



We're one short for the crossing: Abbey Road and popular memory

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Abstract: One of the most understated debates within contemporary cultural studies is popular memory. Requiring radical interdisciplinary work, and a diverse array of textual sites, it remains a challenge for the theorist. This piece takes a cultural text - the wall encircling Abbey Road studios in London - and explores how fans inscribe their memories and meanings on its surface.

Key terms: Beatles, popular memory, London, popular music, fandom, Abbey Road.

Introduction

From far LA Mike Simmons Came, Saw, Photographed and Vandalized.
Forever Fab, August 2, 1991

Graffiti, Wall of Abbey Road Studios, London

Two moments are plucked from time. The first is peppered with humour. On Friday, May 12, 2000, a man in a blue van stole the gates of Strawberry Field, a children's home in Liverpool. News broadcasts around the world bubbled with mock concern and bemusement.¹ The most irate voices belonged neither to the children nor the Salvation Army majors who ran the home. Instead, incensed tourist operators complained at their loss of revenue and a sightseeing location. The gates have not been recovered, but the tours continue.

Second moment: December 8, 2000 – the twentieth anniversary of John Lennon's murder. Radio fans throughout Australia remembered where they were "twenty years ago today". Voices trembled with emotion, relating stories of sobbing shoppers in supermarkets, and deep, personal shock. The intimacy of these emotions betrays much more than the death of a public figure. Instead, these narratives of Lennon's assassination have been entwined with personal and family histories. As I listened to these stories, my mind drifted to other pilgrimages, and other times. The tracing of popular memory is a promiscuous intellectual business, refusing to obey disciplinary boundaries. The re-presentations of place, space and identity envelop theories of power that transgress the limits of history, heritage studies, cultural studies and geography. As Liliane Weissberg has recognised,

memory's stock has not only had a low and a high. Memory's own history, our understanding of what it is and how it functions, has radically changed in recent years. The computer is not the sole challenge to our notion of a personalized, individually owned memory.²

The careful tracing of popular culture – particularly music – has challenged the textual fibres of oblivion and recollection. A tendency to nostalgia and longing for the Beatles' 1960s has only been enhanced through the death of George Harrison. With half of the group now dead, their performances can now only live in popular culture and memory. Popular memory does not signal the end of history, but the loss of a clearly compartmentalised 'private life.' To exhibit this process, I take a personal recollection, and demonstrate how feminist collectivity is reclaimed from the bedrock of the past. Nearly ten years ago, I visited a major site of Beatles' tourism - the Abbey Road Crosswalk. Unlike the volatility of the Strawberry Field Gates, the concrete-rendered wall has permanent protection from fans in blue-vans. However it remains a reminder of how women's visual culture is marginalised and buried beneath the crust of history.

Every site has both signifying potential and authoritative meanings, as determined by empowered institutions and histories. The relationship between social subjectivity and cultural practice is an ambiguous and contradictory topic, and is most effectively explored through a specific textual focus. This paper invokes a reading of a wall, the barrier that encircles the Abbey Road studios in London. As a site of liminality - between text and context, memory and history, Beatles and fans, repression and autonomy - the wall corrupts the demarcation of time and space. In this liminal zone, feminist visual culture is located, serving to reinscribe and rewrite the form and content of popular memory.

The wall, as a component of the built environment, is simultaneously an historical source, a sign, a text and part of a surveillance system. While the wall presents a dull white surface, its constituent, underlying semiotic bricks propose an evocative project that reveals in Jon Goss's problem: "How function and form interrelate to communicate meaning".³ My investigation in urban semiotics uses photographs, street signs and graffiti as its textual database. Three issues are explored. The first part probes the meanings encircling a structure that is temporally disparate, but spatially located in London. The second element works through the multiplicity of readings that encroach upon the wall and grant it touristic value. The final section (over)reads the surfaces of the wall's white facade, exploring the feminine modality of textual poachers and Beatles fandom. These visual shards show how the wall is cut by a conflictual visual system. My writing watches fans as they rewash the surfaces of history.

Speaking Spaces

If walls could speak.⁴

J. Hilier and P. Manus

If walls could speak, who would hear their words? Michel de Certeau, in his theoretical wander with the walkers of a city, suggests that these mobile bodies "follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it".⁵ Walkers situate the city in a meaning system, meandering through the contradictions of power structures. He is suggesting that these semiotic pedestrians are not literate in their own reading/walking practices. Certain walls however, do speak and leave their mark within memories.

On August 2, 1991, as a young History student conducting research for a Masters Degree, I visited London on study leave. At the first stop on a trip that aimed to research Liverpool's tourism industry, I wandered through the streets of the capital city to see and photograph the Abbey Road Crosswalk. This landmark formed the

basis for the cover of the Beatles' last studio album. As I moved into Abbey Road, the street sign that was meant to signify my arrival was almost illegible, as it had been covered in graffiti by fans. This 'authentic' Beatles moment was not corrupted or effaced by these trivial scribblings. Instead the 'actual site' was enhanced by this sense of communal interest and engagement. As I continue to walk, the street sign foreshadowed an even more unexpected touristic find. When I discovered the entire wall of the Abbey Road Studios covered in graffiti, I could only ask, like Marcus, Francis and Meunier, "where and when is this place?"⁶ This wall displays the receptive capacity of the Beatles, a vestige of the fan experience, and a location for the meeting of text and context. These writings on the wall spoke to walkers and offered a space for cultural commentators to transcend the current difficulties facing practitioners working within cultural studies. As Adrian Mellor suggested,

in the study of 'lived cultures', we have increasingly developed a one-sided approach to cultural analysis, in which texts are (valuably) explored, but in the absence of any real check on their reception by lay audiences.⁷

My study offers an inadequate, partial snapshot of a 'moment' within lived culture. There is no 'authentic voice' of the Beatles' fans to be reclaimed. Such an inability to grasp the ephemeral nature of memory has always posed challenges for feminist cultural theorists. Although the knowledge is tentative and the meanings fallible and fleeting, popular memory has an interventionist imperative in the solid, scholarly foundations of heritage and the intellectual core of history.

The city, when viewed at ground level, has its own eloquence that speaks to passers-by. The Abbey Road wall is a metonymy of popular culture more generally. Fans engage in the playful (re)inscription of media texts. Yet media controllers (such as the managers of EMI Studios) perpetually reclaim the right to paint over the words of these textual poachers. Through this struggle to write and be read, ephemeral meanings become attached to the landscape. This wall provides an opportunity to grasp the fleeting moments of consciousness and play that are white-washed by memory professionals who control the word and the wall.

Cosgrove stated that "on Saturday mornings I am not, consciously, a geographer".⁸ Similarly, I was not a cultural historian during that walk through London in August 1991. The discovery of the wall remained the evocative surprise of the trip. The meanings that have swirled around that volatile, hot memory in the ten subsequent years are granted a release within this cool, ordered, typeset prose. The crisp syntax offers a chance to read the insights of fans that have been long since painted over, and removed from the gaze of walkers and semioticians.

Sharing the signs

If frames of mind are sources of cultural understanding and identity for people and institutions, they are also sources of control, conflict and contest. While all of us participate in symbolising the world, people do not enjoy equal access to the conditions for creating those shared symbols.⁹

Kay Anderson and Fay Gale

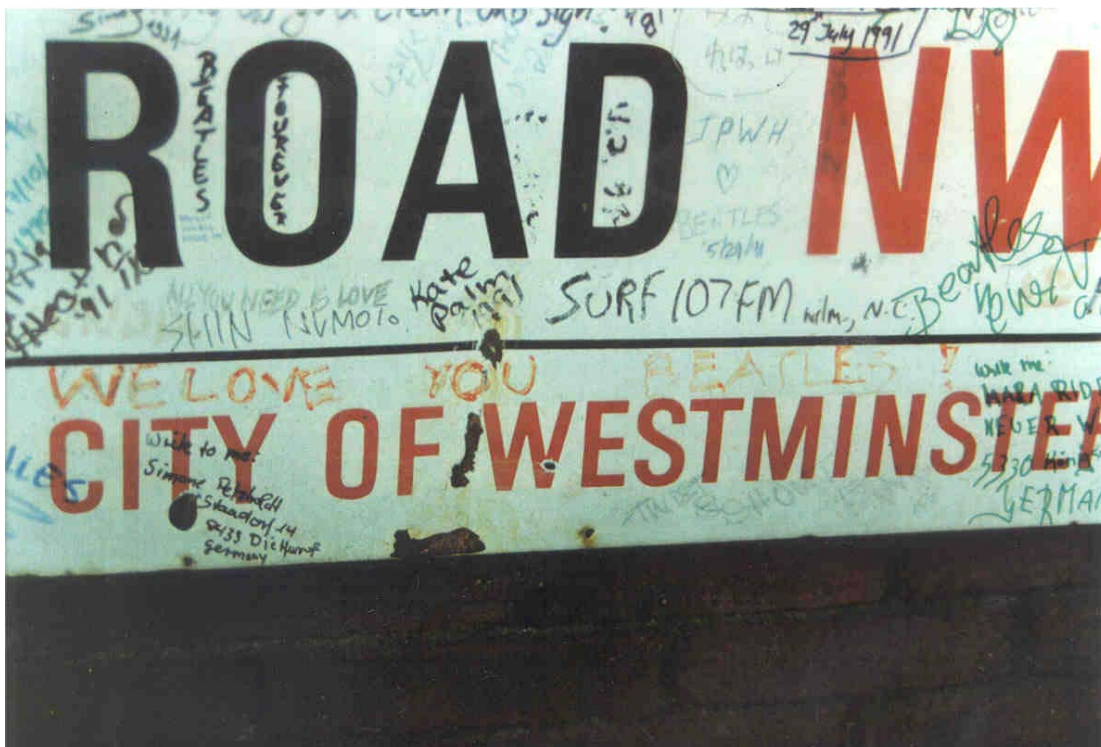
The cultural meanings decoded from space and the built environment have been a recent focus of investigation for those working within both heritage studies and cultural studies. Innovative linkages with the cultural components of geography have resulted in an inventive fusion of approaches and paradigms. The study of space and place enters the material and symbolic spheres, displaying the way in which a place

is named and described. As landscapes are textualised and situated in specific contexts, they become clearing houses for power structures.

Radical spatialism, which flattens out time and denounces the linearity of historicism, grants a topology and roughened texture to history. The empowered, disciplinary binaries of geography and history have (too conveniently) cleaved the study of space and time. Through the inter-disciplinary conjuncture of cultural studies, place is temporalised and time is spatialised. My attention to London, the supposed core of the old Empire, demonstrates that all spaces offer distinct, regional pathways for walkers. Regionality is summoned through the act of reading, rather than being intrinsically buried in the earth of a place.

London is simultaneously pluralistic, playful, ironic, schizoid and mockingly solemn. The lexicon of London frames and contextualises the microknowledges of Abbey Road. The Beatles are not locked into the time-frame of the 1960s, but are continually reinvented and respatialised in the present. The *Beatles Anthology*, the 'authentic history' of the group, was released worldwide in 2000 to queues of eager fans desiring the real story from the Liverpool lads themselves. For other fans, craving physical rather than textual confirmation, Abbey Road summons a spatial medley that resonates through both contemporary London and time.

There are numerous, separate passages through the Beatles' London. These flexible reading strategies can be monitored by invoking the potentials of postmodern thought. One entry point into the Abbey Road semiotic system is a sign located at the commencement of the street.



While the dominant meaning, "ABBEY ROAD NW8", is prioritised on the surfaces of the sign, this functionalist purpose is immediately corrupted by the graffitied shar(e)d culture of the Beatles fans. Their use of the sign does not provide information for the commuter or traveller, but ushers Beatle fans into their

destination. This cross-referenced writing corrupts the boundaries between official and unofficial, sanctioned and unsanctioned, communication. The memory of the Beatles' on this Road is enough for the fans to claim their right to write. The comments vary from 'We love you Beatles' to the visitor's name being scratched into the iron edifice. The connection between the fans and this site is articulated through the act of 'defacement'. Through such an (d)effacement, the painted layers of the Abbey Road wall become a capricious surface for the conveyance of meaning. While the wall can stand in textual solitude, it is also enmeshed in a larger sign system. The touristic value of Abbey Road, as a venue of 'significance', transforms the place into an arena for photographic opportunities.

Abbey Road, as an album, crosswalk, street sign and studio, is a constituent element in visual memory. The crossing has gained a relevance and importance that extends beyond the rim of a vinyl album. Traces of the Beatles are found on that road. As a Beatle tourist guide explained,

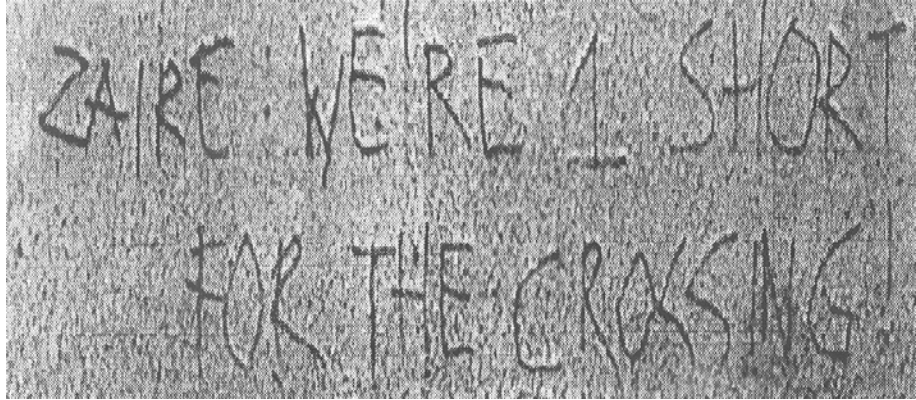
In Rome, Catholics first visit the Vatican, and Jews in Jerusalem go to the Wailing Wall and manic depressives in San Francisco head straight for the Golden Gate Bridge. But you, the true Beatlemaniac, must go straight to the Abbey Road crosswalk. Nowhere else is more sacred.¹⁰

Tourism is the consumption of uniqueness, authenticity and the origin. The rise in the heritage industry, which coincided with the cultural shifts of Thatcherism, reconstituted national icons and invented traditions. Via the wall, the past is spatially replayed in the present. It is an over-painted history where the Beatles' Yellow Submarine continues to live beneath the waves. While the crossing and the studios offer a safe retreat to a controllable past, the frayed scrawls on the wall and frantic scratches into the street sign are outside what Tony Bennett termed "the bourgeois myths of history".¹¹ The fans reclaim and rewrite their Beatles outside the considerations of the safe past and conventional narrative that has dominated the histories of the Beatles written after Lennon's death.



Identity and community are connected via a literacy in the Abbey Road semiotic system. Cultural continuity is formulated in urban places through a storytelling process that grants authenticity to specific sites.

The wall is semiotically permeable, soaking in meaning from the surrounding textual sites. Fandom is constituted by the possession of knowledge, and a huge database of information establishes 'street credibility' about the Beatles. The iconography of the Abbey Road album has been naturalised to such an extent that a conversation between two of the fans, Marlie and Zaire, resulted in an evocative, graffitied comment.



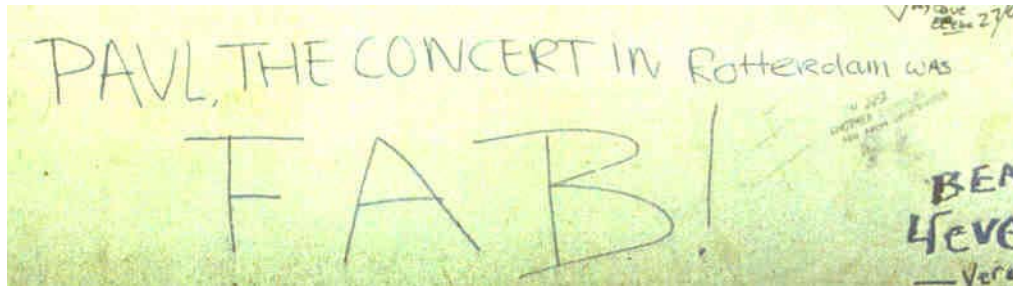
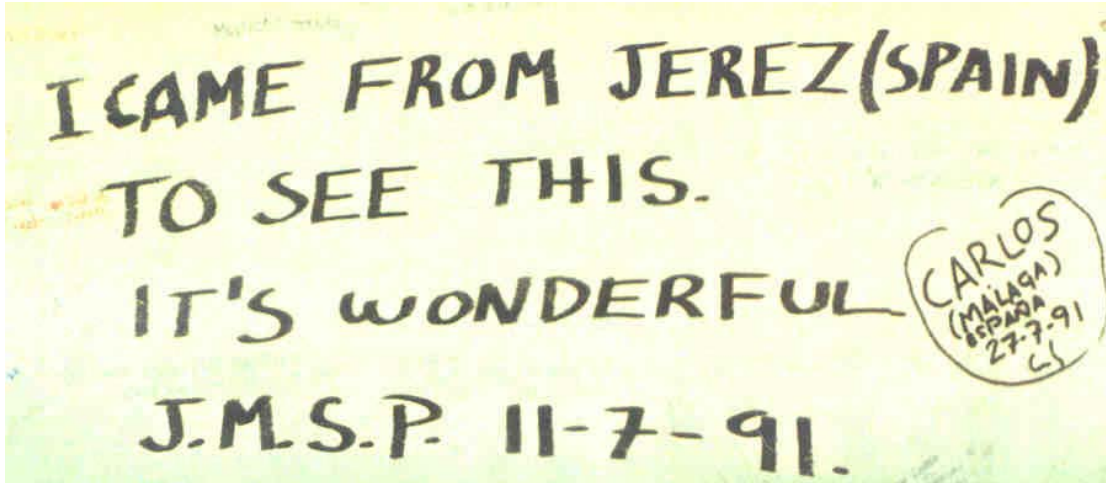
The two fans did not have to articulate the crossing to which they referred, or the reasons why being 'one short' was a problem. The context formulated by the wall's location perpetuates and naturalises this interpretation. While the 'importance' of the studio and the cover has been stored in a collective visual memory, the Beatles' fans are rewriting the group's iconography for their own purposes. The need to follow in the footsteps of the Beatles and replicate their visual configuration fills the semiotic landscape of a crosswalk with reinscribed fan meanings.

Identity and difference are negotiated within the site of the crosswalk, particularly as the desire to cross the street clashes with the obstacles that prevent a crossing. Those walking, scribbling grammarians are negotiating a literacy of Abbey Road that separates a community – with a Beatle-based literacy – from institutionalised histories of the group. For example, the General Manager of Abbey Road Studios, Ken Townsend, questioned the messy, confusing and irrational connection between fans and 'their' crosswalk.

Picture yourself as a motorist driving down Abbey Road, a quiet northwest London suburb when suddenly in the pouring rain you are confronted by a strange sight. In front of you standing on a zebra crossing are four tourists, one minus shoes and socks, being photographed ... Why you ask yourself, some twenty years on from the time the Beatles used this same zebra crossing for their album cover, should there still be so much interest?¹²

Townsend did not answer his own question. The connective space between the Beatles and their fans is played out on the crossing. The strength of that link is the rationale for the interest. For Townsend to commence his review of fan behaviour by 'picturing yourself' as a motorist rather than as a fan traversing the crosswalk, involves the instigation of a frame of aberrance or deviance. The agency of fans is circumscribed by the logics that circumscribe official space and normalised behaviour. The wall remains a record of the interconnections between the fans and the meaning of their particular crossing.

The wall is a testament to the continued relevance of the studios and crossing to fans.



Visitors from Spain, Holland, Bulgaria, France, Russia, Australia and New Zealand are not only drawn to the Crossing, but also compelled to scrawl their name and comments on the wall. This illogical and illegal act is rendered meaningful through its placement within the Beatles' meaning system on Abbey Road. This manner of active consumption is part of what John Hartley asserted

sets incivility or 'parodic politics' apart from straight or 'well-tempered' society ... a critical, creative and performative reading practice.¹³

The performance of fandom, where the imagined community of a Beatles' audience is actualised through the graffitied residue of textual phantoms, remains a resistive force in the official history of the Abbey Road studios. In themselves, these scrawls have gained a tourist value. The final component of this paper questions why these resistive, trivial commentaries on the wall are deemed worthy of attention from cultural studies theorists.

Scribbled History

Women's history in popular music is denied, displaced or decentred. Rock journalism affirms performers and recordings of credibility and authenticity, which actually allows the survival of conservative modes and patterns of rhythm, melody and grain of voice. Yet young women are the most visible and explosive of fans. Often forgotten is that Boy Bands, with their attendant feminine screams, have a history only slightly shorter than rock and roll. The Beatles were the first group to mark each individual member with attributes, specificity and personality. In this way, a diverse audience of women (and men) was drawn to one (or all) of the

shy/pretty/funny/smart Beatles. Few groups of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s managed this together-alone relationship as effectively as the fab four. The Supremes were Diana Ross. The Osmonds were Donny, and later Marie. The Jacksons were Michael – and then the rest. By the 1980s, this trend was continued by Wham, Bros and Spandau Ballet. Duran Duran, for a time, managed to maintain support for all band members, and therefore had a wider audience and longer pop life than Andrew Ridgeley's fan base. If the 1990s had a marked generic form though, then it was the presence of male and female singing groups. The personalities were managed, marketed and performed. The culmination of this principle was obviously the Spice Girls, where the name of the group infiltrated the personality of the singers: Ginger Spice, Posh Spice, Baby Spice, Scary Spice and Sporty Spice.¹⁴ These names were secondary to their tightly toned role. Their trajectory has an earlier resonance in British music, a Beatles model that was followed to fame. Frequently – too frequently – the screaming girls evaporate from the credible parchment of the Beatles history, in favour of the 'quality' of *Sgt. Pepper*, or the artistry of *Revolver*. The Beatles were fortunate: they were granted a decade to evolve, grow and change. They were also contextualised by the fashionable radicalism of the 1960s. Compare their power and long-term presence in the charts to the hyper-rapid rise and fall of the other great British Boy Band with a huge female audience, Take That.

Take That split in early 1996. The fan allegiance evaporated very quickly. While a *Take That Appreciation Page* survives on the web,¹⁵ the bulletin board shows highly intermittent messages. There are very few regular members, so few that an event scheduled to commemorate the group's dissolution became embarrassing in its *unpopularity*.

It is with much sadness that we have to announce that the 2001 Thatters Reunion has been cancelled due to lack of response. We are very surprised that so few Thatters wanted to get together to remember the guys on the 5th anniversary of their split, but we guess a lot of fans have moved on. We have received a total of 25 payments so far but unfortunately because we have to pay the hotel by the end of February, we cannot wait any longer to see if more fans will be coming.¹⁶

Melancholy punctuates this message. There is a tragedy in establishing a relic of youth that no one visits. It is a virtual ghost town. This vacant fandom is odd, not only when considering the place of Take That in recent memory, but also the current fame of Robbie Williams. His present fans practice textual amnesia about his boy band past. "Thatmania"¹⁷ has disappeared even faster than the Duranmania, Rollermania and Beatlemania. The popcult clock is increasing in speed. To make this dismissal of the fan past even more bizarre, those who leave messages on the discussion forum now deny their own commitment of five years earlier. As Deborah remembers,

I remember I was so down after they'd split up and I never thought I'd be able to cheer up again. I wouldn't say that I'm a TT-fan now. I don't think I ever was actually. I was just a teenybopper having a huuuuuge crush on Mark Owen.¹⁸

This statement was made at the same time that the Beatles, thirty years after their breakup, were holding a number one chart position for a retrospective album of their singles. Some memories are more acceptable than others. The obsessions and desires of the girls (we were) are exfoliated from the skin of memory. We lose, deny and forget much of our (present) selves through this process. Popular music is a

demanding musical form, and young women are a demanding audience. Willie Dixon realised that "the men don't know, but the little girls understand".¹⁹ Obviously though, women grow to deny what, as a little girl, we comprehended and shared.

The power held by these screaming girls is difficult to pinpoint. Yet the grazing female gaze, and the intensity of its desiring power, is a troubling concern for Men's Studies theorists. The siren song of feminism is calling out men's uncoiled fear of the feminine. As Kevin Goddard feared,

Medusa's gaze is deadly because it is self-defensive, the snakes obvious phallic symbols – the female assuming male power, turning the male into stone.²⁰

Once more, the female gaze is a threat to masculine expectations and executions of power. There is no doubt that the spearing attention of young women is combustible and shrill. In their collectivity, there is safety in moving outside of normative sexual behaviour. These fans express desires that, because of their ephemerality, can not be contained in heteronormative discourses of sexuality. Although loud, the voices of these girls are vaporised from acceptable, credible history.

While most post-boy band singers insist that they have serious (male) fans, this invariably decentres the millions of female screamers who granted them an original audience. Not surprisingly therefore, as these girls become young women, they decry these memories within themselves, dismissing them as a stage, phase or crazy summer. When these desires and collective hopes are lost, so are significant micro-moments of power and autonomous sexuality. Significantly, because the 'serious music press' is written for men and by men, the source material survives through time. Christenson and Peterson were correct: "gender is central to the ways in which popular music is used and tastes are organised".²¹ This tendency only increases through the digitisation of documents. While *Billboard*, *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Fair* are enfolded into the Expanded Academic and ProQuest databases, *Smash Hits* and *No. 1* remain outside the parameters of their interest and, one would assume, a University market.²² Therefore, those of us interested in preserving the feminine complexity within the past and the present must textualise the few sources of passion, desire and fantasy that remain.

The Beatles' female fans connect with the wall by scrawling graffiti over its white surface. As a devalued form of writing that is regularly painted over by the management of Abbey Road studios, the fans' words are a trivialised and mocked. Jenkins suggested these texts are a form of "scribbling at the margins".²³ These scribbles are a monitor of how the passions of fandom are manifested on/in/through the landscape. With Beatle historians, tour guide writers and the Abbey Road Studios Management attempting to make their truths authoritative and authentic, the scrawls on the wall offer an outside to this official history. As Cosgrove stated,

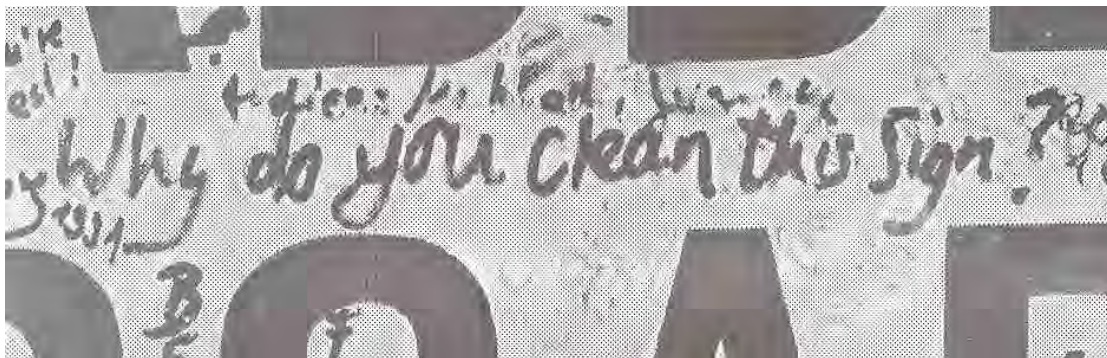
Alternative cultures are less visible in the landscape than dominant ones, although with a change in the scale of observation a subordinate or alternative culture may appear dominant.²⁴

This investigation of the Road encircling the Abbey Road studios is an example of this 'change in scale'. Instead of exploring the 'big picture' Beatle tourism industry, the small scale contestations of culture and meaning are watched through the graffitied texts on the wall.

The struggles involved in generating this alternative memory occasionally extracted direct commentary from the fans.



This aggressive response to those who wiped away the fan's words is precise and unambiguous. This retort also exhibits the way in which fans return to Abbey Road to photograph, view, cross and scrawl. The regular 'whiting out' of the wall is a form of graphological destruction, the removal of words and ideologies that threaten the integrity and authenticity of the Beatles' safe, ordered history. The disorganisation of the surface, which contains haphazard phrases and pastiched images and lyrics, grants fluidity to the London Beatle experience and frays the rationality of the 'sensible' tourist. The questioning of societal rules is a tactic to confirm space. For example, a fan scratched an ideologically provocative question into the Abbey Road street sign.



These textual poachers, scribbling at the margins, problematise the rational world of urban planning and the sanitisation of space. Why should this Beatle space be clean and ordered?

The cluttered composition of graffiti on the wall of the studios is also used as an interface by fans to convey messages to Harrison, Starr or McCartney. Others leave notes for their friends. The fans utilised the wall to link themselves with the Beatles, formulating a connection with the place to efface the temporal gulf between the 1960s and the 1990s. As Pred suggested through his rewriting of Marx's "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonapart",

Women and men make histories and produce places, not under circumstances of their own choosing but in the context of already existing, directly

encountered social and spatial structures, in the context of already existing social and spatial relations that both enable and constrain the purposeful conduct of life.²⁵

Pred is articulating that the generation of meaning from a place is a productive, imaginative enterprise. The textual poachers who scrawl on the Abbey Road wall are directly engaging with - and corrupting - the spatial structures that inhibit the imposition of ideology. In rupturing planning and development, flexibility is factored into the cultural logic of the Beatles' history. The politics of the crossing that feature in the graffitied elucidations instigate a conflict between the fan and official vernacular. The thoroughly postmodern fight over surfaces has been described by Henry Jenkins as

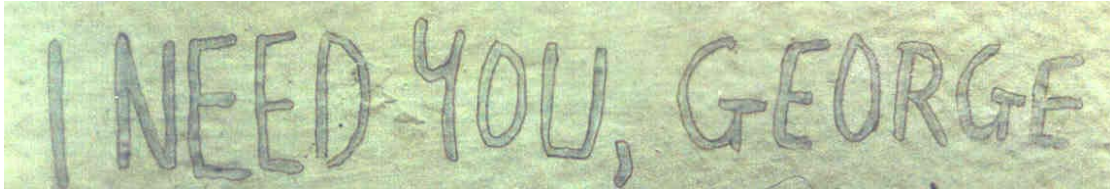
a tug-of-war over meanings, one which can never be totally won by any party but will nevertheless continue to be fought.²⁶

The Abbey Road scribblers are not outside ideology: they 'know their place.' While they freely write on the wall, the fans do not venture into the studios. Their space and role is circumscribed and naturalised.

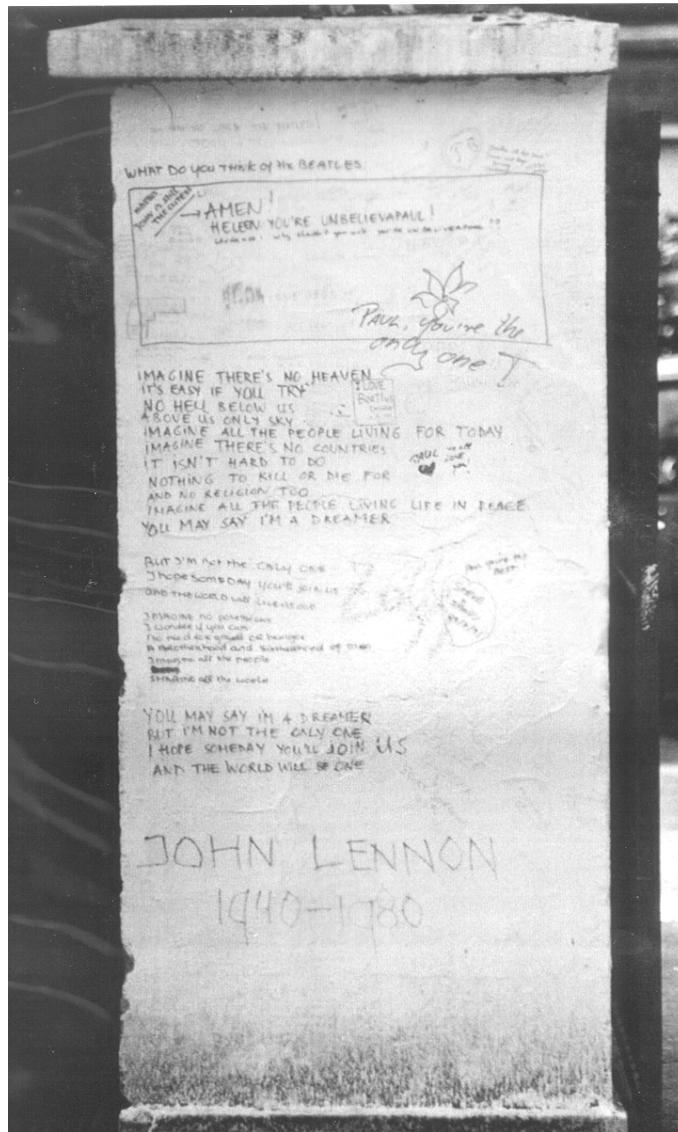
The place of female fans in the semiotic landscape is particularly limited. As Cosgrove realised, "women represent the largest single excluded culture, at least as far as impact on the public landscape is concerned".²⁷ If Abbey Road has a visual language, then the modality of that literacy is feminine. The wall remains an alteritous structure through which to negotiate the limits of the public and private spheres. The gendering of a place results in the semiotic landscape being divided between the moral and the immoral. While Jackson showed that prostitution is organised geographically,²⁸ the sexuality of the Beatles' female fans is dynamic and continually renegotiated through the 'conversations' on the wall.



The negotiation of feminine sexuality, which manifests itself on the wall through the affirmation of the favourite Beatle, publicly performs private desires. Some of these longings are expressed overtly and concisely.



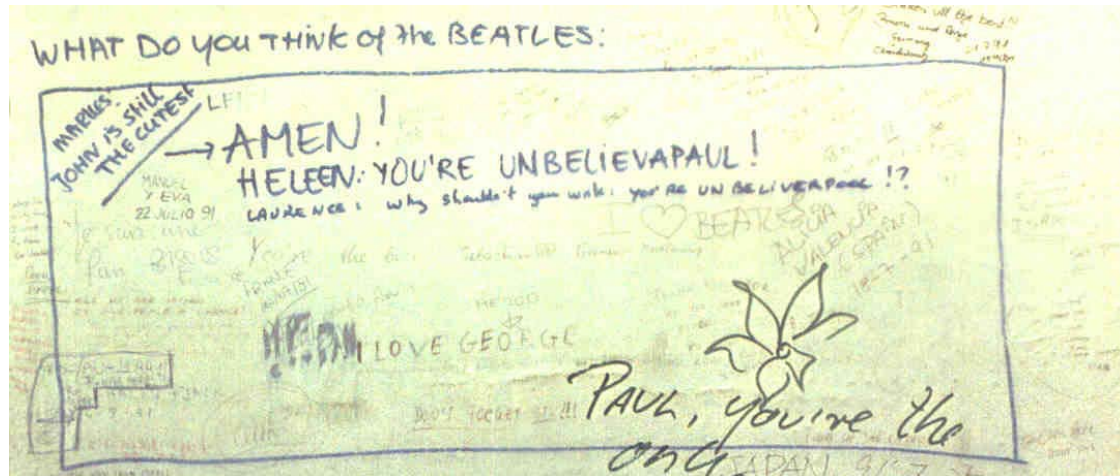
Obviously, such desires become even more tragic through the death of Harrison. Besides 'conversations' with the performers, song lyrics are poached from the Beatles albums and their solo careers. Lennon's 'Imagine' was used as the basis for a memorial to Lennon. This memorial encompassed the entirety of the corner pillar of the wall.



The death of Lennon had a profound effect on the fans that left their mark. They required Lennon to 'mean' something to them. After Lennon's murder, the cultural

pastiche of the 1980s British Beatles fandom was filtered through bloodied gauze. Twenty years after the assassination, it is clear that the loss remains semiotic and social, private and public.

The female fans discuss more than their desire for Paul, John, George or Ringo. They also engage in strangely mediated 'conversations.' Although the female fans visit the wall at different times, the wall provides an analogue, asynchronous discussion forum to reveal their fandom, their obsessions and themselves.



This segment of the wall conveys a temporally disparate but spatially localised discussion between Marlie, Heleen and Zaire. Although they did not meet at the wall, they conveyed information about sightings of Paul, tours and the problems involved in being 'one short for the crossing.' This 'trivial' dialogue is an ephemeral commentary on the landscape, but it conveys much about power, sexuality and the connections between women. But further, as Joseph Roach realised, "on the cusp of the most intimate of memories and the most public of historical events".²⁹ The wall is not an inanimate effigy. It is a moving, changeable whitewash of social and personal possibilities.

A history of place is written using the iconography of landscape. As Giorgio Agamben has offered, "every written work can be regarded as the prologue (or rather, the broken cast) of a work never penned".³⁰ Memory is woven through a tenuous tissue of experience. While Abbey Road may be a suburban street within North West London, this public, masculinist map making discourse is corrupted by the trivial tinkering of spatial scribblers. Edward Soja stated that "we still know too little about the descriptive grammar and syntax of human geographies, the phonemes and epistemes of spatial interpretation".³¹ Instigating a small scale study at the nexus of space and time, geography and history, forms a beginning for such a project. In affixing our gaze to visual cultures, cultural theorists can agitate the scriptorial domination of historical evidence.

The graffiti recorded at the wall of Abbey Road Studios on August 2, 1991 have been effaced. Those particular histories have been removed from the historical database. The musings of Heleen, Zaire and Marlie have been whited out from the official record of the Beatles' history. They cannot be reclaimed. The wall remains, like the best of popular culture, an ever-changing library display, scrawled on textured concrete. It is a bag-washed surface on which we find what Daniel Traister describes as "uncontained cultural memories".³² If the potentials of heritage studies, cultural

studies, women's studies and popular memory are accessed, then the historical past can be re-placed and remoulded. Global travellers reclaim iconographies of the past through a visit to London, and to a wall. It is a nostalgic imagining, affirming the centrality of London to fashion, style and music. The trade route has been reworked into a text route, enacting a new, unequal exchange: of tourist revenue, iconography and imagining. There are disturbing colonial consequences of this search for meaning and community.

A study of popular memory demonstrates that there is a feminist imperative beyond scholarly and professional responsibilities. Occasionally, we need to put down our notebook, silence the clatter of keys, pick up a camera and flood the shutter with meaning. The digital age will not be kind to ephemera. Researchers need to become amateur archivists. Alternatively, we may have to hop a ride on the blue van, and commence the poaching.

Endnotes

- ¹ An example of these stories is found in "Strawberry Field gates stolen", BBC Homepage, http://newssearch.bbc.co.uk/hi/English/uk/newsid_7460000/746683.stm, accessed on August 7, 2000.
- ² L. Weissberg, "Introduction", in D. Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (ed.), *Cultural memory and the construction of identity*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999, p. 13
- ³ J. Goss, "The built environment and social theory: towards an architectural geography", *Professional Geographer*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1988, p. 398
- ⁴ J. Hillier and P. Manus "Pull up the drawbridge: fortress mentality in the suburbs", in S. Watson and K. Gibson (ed.), *Postmodern cities conference - proceedings*, Sydney: University of Sydney, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, 1993, p. 221
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- ⁶ C. Marcus, C. Francis, C. Meunier, "Mixed messages in suburbia: reading the suburban model home", *Places*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1992, p. 27
- ⁷ A. Mellor, "Enterprise and heritage in the Dock", in J. Corner and S. Harvey (eds.), *Enterprise and Heritage*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 95
- ⁸ D. Cosgrove, "Geography is everywhere", in D. Gregory and Walford (eds.), *New Horizons in Human Geography*, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble, 1989, p. 118
- ⁹ K. Anderson and F. Gale, "Introduction", in K. Anderson and F. Gale, *Inventing Places*, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992, p. 7
- ¹⁰ D. Bacon and N. Maslov, *The Beatles' England*, London: Columbus Books, 1982, p. 16
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- ¹³ J. Hartley, "Citizens of the Media: the public domain and technologies of readership", *Paper for the 4th International Symposium on Film, TV and Video*, 1994, p. 8
- ¹⁴ As the group have aged and gone on to 'solo projects,' the labels have followed them. Spice World has become Spite World, Posh Spice (Victoria Beckham) transformed into Skeletal Spice and, with great cruelty, Sporty Spice's weight gain remade her into Sumo Spice.
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