex interface between human consciousness and its accompanying technological environment, especially between the human voice and electronic musical effects, many of which are the first examples of sounds intended to reproduce or recall both the aural dimension and the altered perception of duration and continuity characteristic of psychedelic experience. The abrupt transition from, say, ‘Eleanor Rigby’ to ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ typifies the way Revolver jolts out of one perceptual frame into another, in a manner akin to the ways in which psychedelic experience affects attention span and can hurl us from blissful calm in one moment into frantic joy or anxiety in the next. The Thirteenth Floor Elevators capture something of this surging sense of reality in their early psychedelic classic ‘Roller Coaster’ and Pink Floyd albums regularly peel us from one tune to the next with disorienting transitional ruptures. The movements from one cut to the next throughout Revolver dramatizes a wide range of musical possibilities and, while distinctly different from the seamless segues that mark many of the transitions from cut to cut on Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band or the second half of Abbey Road, nevertheless creates a language of coherence within musical variety, in many ways one of the hallmarks of psychedelic album composition, explored more fully by the Beatles on albums like Sgt Pepper and Abbey Road, by Pink Floyd on Dark Side of the Moon and Wish You Were Here, and by Yes on Tales From Topographic Oceans.

Second, in the complex skein of Revolver’s intra-album dialogue, an album’s songs speak meaningfully to each other for the first time in rock and roll history. In so doing, Revolver articulates an evolutionary dialogue intended to encompass all of human experience and parallels the primary effects attributed to psychedelic experience. As R. E. L. Masters and Jean Houston put it in their still influential Varieties of Psychedelic Experience the same year that Revolver was released, ‘the symbolic images experienced [at the deepest levels of psychedelic consciousness] are predominantly historical, legendary, mythical, ritualistic and archetypal’. The subject may experience a profound sense of unity with ‘archetypal’. The subject may experience a profound sense of continuity with...
marginal dimensions that characterize the album's fourteen compositions and in the collection's rich lyrical content. Musically, no two of Revolver's cuts seem very clearly related to any other — each song seems to introduce the collection's new musical universe — but philosophically and thematically, the album twists, turns, stumbles, and surges toward the transcendental vision of 'Tomorrow Never Knows.' In like manner, Jimi Hendrix arranges his tripartite guitar solo in 'All Along the Watchtower' so that each segment partakes of a different style and amplification mode, yet the solo holds together because of the family resemblances unifying the otherwise different psychedelically distorted sounds he explores. Of course, by the release of Electric Ladyland a mere two years later in 1968, his audience had already been sufficiently 'experienced' to process and appreciate his refinements. But in 1966, the idea of coherence lurking within the diversity of a collection of sounds pushed Beatles fans to another level of musical sophistication. To draw on my epigraph from Emily Dickinson, the Beatles intersperse musical and technological innovations by degrees throughout Revolver, preparing us for that 'Ethereal Blow' when 'they drop full Music on' in 'Tomorrow Never Knows'.

I believe that the Beatles are fully aware of, if not fully intent on, the theoretical dimension of Revolver. By originally calling 'Tomorrow Never Knows' (the first song recorded during the now famous 'Revolver sessions') 'Mark I', the Beatles signalled a new musical departure. As I will demonstrate in my discussion of 'Tomorrow Never Knows', that song recapitulates virtually every important thematic element introduced earlier on the album. While we can't argue definitively that the Beatles wrote and arranged the rest of the tunes in order to establish the prehistory of human evolution taken to such a quantum leap in the final cut, the coherence resulting from the complex interweaving of the album's lyrics suggests such a trajectory. But Revolver speaks eloquently to the entire prehistory of the Beatles' recording career in significant interalbum ways as well. That Harrison's countdown into 'Taxman' echoes the more exuberant such introduction to 'I Saw Her Standing There' has, of course, been duly noted by Beatles scholars. Other songs similarly position themselves vis-à-vis earlier tunes. In both the linguistic play of its title and its examination of romantic themes, 'Love You To', for example, recalls its innocent precursor 'Love Me Do' quite complexly. The way in which drinking from Doctor Robert's special cup results in our 'feeling fine' bears little resemblance to the way that being in love makes one feel in 'I Feel Fine'. 'Eleanor Rigby' offers a powerful counterpoint to all earlier songs with women's names for their titles, including the cover versions of 'Dizzy Miss Lizzy', 'Anna', and 'Long Tall Sally', and the gentle love song 'Michelle'. With a few notable exceptions, such as 'Martha My Dear', deeper and often darker songs follow in 'Lovely Rita', 'Polythene Pam', and 'Julia'. 'Tomorrow Never Knows' surely takes us beyond 'Yesterday', again both in terms of verbal reversals as well as thematic transcendence. The dark explorations of 'For No One' might even signal the Beatles' looking back and repudiating the crudely commercial moment of their careers marked by the album Beatles For Sale by implying that their rejection of live performance only several months away signals their new commitment to uncompromising studio explorations: they will no longer sell out, or even perform live, for anyone.

Klaus Voormann's beautiful and, as Sheila Whiteley argues in a previous chapter, somewhat jarring cover art captures the album's emphasis on philosophical matters, on psychedelic coherence and mind expansion in his representation of the Beatles standing around, tangled within, perched upon, and peeking out of each other's heads (especially their ears and hair), suggesting that the symbiosis of this recording reached levels so profound as to minimize the distinctions among the four individual members of the band. Indeed, the fusion of photographic images with Voormann's drawings questions the distinctions between photograph and drawing, perhaps indicative of the Beatles' own problematization of the relationship of live performance and studio constructions, especially in the cleverness of what appear to be photographs of eyes lodged within the drawn facial features of each member. Moreover, the images Voormann selects for his photographic collage come almost exclusively from earlier manifestations of the Beatles' looks and styles, again suggesting that the group's latest manifestation signals a significant break from the literalness suggested in the photographs. Whether evoking images of summation or transcendence, these animated Beatles shuffled in with photos of their past glories register another kind of vision there. Just as his visual representations of the Beatles now freely exceed photographic documentation, the sonic and lyrical experiments characteristic of songs like 'Love You To', 'She Said She Said', and, of course, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' constitute fully realized musical breakthroughs within both their own corpus and rock and roll in general.

In its music and themes, Revolver represents psychedelic experience in a variety of ways. Most explicitly, 'Doctor Robert' pays homage to various medical practitioners who first introduced many luminaries to LSD. Specifically, the song virtually defies Dr Robert Freymann, a New York physician famous for his mind-expanding concoctions, but Dr Max 'Feelgood' Jacobson, who provided psychedelic potions for Andy Warhol's New York circle before serving as John F. Kennedy's personal physician during his presidency, established himself as an equally influential dispenser of psychedelic experiences. We know that each of the Beatles had his first LSD experience prior to the release of Revolver, with John Lennon, John, George, and their wives being turned on by George's dentist. John Lennon wrote two of his contributions, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' and 'She Said She Said' in the immediate wake of his earliest LSD trips. While 'She Said She Said', clearly recollects and revises one of Lennon's first psychedelic experiences, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' offers Lennon's theoretical take on the drug's possibilities, as well as his response to Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert's manual, The Psychedelic Experience (1964), based on the Tibetan Book...
of the Dead. Memory and pronunciation, immersion and detachment, such couplings of the immediate and experiential with the abstract and theoretical implied by these two compositions marks much of Revolver’s response to the Beatles’ earliest psychedelic experiences, a phase during which Lennon, at least, was taking the drug on nearly a daily basis (DeRogatis, 1996, p. 25). Such symbiotic energies also characterize Lennon and McCartney’s respective contributions to Revolver. McCartney’s psychedelic offerings, ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’ and ‘Good Day Sunshine’, register the thrill and exuberance of psychedelic initiation. Whereas Lennon dramatizes the problematic communicative impasses and theoretical dimension of psychedelia, McCartney domesticates his own initiations with love songs and images of sunny days and wild rides, maybe even hinting at Albert Hoffmann’s famous bicycle ride during his accidental first ingestion of LSD.5 Harrison documents the feeling of LSD in ‘Love You To’ as do Ringo Starr’s vocals in ‘Yellow Submarine’, with each song bearing the unmistakable signature of its singer’s personality and priorities. That each of the Beatles registers the impact of his inaugural LSD experiences in such diverse lyrical and sonic ways – including wild optimism, exotic sampling of other cultures, morbid introspection, and magisterial pronouncement – testifies, itself, to the heterogeneity and wide-ranging implications and impacts of psychedelic experience. But these four men still lived, thought, and functioned as a songwriting unit, identifying functions as a synecdoche, not a transparent representation, of the psychedelic state. In this respect, the Beatles offer Revolver’s final cut almost as a whirlwind education in psychedelia.6 To summarize: Revolver represents those first thrills of insight and illumination felt after one’s initial psychedelic experience, all filled with a sense of coherence, evolutionary transcendence, and newly liberated perceptions and perspectives. Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band already trivializes those insights by making them merely the playthings of technological innovation for the sake of mere sensory impressions. The continuity of Revolver is thematic, philosophical, and musical, whereas the continuity of Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band doesn’t really reach beyond the fluidity of some of its musical segues. Even ‘A Day In The Life’, while potentially a song of summation and condensation, doesn’t really speak to the other songs very clearly or synthetically.

But we should address the nature of the beginning. In what follows, I will trace the boldness with which the Beatles structure their sonic revolution, paying attention not only to the thematics and significance of each cut, but also to the album’s interstices and the thresholds of sound concluding one tune and beginning the next. Along the way, I will focus on lyrical and instrumental moments that strike me as the hallmarks of the Beatles’ psychedelic initiation.}

*Revolver‘ opens with George Harrison’s voice emerging out of silent grooves along with some rambling swipes at a guitar. Immediately, as Tim Riley points out, Revolver frustrates the distinction between live performance and studio seclusion (Riley, 1988, pp. 182–183; see also Shaugh O’Donnell’s chapter in this collection). Whereas Riley and others read this complex introductory scene as a problematic, even stumbling, moment in the Beatles’ evolution, suggesting their frustration with live performances and the resulting tension aroused by their studio turn, I think we can view it equally as a statement of new beginnings, of possibility, wherein the Beatles’ vocal presence enters into a new phase with their
instrumentation and the technological experiments made possible by their migration from the stage into the studio. Again, Klaus Voormann’s drawings slip beyond photographic literalism. I read this introductory chant as the first pulse in Revolver’s exploration of precisely those possibilities, an exploration that wanders the long and winding roads of the album’s dialectic. Bromell offers a corrective over Riley’s position when he comments that ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’ ‘and so much of Revolver wreaks havoc with the distinction between the natural and the artificial’ (Bromell, 2000, p. 96). Since it is not intended to evoke the intimate presence of the mop tops, Bromell concludes, Revolver can only distance and estrange us from the Beatles. But given the accomplishment of the very album in question, the distinction seems obsolete and archaic. On the other hand, Bromell’s commentary on the electronification of the entire Beatles sound is very much to the point:

The unearthly sounds that Revolver released into the world were at once the antithesis of the human and a provocative indication of the mysterium tremendum. They allowed the imagination to traverse the netscape of the future in which biology and technology would come full circle and touch. (Bromell, 2000, p. 98)

I agree completely. Mystery, technology, and the human presence at the heart of both are what Revolver is all about.

In any event, Harrison’s countdown erupts in his wailed ‘Oh’ and the quartet’s explosion in hard-edged unison. Hardcore to be sure, ‘Taxman’ establishes both the rhythmic pulse of Revolver and the album’s first statement on the status of the contemporary individual, in this case in isolated opposition to some oppressive governmental apparatus. In, perhaps, the album’s ultimate merging of the human and the technological, Paul’s thumping, heartbeat bass provides a visceral foundation over which the rest of the instrumentation and vocals swirl around in varying degrees of intensity, humanizing Revolver’s entire theme. Together with Revolver’s innovative and uncanny blending of vocals with electronic effects, these mergings of the corporeal with the technological (constitutive, according to Sheila Whiteley, of the texturing and layering of sound that launches the psychedelic edge of some more obviously trippy music) close the gap between human and machine and realize the complementarity of human creativity with technology that is representative of psychedelic soundscapes. The outrage of ‘Taxman’ is monologic, but the song itself is the protest against the taxman, even though it is spoken from his hypothetical point of view, an experiment in ironic perspectivism that the Beatles will develop throughout the rest of their career, notably in songs like ‘Paperback Writer’ and ‘She’s Leaving Home’. The Beatles depict this particular form of oppression as but one mode, in this case a macro-institutional mode, among other forces capable of ‘screwing you in the ground’, ‘making [you] feel like you’ve never been born’, and either wearing or bringing you ‘down’, all represented in Revolver’s other songs.

‘Taxman’ fades out to the tones of a solo electric guitar, giving way to the beginning of ‘Eleanor Rigby’. The nearly perfect synchronization of Paul’s voice with the strings enacts a virtual retreat from the rock mode, a break emphasized by the Beatles using two string quartets and by having no Beatles playing on ‘Eleanor Rigby’. The cut thus represents the first of Revolver’s several attempts at withdrawal, abandoning the ‘here and now’ immediacy of ‘Taxman’’s complaint and harkening back to some traditional merging of human voice and acoustic instrumentation, characteristic, perhaps, of the musical esotericism of a simpler and less technological culture (although not necessarily one immune to the corruption and exorbitant claims of the taxman). Let us harbor any illusions about the coherence of such a culture, ‘Eleanor Rigby’ straddles its small cast of characters in a shattered world of alienation and despair. Apparently the more ‘organic’ community, signaled by the acoustic mode, the quaint religious milieu, and occupations of picking up rice, writing sermons, or mending socks, provides no guarantee of human fullness or satisfaction. Eleanor Rigby’s death signals Revolver’s first extended articulation of its dominant thematic: life and death, a meditation begun in ‘Taxman’ with George’s ‘advice to those who die’ to ‘declare the pennis on your eyes’ and not resolved until the transcendent proclamation ‘It is not dying’ that opens ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’.

Paul McCartney’s vocal treatment in ‘Eleanor Rigby’ is noteworthy. At first, Paul’s voice is slightly distanced through being reproduced on only the right channel. At the moment when he sings the first refrain of ‘All the lonely people’, Paul’s voice takes on a rich depth as it sweeps across the entire stereo sound stage from the far right. I’m not aware of any such ‘headphone’ effect earlier in the Beatles’ careers; this might be the first psychedelic effect achieved entirely through electronic manipulation. It is not the last.

After the strains of ‘Eleanor Rigby’’s string quartets fade out, ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ opens with the album’s second consecutive example of a voice perfectly fused with its instrumental accompaniment, in this case with alarm clock abruptness in a wall of electrical sound, a thundering return to (and of) rock and roll, completely opposite of the acoustic mode of ‘Eleanor Rigby’. Lennon’s distanced voice, along with the fully fused electric background, suggests a possible musical and technological transcendence of the impasse posed by ‘Eleanor Rigby’. ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ also initiates the album’s explicit psychedelic lyrical drift (and the first lyrical moment that will be repeated later on the record), with its line ‘Stay in bed, float upstream (float upstream)’, an anticipation of ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’ and its injunction to ‘Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream’. One of the titles the Beatles considered for this album was Magic Circles, referring, perhaps, to the cyclical continuities embedded in in-album relations such as this. Indeed, the dream-state evoked in ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ maintains the otherworldly tone of Revolver’s lyrics, lyrics that guide the Beatles through various attempts at transcendence. Apparently, the dream-state celebrated in ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ differs significantly from that of Eleanor Rigby, who ‘lives in a dream’, a dialectical reversal characteristic of Revolver’s
to put into words. I was over time, I saw the top of time, or the end of time''' (Bishop, 1963, p. 159). Indeed, the ‘epitology’, to use Bishop’s coinage, or the ‘timeless’ realm of Indian music noted here thus functions doubly in ‘Love You To’, as both atmospheric dreaminess of the particular cut and theoretical intersection in which the Beatles speculate on the nature of time itself.

Already beginning Revolver’s synthetic work, ‘Love You To’ builds on the critique of those ‘running everywhere at such a speed’ in ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ and similarly laments that sense that ‘Each day just goes so fast / I turn around – it’s past’, and opens up new possibilities for love rather than for solitary dreaming. In doing so, ‘Love You To’ maintains a dialogue with the other cuts on Revolver, while also constructing a dialogue within its own lyrics. The title responds to the song’s final couplet, ‘I’ll make love to you / If you want me to’, with its simple affirmation, redefining the craving suggested in ‘want me to’ with the relaxed poise of ‘Love You To’.

In the transition from ‘Love You To’ to ‘Here, There, and Everywhere’, the Beatles enact yet another disorienting rupture, sliding the sitar and tabla fade-out into a gentle electric guitar strum and the sweetest, most traditional of ballad vocals. In a matter of seconds, they propel us many centuries ahead and juxtapose their vision of Asian antiquity and exoticism with the mellow tones of a Paul McCartney love song, in fact his favorite composition (MacDonald, 1994, p. 168). In this rapid movement from present to distant past and back to the immediate present, the Beatles conclude their first musical approximation of a psychedelic state of mind, especially in the peculiarities of one’s sense of time and one’s attention span while under the influence of psychedelic substances.

Nor is this sonic shift out of sync with the song’s lyrical direction. As if awakening from the detached alternatives offered by ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ and ‘Love You To’, ‘Here, There, and Everywhere’ returns the Beatles, Revolver, and the listener to the immediate present, domesticking the ‘I’ll make love to you’ into the familiarity of the modern love arrangement: ‘To lead a better life I need my love to be here’. In one remarkable transformation, ‘Here, There, and Everywhere’ also recasts, in gentle, loving and tactile images, the idea of running out of desperation in ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ and ‘Love You To’ as ‘There, running my hands through her hair’. Moreover, the very concept of omnipresence suggested by the title ‘Here, There, and Everywhere’ suggests the universalizing ambitions of Revolver, both geographically, chronologically, and historically. In essence, then, the lyrical content of ‘Here, There, and Everywhere’ functions both as an immediate return to the present from exotic otherness and as a thematic core of the entirety of Revolver, which aims at nothing less than taking its audience here there, virtually everywhere popular music can travel. As William Burroughs wrote to Alan Ginsberg after an experience with an Amazonian hallucinogenic brew,

\[\text{The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian, Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polygot [sic] Near East, Indian - new races as yet unconceived and}\]

In one of the most remarkable psychedelic memoirs ever written, Malden Grange Bishop defined his own sense of time while under the influence: “‘It’s the epitology of time,’” I said aloud there in the silent room. “That’s what I’ve been trying
unborn, combinations not yet realized passes through your body. Migrations, incredible journeys through deserts and jungles and mountains (stasis and death in closed mountain valleys where plants sprout out of the Rock and vast crustaceans hatch inside and break the shell of the body), across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island. The Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market. (Burroughs and Ginsberg, 1963, p. 44)

If existence really can be lived from the point of view of cosmic time and space, 'Here, There, and Everywhere' puts the individualistic grievances of 'Taxman' into another kind of perspective. 'Here, There, and Everywhere' departs just as it entered, in some of the most mellifluous tones on the album, a gentleness immediately disrupted by the slightly jarring tones of a heavy, jangling guitar strum, percussive effects, and, for the first time on the album, Ringo's voice. The sonic effects of 'Yellow Submarine' anticipate not only the deep sea explorations of the Beatles' own 'Octopus' Garden', but also the aquatic soundscapes of Jimi Hendrix's '1983, A Distant Lover', Pink Floyd's 'Echoes', the ambitious introduction to Yes's monumental Tales From Topographic Oceans which stages the emergence of human life from its aquatic origins, and the Strawbs' 'Queen of Dreams', a veritable tour de force of the genre. To be sure, Jan and Dean, the Beach Boys, and others had surfed the waves of the west coast, and some young beauties got stranded in the water by virtue of the skiminess of their 'Itsy, Bitsy, Teenie, Weenie, Yellow Polka-Dot Bikinis'. But psychedelia has explored a deeper fascination with oceanic venues. Dylan dances along the circus sands in 'Mr Tambourine Man' and Donovan opens his eyes to find himself 'by the sea' in 'Hurdy Gurdy Man'. But 'Yellow Submarine', in its persistent refusal to recognize any boundaries as stable or fixed, takes the full psychedelic plunge. Rock and roll was never the same, and that moment's ripples extend even to farcical pieces like 'Rock Lobster' by the B-52s.

While the song might initially sound a bit 'ridiculous', as Tim Riley characterizes it, 'Yellow Submarine' contributes significantly to Revolver's overarching affirmative scheme with its many repetitions of the word 'life' (Riley, 1988, p. 188). Cumulating this veritable orgy of affirmation, 'Yellow Submarine' fades out to the repeated chorus, 'We all live in a yellow submarine, yellow submarine, yellow submarine' (repeated in the song's final moments emphasizing 'We all live'), as if in implicit dialogue with the deathly atmospheres of 'Taxman' and 'Eleanor Rigby' as well as with the dreamy state of detachment of 'I'm Only Sleeping'. The other four occurrences of such words, 'Lived a man who sailed the sea', 'Many more of them live next door', 'And we lived beneath the waves', and 'As we live a life of

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The movement from 'Good Day Sunshine' to 'And Your Bird Can Sing' replaces the vocal repetitions of the phrase 'good day sunshine' with a hard-rocking jam foregrounding George's and John's guitars, while also reinstating the heartbeat pulse of Paul's bass line as the dominant rhythmic device of the album. This speaker remains unaffected by the various crises recounted, but this aloofness does not stage a return to the dreamy isolation of 'I'm Only Sleeping'. Even as he positions himself beyond the particular grievances of the song's implied auditor, this speaker reaffirms his presence for those who may lose their bearings as a result of material obsessions, world-weary ennui, and depression. In response to any of these crises, the vocalist reminds his audience, 'I'll be round. I'll be round, like the round record Revolver spinning around and around on the turntable: 'And Your Bird Can Sing' thus partakes of Revolver's thematics of circularity, of wholeness, of completeness, of the 'magic circles' that nearly formed its title. Round like the pennies you might put on the dead's eyes. Circular like the dialectic of floating upstream and floating downstream, or of sailing up to the sun until you find a sea of green. Round and whole as suggested by the deictic title 'Here, There, And Everywhere', or by the ability to call Doctor Robert anytime 'day or night', and maybe even like the rim of his special cup from which you can drink and feel fine.

'And Your Bird Can Sing' also pays oblique homage to Revolver's overall sonic experiment in the line 'You tell me that you've heard every sound there is'. In one supreme example, the phase shift that alters the Beatles' choral singing that very line represents another of Revolver's significant psychedelic vocal effects, suggesting that the Beatles pace the album's technological innovations, building up to 'Tomorrow Never Knows'. 'Eleanor Rigby' altered a single voice for a disruptive moment; 'And Your Bird Can Sing' stages something similar at a choral level, a return to the affirmative chorus 'We all live' from 'Yellow Submarine',11 hyperbole, to be sure, but Revolver certainly has, even at this point of its unfolding, exposed its listeners to many other kinds of sounds.

Just as jarringly as the shift into and out of 'Love You To', 'And Your Bird Can Sing' slips from a guitar duet into the harpsichord/vocal introduction to 'For No One', another unearthing of nearly archaic musical remnants and a return to traditional instrumentation and styles later punctuated by Alan Civil's gorgeous horn solo. As in 'Eleanor Rigby' the archaic soundscape elicits a feeling of antiquity and doom, in this case of the collapse of a relationship, originally titled 'Why Did It Die?' (MacDonald, 1994, p. 164). However, in its own transcendence of the bleakness of loss, 'For No One' signals a fresh beginning, a realization that, perhaps, resulted in the song's title being changed. A new symbiosis of voice and instrument line emerges from Paul's bass-playing sometimes following his vocal progressions in near-perfect note-for-note unison, sometimes merging in a simple harmony with them. For all its sadness, then, 'For No One' nevertheless stages the triumph of its vocal/instrumental synthesis over the confusion and sadness of love gone wrong. Less than a year after recording 'For No One', the Beatles will announce 'all you need is love'. At this point, however, they suggest that all you need is music, and perspective.

The traditional sounds of harpsichord and horn provide the mellow closure that ushers 'For No One' into the space between the songs. The resulting silence is broken by the borderline country-western lead-in of Doctor Robert's, a guitar sound reminiscent of Rubber Soul in general and 'What Goes On?' and Act Naturally in particular. Doctor Robert might help you recover from the sadness of 'For No One', and the spectre of drugged distance recalls the dreamy escapism of 'I'm Only Sleeping', but the song makes us consider whether such avoidance constitutes a problem or a credible boon to consciousness. Moreover, the electrically altered and very lyrical chorus of 'Well, well, well, I'm feeling fine' pleads so eloquently for Doctor Robert's viability that it lends credence to his vision, or at least to the visions his special cup can induce. As Janis Joplin ('Me and Bobby McGee') and Sgt Elias (in Oliver Stone's Platoon) insist, sometimes 'feeling good is good enough'. The repetition of 'Well, well, well' also suggests 'we can all be well, at least potentially, if we're feeling fine'. With reference to earlier moments on Revolver, if you 'know what it's like to be dead', if 'your mind aches', if 'your bird is broken', or if 'your prized possessions start to wear you down', Doctor Robert will 'pick you up', providing all the good vibrations you need for a pharmacological good day of sunshine.

'Doctor Robert' fades out to the tones of a harmonious vocal-instrumental synthesis and gives way to the instrumental fade-in of 'I Want To Tell You'. The
first of Revolver’s concluding trilogy of songs, one each by Harrison, McCartney, and Lennon, ‘I Want To Tell You’ sets the urgent tone of the album’s philosophical and psychological epiphanies in two ways. First, the Beatles ‘want to tell you’ something urgent, something new, something revolutionary. The urgency of this communiqué, expressed via a choral vocal mode, expands outward from the monolithic rhetoric of protest of ‘Taxman’ (replete with repetitious call and response warnings), as well as the interpersonal impasse of ‘She Said She Said’, and reaffirms the communal spirit of ‘Yellow Submarine’. Perhaps most significantly, whatever urgency the Beatles express in ‘I Want To Tell You’ carries over into Paul’s overtly psychedelic song, ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’, with the ‘Got To’ pushing the earlier ‘I Want To’ to a higher level of intensity and intensity. In this respect, ‘I Want To Tell You’ sets the stage for an important genre of psychedelic music, the messianic announcement of the wonders of psychedelic insight.

The Thirteenth Floor Elevators’ ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ is a good example, as is Kaleidoscope’s ‘I Found Out’ (1968), which includes the lyrics ‘I found out without a doubt what it’s all about. And now I know in my soul just where to go’. Of course, John Lennon included his own ‘I Found Out’, albeit a more hostile version, on his first solo album, Plastic Ono Band. Certainly coupled with rhetorical hyperbole characterize these and similar pronouncements.

Second, ‘I Want To Tell You’ makes another significant contribution to Revolver’s psychedelic unity. The song’s lyrics repeat the word ‘mind’ four different times, with three distinctly different meanings. ‘Mind’ alternately means one’s being (‘It’s only me, it’s not my mind / That is confusing things’), one’s opinions (‘Then I could speak my mind and tell you’), and one’s caring or lack of caring (‘I don’t mind’). I take this flowering of many minds in ‘I Want To Tell You’ as a prelude to ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’ and its crucial opening stanza:

I was alone, I took a ride,
I didn’t know what I would find there
Another road where maybe I could see another kind of mind there.

The Beatles thus situate the very lyrical version of mind expansion and ‘tripping’ in the pivotal songs that give way to the revolutionary ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’. I must again take exception with Tim Riley who declares ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’ as ‘Revolver’s most derivative cut’ (Riley, 1988, p. 197), at least insofar as his perception fails to recognize that the blues-based instrumental presentation undergoes a powerful revision, in this particular deployment, by what John Lennon recalled as Paul’s tribute to his early LSD experiences (Sheff and Golson, 1981, p. 191). Of course, we aren’t sure whether this other kind of mind means another kind compared to the three earlier alternatives in ‘I Want To Tell You’, the fourth in an evolving surge of mind expansion, or some absolute anticipation of the ultimate transcendence of ‘mind’ as realized in the first line of ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’. At any rate, the word ‘mind’, mentioned in only two other

Revolver songs, ‘I don’t mind, I think they’re crazy’ from ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ and ‘Your day breaks, your mind aches’ from ‘For No One’, virtually defines, in its seven repetitions, the final third cuts on the album, surely an indication of the Beatles’ surging toward another kind of mind-expanding finale.

The actual transition from ‘I Want To Tell You’ to ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’ enacts perhaps the album’s boldest transition, at least in terms of voice and technology. The vocal chorale fade-out features voices electronically altered to resemble brass instruments, leading into the pounding brass opening of ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’. Functioning as a summation of Revolver’s several experiments in the interface between voice and instrument, this particular transition recalls the unified vocal/instrumental introductions to ‘Eleanor Rigby’ (acoustic) and ‘I’m Only Sleeping’ (electric). The brass section also recalls the solo horn from ‘For No One’, although they pump up the formal and contemplative solo horn into a jazzy brass section with brightness and surging intensity. As Walter Everett argues in this volume, Motown and its big band sound is more than a little on Paul McCartney’s mind in this work on ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’, and the entire horn-based sound of groups like Blood, Sweat and Tears, Chicago, and others gained impetus from this expansive number. Nor should we ignore the possibility that the ‘sunshine’ to which Paul bids good morning is in fact the first pulse in the ‘love song as coded paean to LSD’ musical genre of which the Animals’ ‘Girl Named Sandiego’, Donovan’s ‘Mellow Yellow’, and the Beatles’ own ‘Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds’ are the best-known examples.

In terms of its own recollective placement on Revolver, ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’ prepares us for the revolutionary ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’, but also returns to the album’s opening song. The wailed and despairing ‘Oh’ which opens ‘Taxman’ becomes the almost tipsily affirmative ‘Ooh’ repeated throughout ‘Got To Get You Into My Life’. McCartney thus redeems the vocalizations of ‘Taxman’ and shores up the hope that Revolver struggles to consolidate throughout its song cycle. What a difference an ‘O’ makes, soothing the pain of ‘Taxman’, voicing the fine feeling of ‘Doctor Robert’, and perfecting the circular evolvement of Revolver and its returning us near its end to the origins of the beginning.

Of course ‘Tomorrow Never Knows’ opens with the injunction to ‘Turn off your mind, relax and float downstream’, but only dying, injecting one final affirmative pulse into the album’s finale and evolving into its final vision of expansion and transcendence. As Jon Savage comments in his description of expansion and transcendence. As Jon Savage comments in his description of 

"Tomorrow Never Knows" takes you right into the maestrom ... it immediately impacted on pop culture" (Savage, 1997, p. 61). Indeed it does ascend into the maestrom, but not without taking aboard its 'magic swirl ship' much of Revolver’s themes. Lennon’s lyrics relate explicitly to the intensity of Harrison’s Revolver’s themes. Lennon’s lyrics relate explicitly to the intensity of Harrison’s Revolver’s themes. Lennon’s lyrical relate explicitly to the intensity of Harrison’s Revolver’s themes. Lennon’s lyrical relate explicitly to the intensity of Harrison’s Revolver’s themes.
initial lines 'Back out of all this now too much for us', 'Tomorrow Never Knows', in essence, repudiates and transcends the insincerity and immediacy of the lyrical drift of those two preceding songs, cutting Revolver loose from all forms of anxiety and stress with its own injunction to 'turn off your mind' and 'relax'. All three of these final songs return repeatedly to an opposition of being 'down' and being lifted 'up', also preparing us for the final injunction to:

Lay down all thoughts, surrender to the void,
It is shining, it is shining.

Timothy Leary captures the 'shining' element of psychedelic experience quite beautifully in High Priest, when he describes a particularly transcendent moment in a trip in the following way: 'I opened my eyes. I was in heaven. Illumination. Every object in the room was a radiant structure of atomic-god-particles. Radiating. Matter did not exist. There was just this million-matrix lattice web of energies. Shimmering. Alive. Interconnected in space-time. Everything hooked up in a cosmic dance. Fragile. Indestructible' (Leary, 1968, p. 328). It is quite likely such a shatteringly beautiful experience as this that powered John Lennon's creation of 'Tomorrow Never Knows'.

In a remarkable accomplishment of summation, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' recapitulates, in its own swirl of magic circles, virtually every motif articulated in Revolver's earlier cuts. To return to my Emily Dickinson epigraph, whereas each of the earlier songs may have stunned us by degrees, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' is that moment when the Beatles 'drop full Music on' their listeners, setting the agenda for psychedelic music and for album-length experiments in lyrical coherence for decades to come. Virtually every word revisits and supercharges an earlier phrase from Revolver. The 'shining' of these lines refers us back to 'Good Day Sunshine', just as 'it is not dying' recalls the deaths recounted in 'Taxman', 'Eleanor Rigby', and 'She Said She Said'. 'Love is all and love is everyone' redeems the loneliness in 'Eleanor Rigby' and the loss of love in 'For No One' and reconfirms the drift of 'Love You To'. The notion of belief from 'it is believing' reaffirms 'each one believing that love never dies' from 'Here, There, and Everywhere'. 'It is knowing' reorients 'I know what it is like to be dead / I know what it is to be sad' from 'She Said She Said'. 'It is believing' rescues 'you don't believe her when she says her love is dead' from 'For No One'. 'It is not leaving' recuperates the earlier attempts at withdrawal and escapism from 'She Said She Said' and 'I'm Only Sleeping', while 'So play the game "Existence" to the end' redefines the 'games that begin to drag the speaker down' in 'Doctor Robert'.

Finally, the line 'But listen to the colour of your dreams' revisits images of dreaming in both 'Eleanor Rigby' and 'I'm Only Sleeping'. Moreover, the return staged by 'Tomorrow Never Knows' is doubled by its final line, 'Of the beginning, of the beginning'.

The sonic effects of 'Tomorrow Never Knows' deepen that lyrical return to 'the beginning'. One of the song's most engaging effects is accomplished instrumentally by virtue of Paul McCartney's guitar solo from 'Taxman' being sampled, slowed down, cut up, and reversed in 'Tomorrow Never Knows' (MacDonald, 1994, p. 152), an instrumental accompaniment to the 'Ooh's of Got To Get You Into My Life' rounding out and redeeming the despairing 'Oh' from 'Taxman'. Even the tinny, dance hall piano at the song's conclusion refers back to the ragtime piano from 'Good Day Sunshine' and, looking forward, anticipates the end of 'Within You Without You' with its enigmatic laughter. The end literally revisits the beginning.

But rather than suggesting some pointless circularity, however, the Beatles return us to another kind of beginning, one reached by the historical and psychological journey through Revolver and its newly psychedelicized take on the human condition. In yet one final recapitulative moment, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' symbolically expands the geo-logic of Revolver, both in its re-referencing the eastern sounds of 'Love You To', and in John Lennon's original desire to have 1,000 Tibetan monks chanting in the background. Revolver's exploration, then, plunges the depths of the oceans in 'Yellow Submarine' and climbs to the top of the world for a view from Tibet. Here, there, and everywhere, indeed. But Lennon's perspective from mountain tops functions more than atmospherically and culturally. The Beatles, like Sly Stone, want to take us higher, and they do so gradually, as is suggested in the Dickinson epigraph, and not without complications occasionally interrupting its positive flow. Certainly, 'Tomorrow Never Knows' propels us beyond the confines of the individual ego which had delimited even the most optimistic songs on the album, and, while being the least subjective perspective offered on Revolver, returns us to the pulse of humanity taken up to highest levels by communal affirmations.

The negativity, alienation, and despair present in varying degrees on several of Revolver's cuts are all resolved, 'left', transcended within the psychedelic dialectic of its unfolding. It is in this respect that 'Tomorrow Never Knows' most complexly recapitulates psychedelic experience. 'It is not dying' dramatizes the symbolic 'death and rebirth' that many psychedelic journeys enable one to experience. It is not 'merely' dying, or being symbolically reborn, that forms the crux of these transformative experiences, but rather the sense of having been reborn into a life which, as one of Masters and Houston's psychedelic case studies put it, is 'a new life exactly like someone who has died and been reborn, leaving behind all the torments of the old life'. The newness of 'Tomorrow Never Knows' soundscapes, then, mirrors the renewed appreciation of existence following the symbolic death of the psychedelic trip, which, in turn, emerges as a result of having transcended the troubles of loneliness, alienation, failed communication, and withdrawal, as represented throughout Revolver's fourteen songs.

Moreover, the concept of the album provided a vehicle and a philosophy capable of transcending the discrete units of songs usually packaged together to constitute a long-playing recording. Whereas albums prior to Revolver merely
packaged thirteen or fourteen largely unrelated songs into the popular long-playing record format, \textit{Revolver} gathered fourteen dialectically related statements on the human condition into a unified and coherent vision. The album progresses from its initial human vocal countdown to the highly technologized fade out of 'Tomorrow Never Knows', from static and repetitive individual protest to communal transcendence. In one sense it is popular music's first celebration of the human as technological and the technological as human. It also moves from anger and alienation through communal solidarity to redeem privatized individualism to the ecstatic merging into the transpersonal void. \textit{Revolver} also ranges broadly throughout time and space, historically from invention of the sitar to the immediate present, geographically, from the Indian subcontinent to London, topographically from the ocean depths to the peaks of the Himalayas. No two transitions are the same, no two songs are musically the same (or even very closely related), and yet \textit{Revolver} articulates a vision of human existence both evolutionary in its dynamic and unified in its themes. Unity within diversity and diversity punctuating unity: take your pick. Through its synthesizing ambitions, \textit{Revolver} achieves something like the grand unification of experience that many regard as the hallmark of psychedelic experience itself. Jazz god John Coltrane, in one representative statement, reported that, during his first trip, he 'perceived the interrelationships of all life forms' (Lee and Schlain, 1985, p. 79). I would even venture that 'Tomorrow Never Knows' concludes \textit{Revolver} with infinitely more sonic and lyrical coherence than 'A Day in the Life' sums up \textit{Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band}.

\textit{Revolver}'s dynamism and much of its genius nestle along its borders, in the transitions from one song to the next, including the buffering silent spaces between the songs, between the notes, between the words. In its explosive dialectic with its silences, \textit{Revolver} ushers popular music into another kind of world, one in which voices, sounds, and songs play out a musical and conceptual inquiry into the then and now as well as the here, there, and everywhere of human consciousness.

Notes

1. I must say, however, that Timothy Leary's decision in 1996 to have his cremated ashes sent up in a satellite to orbit earth, has made me reconsider the importance of the Ventures' homage to the satellite age and my friends' musical tastes
2. For an account of psychedelics and rock music that addresses the impact, the endurance, and importance of the genre, see Nick Bromell's 'Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s' (University of Chicago Press, 2000). Bromell's study is rich with cultural and psychological insights, although I disagree with what I see to be Bromell's ultimate characterization of psychedelics as little more than a passing fad of adolescence, as it trivializes both the accomplishments of psychedelic art as well as Bromell's own insights.
3. Tim Riley comments that \textit{Revolver}'s transitions 'point toward the integration of song segues that makes \textit{Sgt Pepper} a continuous stream of sound'. I would differ from Riley in suggesting that