The Intertextuality and Intermediality of the Anglophone Popular Song

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This book is dedicated to the memory of my very dear friend and colleague, Prof Eugene Eoyang, whose last monograph was also published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

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CHAPTER ONE

"BEFORE I START SINGIN'": LITERARY LYRICS IN ANGLOPHONE POPULAR SONG

> "Can a mere song change people's minds? I doubt that it is so. But a song can infiltrate your heart and the heart may change your mind."
> —Elvis Costello (2015), *Unfaithful Music and Disappearing Ink*, 393

Popular song is a hybrid, inter-semiotic form of cultural production, combining semantically communicative linguistic texts—despite their potential ambiguities—with the more abstract medium of musical sound. Similar to art song, which involves the amalgamation of literary texts and 'highbrow' or 'classical' musical settings, popular songs are sometimes based on a pre-existing text produced for a separate communicative purpose. Sources of such adaptations from literary texts include poems, novels, and, as with classical opera, stage plays and musicals; adaptation strategies range from straightforward and literal textual settings to variations on, and parallel versions of, the original work, or brief extracts from it. Literary inspiration for song lyrics in the form of quotations, conscious and unconscious borrowing, name-checking references, parody and oblique allusion can also be discerned in some song lyrics across a range of genres, specifically folk, jazz, rhythm and blues (R&B), pop, rock and hip-hop.

Popular song's reframing and remediating of texts, as well as text extracts and quotes, will be discussed in this study, with reference to specific examples that illustrate the key terms and types. My aim is to investigate how literary texts and extracts metamorphose, or are assimilated, into sung texts in vocal and musical performances. At the same time, the cultural influence of popular song on contemporary literature is noted, and the interesting reciprocity between certain artists and songs and novels and stage plays is discussed. Esteemed literary figures, including Tom Stoppard and David Mitchell, as well as popular novelists like Nick Hornby, exemplify that such influence isn't simply a case of one-way traffic.

Although popular song has been the focus of various types of research, the dynamic and creatively intertextual and intermedial relationship between literary arts and the art of popular song has not been widely recognised. The researcher interested in this field can explore a number of related websites that discuss salient examples of the creative encounter between the two, and the plethora of dedicated lyrics sites also facilitates the task. Nonetheless, it has lacked visibility by comparison with more dominant adaptation practices, especially those for the screen or the stage, as the dearth of studies in this area indicates. Perhaps the preconception that literary texts align more closely with 'serious music' has precluded more systematic scholarly investigation, or at least restricted it to pockets of interest among song enthusiasts. The present book is designed to fill this lacuna, and provide an informative overview and analysis of a significant cultural phenomenon. At the same time, I acknowledge the informative work that has already been done, and is readily available in many instances on the worldwide web, in respect of specific song adaptations and the intertextual processes of notable singer-songwriters.

Such sources have facilitated my survey of a surprisingly rich field of case studies in preparation for writing this book, as has the easy accessibility of song lyrics on a number of dedicated websites. Other sites that promote discussion on song meanings and references, especially the richly informative songfacts.com and lithub.com, offer valuable resources to the keen researcher. Certain notable popular songs about other art forms, for example Don McLean's ekphrastic song "Vincent" about Van Gogh's painting "Starry Night", have long been the subject of critical discussion, but this has not been developed in a wider systematic framework. Despite the admittedly stimulating online discourse on literature and popular song, relatively little has been published to date on the relationship between literary and other artistic forms and popular song; this paucity of attention was noted in a 2021 article in the online music magazine *Far Out*, entitled 'Patti Smith's love for Leonard Cohen and the problem with aspiring "rock poets"'. Smith suggests that younger-generation lyricists can develop their writing by listening to the best lyricists of a previous generation, such as Cohen, and becoming more familiar with literary tropes and archetypes.[1]

As the above quotation from prolific singer-songwriter Elvis Costello suggests, popular songs, like popular poems and novels, can have a powerful impact on our psyche; the song tunes and lyrics that we carry round in our heads from day to day not only enrich our lives and express subconscious or semi-conscious thought and emotion, they also illuminate our understanding and insight about ourselves, others and the world around us.

A "mere song", even if it cannot, of itself, change the world, or right wrongs, can capture the essence of inchoate thoughts and feelings about our personal relationships, as well as about actions and events in "the ordinary world".[2] While a particularly felicitous arrangement of words, in conjunction with a memorable musical motif or melody, resonates in our minds, it can prompt positive thinking in individual listeners and, occasionally, have a more profound, far-reaching impact.

Songs such as Charlie Chaplin's "Smile", as sung by Nat King Cole, Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land", Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come", Louis Armstrong's version of "What a Wonderful World", Aretha Franklin's interpretation of Otis Redding's "Respect", Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'", John Lennon's "Imagine" and Public Enemy's "Fight the Power" are all globally recognised anthems and songs that have spoken, and continue to speak, to vast numbers of people, individually and collectively. Hit songs recorded for fund-raising campaigns, such as Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie's "We Are the World", and those performed at philanthropic concerts and festivals, such as Live Aid, are likewise songs that have exercised worldwide influence through their combination of topical lyrics, attractive melodies and international appeal. The majority of these popular songs are examples of intertextual songs only in the sense that all texts, to a degree, are intertextual, and most of them are not expressly based on any pre-existing literary work. At the same time, it is clearly impossible to know exactly what prior texts consciously or subliminally influenced the composition of these song classics.

The past half-century has seen a veritable explosion in the production, dissemination, marketing and consumption of recorded popular music in ever-more accessible technologies and platforms. This has served to widen the gap between straightforward pop (music for mass consumption) and the lyrically more sophisticated popular song forms that emerged during the 'cultural turn' of the mid-to-late 1960s and have endured despite the vicissitudes of fashion. To a considerable extent, the verbal creativity and inventive rhythmic and rhyming patterns of rap/hip-hop have helped to redefine the Anglophone popular music scene; their typical deployment of idiomatic vernacular language has tended to preclude literary adaptations for the most part, but with some remarkable exceptions. However, we should acknowledge that the listener's enjoyment of the song lyrics and music does not always depend greatly on her/his awareness of literary quotations or allusions. Indeed, the listener does not even need to grasp all the resonances, allusions and implications of a song lyric to enjoy it.

My first chapter title is taken from Nobel laureate Bob Dylan's world-famous protest song "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" from his 1963 album "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan". Lauded by *Rolling Stone* writer, Alan Light, as "the brilliant epic 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall,' based on the melody and structure of the British folk ballad 'Lord Randall'",[3] Dylan's song creates the image of an isolated but defiant singer who will sing his songs of protest against the impending cataclysm of all-out war. But, in order to voice out his warnings in song, he must know his text by heart: "And I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'/ But I'll know my song well before I start singin'".[4] These two lines are the last ones of Dylan's free variation on the original theme of the anonymous ballad preceding the final iteration of his much-discussed refrain. The self-reference is placed at the end of the song for good reason: even though the song's melody was borrowed from the Anglo-Scottish border ballad, today it is the contemporary blue-eyed son's mission to sing out about the state of the world, while he still has a voice left to do so. The 21-year old singer sees it as his personal responsibility to "tell it, and think it, and speak it, and breathe it",[5] rather than leaving the meaning of his song in the thoughts and words of his musical predecessors.

"No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone...and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted...the past [is] altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past"; these astute observations were made by T. S. Eliot in his 1919 essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.[6] For Eliot, all art emerges out of an inherited tradition, with the result that the modern artist's voice and expression are shaped by earlier works of art and creative figures. The interaction, whereby the individual talent is nurtured and fed by the tradition and, in turn, contributes to it by finding her/his own distinctive means of expression, represents the crux of Eliot's argument in the essay. In a further insight, Eliot recognises the value of 'stealing' rather than merely imitating, and cogently argues, "the good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn".[7]

Dylan's songwriting exemplifies this process of ransacking the cultural heritage to forge his unique sound and artistic vision. As Anthony Decurtis notes of the Nobel laureate's work, "blending the traditional and the modern is his forte."[8] Dylan recognised in his memoir *Chronicles: Volume One* and his Nobel Prize acceptance speech his debt to artists of an earlier generation, particularly Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams. He readily cites iconic figures of his youth, such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Odetta and Johnny

Cash, as well as a host of folk and blues practitioners, as song stylists from whom he took ideas and motifs. Like many artists before him and many of his peers, the influence of literary language on his written lyrics compounded the influence of these musical predecessors on his songwriting and performing style. When Dylan gravitated toward writing his own compositions, initially on "The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan", and subsequently on other critically acclaimed albums, he stole motifs from folk ballads, R&B songs, rock and roll and country blues, but he always made the sound of his appropriations entirely his own. Thus, the title of his 2001 album "Love and Theft" wryly reflects Dylan's awareness of his debt to the Anglo-American song tradition.

While retaining a focus on the sociopolitical concerns of "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" throughout this study—and especially in the following chapter on ballads of social protest—I propose to interpret the meaning of the second line of the couplet quoted above in a more general sense: what do songwriters hear, read and write before they start singing? In short, they need either to adapt material from existing sources, or to write their own lyrics drawn from a wide range of source texts and personal experiences. Such lyrics are subject to myriad influences, and among these are other song lyrics, poems, short and long fictions, plays, films, photographs and hybrid cultural forms. As discussed above, they may also reflect consciousness of the artist's engagement with a cultural and stylistic tradition. Artistic responses to these influences and stimuli can constitute straightforward literal settings of, or quotations from, literary sources, updating/modernisation of texts or parts of texts, serious imitation (pastiche) or mock imitation (parody) or radical transmutation of prior texts, deploying similar patterns to express alternative meanings.

This deep-structure intertextuality is embedded in the cultural flux of language, and, in regard to referentiality, as opposed to deliberate setting or quotation, operates at both conscious and subconscious levels. The term 'intertextuality' is a relatively modern coinage, and was proposed by Bulgarian critical theorist Julia Kristeva in her essay analysis of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts, 'polyphony' and 'the carnivalesque'.[9] Kristeva introduced the term based on her observation of what is implied by the linguistic-literary theories of Ferdinand de Saussure and Bakhtin. According to her argument, a text is composed of a mosaic of citations, involving the assimilation and reconstitution of other words/texts. Her work reveals the interconnections between texts, and situates the construction of meaning in the dialogic relationship between texts and audience.

Critics have noted three levels of intertextuality: namely, obligatory, optional and accidental. In the case of the obligatory type, both the encoding by the subsequent artist and decoding by the audience of the textual relationship are intrinsic and essential: to provide a specific song example of this phenomenon, Weird Al Yankovic's "Eat It", based on Michael Jackson's mega-hit "Beat It" from the best-selling 1982 album "Thriller", illustrates the obligatory intertextual connection perfectly. It is obligatory, because Yankovic's spoof, like many of his other songs, is contingent on the presupposition that the listener already knows the prior song. Parody, as in the case of "Eat It", necessitates awareness of the intertextual link. Presupposition is, therefore, constitutive of this category.

The optional category applies to most of the song examples of literary intertextuality discussed in this book; while recognition of the intertextual connection on the part of the audience enhances the quality of the song's reception, it cannot be presupposed by the composer, and is not essential for the appreciation of its lyrics, melody, rhythm, and other features. Much depends on the cultural status of the source text; so it is feasible, though somewhat unlikely, that a song setting of a Shakespeare sonnet or a biblical psalm may be enjoyed for itself, without any presupposition on the part of the listener, or awareness of the text's derivation.

The third type, known as accidental intertextuality, depends on the random cognitive processes of either the listener, who may decode meanings and connections related to other songs or texts of her/his acquaintance, or the songwriter, who may be inadvertently influenced by a prior literary text. In such cases, the intertextual connection tends to function through unconscious association or indeterminate and arbitrary responses, as opposed to any objectively demonstrable textual relationship. Self-evidently, such intertextual associations defy categorisation.

Besides intertextuality theory, the important work of French literary semiologists, such as Gérard Genette and Roland Barthes, has informed critical discussion of the past half-century, and similarly challenged previous theories of textual originality and autonomy. The former's theory of 'palimpsests', using the metaphor of recycled manuscripts retaining visible traces of effaced earlier writings,[10] and fellow-structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss's metaphorical concept of 'bricolage', referring to an improvised rearrangement of available and convenient materials, are often both associated with intertextuality. Génette's structuralist terms 'hypotext', to designate the preceding source text, and 'hypertext', to designate a subsequent palimpsestic text, are also relevant to any discussion of

intertextual relations. My book traces Kristeva's dialogic relationship, not just between text and audience, but between text and text, that is to say, between intertexts, and focuses on the inspiration that the English popular song tradition has derived from various kinds of literature.

A further theoretical aspect of textual interpretation, namely the semiological theory of deixis, or pointing, is relevant to any discussion of how texts reference or indicate other texts. Lyricists often encode or embed references to events, places and other creative works in their lyrics to enrich the song with hyperlinks to shared knowledge and representations of the world; these links purvey various sociocultural and sociopolitical ideas and values. In the same way that smoke is indexical of fire or dark clouds are a sign of a coming storm, a literary name, title or quotation in a song lyric points toward that prior text, and creates a potential intertextual relationship. The effectiveness of the signifier (the name or cited phrase or extract employed by the lyricist) in the communicative event (listening to the song or browsing the lyrics) will depend, naturally, on the ability to decode or recognise its derivation. Even if the listener is unaware of the precise origin of the reference or allusion in the particular song lyrics, s/he may discern that it is part of a mosaic of quotations in a text, the source of which s/he remains uncertain about, but can easily verify, if s/he is motivated to do so.

Only if the listener is entirely unconscious of the specific intertextual reference, and assumes that the songwriter is responsible for all of the song lyrics, does the act of deixis on the part of the songwriter fail to communicate with that particular individual. Of course, such lack of awareness does not prevent comprehension of the lyrics or equal enjoyment of the song on the part of the putative listener, as suggested above; as the idea of optional intertextuality proposes, the song can still be communicatively effective, whether or not literary references are picked up. That said, the elements of literary adaptation and allusion add a further layer of meaning to the lyrics that can deepen the listener's appreciation of the song's meaning. As with all texts, the reception of song lyrics can vary greatly, depending on what the listener brings to the process of decoding.

Certain intertextual references are much more overt than others: Kenny Loggins's songs "The House at Pooh Corner" and "Return to Pooh Corner" have self-evident reference to A.A. Milne for probably the vast majority of listeners. Likewise, Jefferson Airplane's hit "White Rabbit" makes its connection to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* clear by referencing the child protagonist of the novels, even if the lyrics suggest a very different and more adult interpretation of the

source narrative. By sharp contrast, few listeners—with the exception of the ultra-dedicated—are likely to pick up on the obscure origin of lyrics from the Lennon-McCartney song "Golden Slumbers" on the "Abbey Road" album.[11] Whereas in the earlier song examples the literary context is significant, in the case of this particular Beatles' song the arcane derivation of the textual borrowing matters much less than its musical function as a lullaby.

While cover versions of other songwriters' songs generate royalties for the composers concerned, this is not normally the case with literary intertextuality. The Beatles did not feel obliged to acknowledge use of a text produced long before copyright laws were even introduced, and to which, to be fair, they added a fresh melody, but there is an ethical issue involved in not doing so. Nowadays, the ethical expectation related to any such borrowing, irrespective of the age of the source text, is for full acknowledgment. At the same time, literature-inflected lyrics are usually less constrained by ethical issues bordering on the use of intertextuality than other song lyrics; moreover, greater latitude is often extended to them in matters of copyright. According to the aesthetic conventions of music, literary sources are considered legitimate sources of primary material for art-song settings and even, by extension, rock, jazz and folk settings. Other literary quotations and allusions are, likewise, not usually a copyright concern, since quotation is a legitimate practice in the arts. Unlike the high-profile plagiarism cases brought against pop artists and songwriters such as Ed Sheeran and Taylor Swift for alleged commonalities between their hits and other people's compositions (the offending songs are invariably lucrative hits and the complaints related not to lyrics, but to melodic and harmonic elements), literary intertextuality in song lyrics rarely provokes such controversy in the popular music industry.

As regards the often unrecognised connection between popular song and various types of literature, Anthony May's research on the marketing of 1940s and 1950s pop music reveals the extent to which adaptation from a wide range of sources, literature included, played a significant role in the exploitation of the genre's commercial potential and growth.[12] However, in his handbook of popular music concepts, Roy Shuker defined the tendency toward adaptation in popular music more in terms of "appropriation" than adaptation. He describes it as "an umbrella term, a synonym for 'use,' which includes related concepts such as transculturation, hybridisation, indigenisation and syncretism. Collectively these refer broadly to the process of borrowing, reworking and combining from other sources to create new cultural forms and spaces."[13] Shuker's delineation of the role of appropriation has helped

to clarify the composite nature of song texts, and emphasise the constant recycling of words and music in the process of song creation. The integration of the verbal with the non-verbal in the union of lyrics and musical melody and rhythm endows song with its dual nature; being neither entirely concrete, nor entirely abstract, a song is an intrinsic hybrid.

This hybrid nature is a product of fusion between two very different media of communication, as composer Ned Rorem once observed in his essay 'The American Art Song'. Rorem remarks that the relationship between words and music in the production of song is a bastardised one.[14] His metaphor problematises the process of amalgamating concrete and abstract forms of artistic expression, while implying a sense of illegitimacy, and even transgression, in the coupling. This idea of transgression is a very apt trope for much of the 20th century's popular music, especially in respect of its resistance to sociocultural conformity. Arguably, though, Shuker's syncretic or alchemical metaphor is more apt for present purposes, since it emphasises the target or outcome of the fusion, rather than any question of incompatibility between the source material and the end product. Moreover, the context and synchronicity of performance changes everything, and live songs have different resonances at different times for different audiences, while the reception of recorded versions tends to be more fixed and stable.

My study argues that songwriting and original, or adapted, lyrics should be regarded as an extension of a broad literary-cultural continuum, rather than being perceived as of negligible cultural relevance; this perspective runs contrary to traditional critical tendencies to dismiss popular song as a lowbrow manifestation of popular culture generally, in line with Theodor Adorno's Marxist critique.[15] The perceived division, and the debate that it has generated, between highbrow and lowbrow cultural values informs our discussion of popular song. As Raymond Williams contends in his influential 1958 essay, "culture is ordinary: that is the first fact."[16] Stating the persuasive case that it is never just the preserve of a privileged elite, Williams rejects the socially deterministic, dichotomous model of highbrow-versus-lowbrow culture that T. S. Eliot had proposed in his essay, 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture'. Williams relates his arguments to working-class culture, as he experienced it growing up in a working-class community in South Wales; although he doesn't refer to it specifically in his essay, the enjoyment of popular music is one aspect of that 'ordinary' shared cultural experience. Popular music's intersection with cultural phenomena, such as literature, that Eliot would have considered of higher value to civilisation supports Williams's critique of the former's rather snobbish dichotomy.

Following Williams's argument, popular song must be considered an intrinsic element of a wider cultural spectrum, and include those songs inspired by literary texts. At the same time, we should bear in mind that, however seminal or influential a source or referenced text may be, a good song adaptation is one that functions well as a song, not just as a skilful adaptation. In adapted or allusive songs by folk-rock or pop composers of the calibre of Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Tom Waits, Kate Bush, David Bowie, songwriter-poets Cohen and Smith and songwriter-novelist Nick Cave the innate musical quality of literary source text lexis and striking visual imagery can be transformed into a very concrete and effective musical form. This occurs through the melodic and harmonic setting of words and the judicious choices of genre, tempo, key and/or mode, notation, vocal range and instrumentation to create an effective compound. This creative alchemy is bi-directional: that is, the song contributes to the afterlife of the poem, play, novel or film, but at the same time draws its text or textual allusion from the literary source, while remediating and redefining it in an unfamiliar context.

In rare cases, notably Dylan's eleven-minute epic "Desolation Row", the fleeting literary references—The Bible, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Hamlet, The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, Franz Kafka's *The Castle* and T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock*—engage in a cultural critique that is independent and transformative of the source texts' frame of reference. In these contexts, the intertextual relationship with specific titles, authors and characters of often canonical literary works is weighted in favour of the target text's appropriation more than any fidelity to the source.

In theory, any art medium could interact with song, or provide the source for a song adaptation. But in practice only a few other art forms are catalysts for the process of inter-semiotic transformation that song-writing entails. Photography, rather than painting, is the most common ekphrastic source medium, but the inspiration from literature has been arguably more significant, despite the close correspondence between popular music and film and video art. The most typical and, historically speaking, closely associated of these literary source forms is poetry, which will furnish a fair proportion of examples and case studies in the following chapters. Originally, poetry and song were more or less indistinguishable in many cultural traditions, but after the Middle Ages they became much more distinct, the sung form generally being considered more 'lowbrow' and the written and spoken form more culturally 'highbrow'.

Nonetheless, poets continued to use the generic description 'song' in their titles, as for example in William Blake's anthology title *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' in his influential collection *Leaves of Grass*. Metrical, rhymed poetry of the past, such as that of Blake, has an obvious affinity with the song form, while the free verse of the modern age has tended to obscure the common roots of the respective art-forms. Poets, including Homer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Blake, Burns, Poe, Dickinson, Yeats and Lorca, have provided stimulus to the popular songwriting imagination, as well as, in the case of a significant number of settings, partial or complete source texts for songs. Moreover, the Harlem Renaissance in the United States saw a tight relationship between new jazz and blues songs and poetry by voices on the black cultural scene.

Such literary references were, unsurprisingly, rarer in the pop explosion of the 1950s and early 1960s during the apogee of the Brill Building songwriting industry. However, they experienced a boom in the singer-songwriter decades between the late 1960s and early 1990s, both in the U.S. and the U.K. The Beatles reflected the 1960s taste for consuming popular paperback literature with their ironic lyrics to the 1966 hit song "Paperback Writer"; besides, there were quite a few song composers in this period, for example, Leonard Cohen, Gil Scott-Heron, Lou Reed, Jim Morrison, Laura Nyro, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison and, of course, Dylan, inspired by literary influences of greater substance and enduring quality, as opposed to the ephemeral popularity of the paperback bestseller. These latter songwriters not only produced lyrics of much greater complexity than most of those produced in the previous era, they also deployed typically literary tropes, particularly irony, paradox, contradiction (oxymoron), and understatement (litotes), as well as introducing metaphors and imagery that transcended those conventionally featured in pop lyrics.

In this period eloquent and poignant poetry, whether ancient or modern, often provided the touchstone for creative independence from the source text, generating a definitive artistic response to source material in the process of its transformation. In a few isolated cases, poets began to sing their own work, Leonard Cohen being the most prominent example, although both Patti Smith and Rod McKuen started out primarily as poets. In addition, Liverpudlian trio The Scaffold featured the eminent British poet Roger McGough, and specialised in humorous, finely crafted lyrics. Lyricists' predilection for older poetic source texts may also be explained by the fact that more recent poetic source material is subject to copyright, unless the adaptation is done with the blessing or collaboration of the particular author. A few celebrity authors engaged in such collaborations

with popular music groups: for example, Kurt Vonnegut collaborated with the U.S. band Ambrosia, producing lyrics for their 1975 hit song, "Nice, Nice, Very Nice". Vonnegut got an official songwriting credit for the lyrics, which were adapted from his satirical 1963 novel *Cat's Cradle*. Other similar notable collaborations include U.S. singer-songwriter Tom Waits's collaboration with Beat author William Burroughs on the rock opera *The Black Rider*, in a 1990 production directed by Robert Wilson, and fantasy author Michael Moorcock's lyrical contributions to songs by American hard-rock band Blue Öyster Cult.

Some of the more textually sophisticated songs in the popular song repertoire were inspired by novel extracts or novel titles, notably classic fictions of the calibre of *Frankenstein, Wuthering Heights*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Huckleberry Finn, Ulysses, Lolita, 1984, The Lord of the Rings,* and Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy. Novel references tend to be used more as motifs or cultural allusions in certain songs, given the impossibility of covering, or even attempting to cover, the entire narrative. Two major sources of literary inspiration, namely the Bible and Shakespeare, merit separate dedicated discussion in this study, so fertile have they been as sources for popular songs, particularly in the folk ballad, jazz and rock genres. In addition, Greek mythology, the ancient Chinese philosophical text *I Ching* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* are among other more recondite sources. Lyrics set from, or alluding to, fashionable literary texts or authors, such as Santana's chart-topping 1970 album "Abraxas", which referenced the Herman Hesse novel *Demian*, sometimes courted pretentiousness, or at least the perception of it. In the early years of pop, rock and folk-rock literary lyrics and allusions to novels or poems tended to be critiqued, either for reasons of plagiarism or grandiosity, in an era when the perceptual framework for pop and rock music composition was much narrower.

It wasn't until the wave of literary adaptations in the shape of Seventies concept albums occurred that more overt literary references and appropriations became familiar. Before this allusions and borrowings by artists such as Dylan were often subtly embedded in song texts. The latter's surrealistic allusions to Melville's *Moby Dick* at several points in the lyrics of his wry satire "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream", about his homeland and its penchant for self-mythologising, serve to debunk the myths by deploying probably the nation's greatest novel. Just how skilfully encoded his sequence of passing allusions is would only have been evident to the Melville enthusiast, and must have gone over the heads of the vast majority of listeners when his album "Bringing It All Back Home" was released in

early 1965. Back in the 1960s no popular songwriter would have considered the notion of releasing an album based on Melville's *magnum opus*, as the metal band Mastodon did in 2013.

Adaptation as a general practice, whether in cinema, on stage, or in song, has also taken time to become recognised and accepted as an autonomous and legitimate art form. Nowadays, a clear distinction is usually made between the practices of literal adaptation and more independent appropriation.[17] Nonetheless, from the perspective of the song researcher, a straightforward dichotomous model of literal adaptation or setting, on the one hand, and a free appropriation, on the other, fails to account for the continuum or spectrum of adaptation types. Instead of a simple binary model, my study proposes one based on popular song's transtextual, transcultural, transmedial relationship with literature in the form of literary allusions and literary settings. It argues that the orality of song endows it with a protean quality and the proclivity for 'cultural mobility', to borrow the term from the theory of Stephen Greenblatt *et al,* [18] thanks to its technologies of rapid transmission and proliferation. These fluid qualities also make popular song appear harder to define and categorise than say, film, which has its own highly developed adaptation discourse.

Geoffrey Wagner, citing the influence of early film critic Béla Balázs's theorisation of film adaptation, proposes a three-level descriptive categorisation of what he describes as "adaptive modes."[19] According to Wagner's schema, itself adapted from Balázs, the three modes are: *transposition*, *commentary* and *analogy*, representing a continuum of formal and aesthetic approaches to adaptation, from closer alignment between source and target text in transposition, "with the minimum of apparent interference," to commentary, "where an original is either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect . . . a re-emphasis or re-structure",[20] to analogy, which he sees as representing "a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art". [21] More contemporary categorisation by Linda Hutcheon also posits three categories of adaptation, corresponding approximately to those of Wagner/Balázs, but without a specific application to cinema. These are, "an acknowledged transposition of a recognisable other work or works"; "a creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging", which echoes the Wagner/Bálazs 'commentary' type, and "an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work"[22] broadly equivalent to their 'analogy' type.

Invoking these established tripartite models, I shall present the case for complementing the broadly descriptive category of intermedial adaptation

with a more detailed formal-aesthetic analysis, following the Wagner/Bálazs taxonomy and the three categories defined by Hutcheon. The application of these criteria to diverse approaches to song adaptation, involving the amalgamation of words and music, naturally necessitates something of an adaptation in itself. After all, the first model was originally conceived for film adaptations, while the second relates to other practices of adaptation, and not specifically to popular song. As my examples in the subsequent chapters will bear out, they offer a more sophisticated taxonomy than a binary distinction between adaptation and appropriation. Like all theoretical models, though, they rely on abstractions more than on specifics: for example, the notion of "minimal interference" in relation to the transposition mode cannot be quantified, making it a matter of listener subjectivity, and qualifying phrases and epithets, such as "fairly considerable", "in some respects" and "extended", hardly promote clarity of definition. Nevertheless, such models provide a helpful framework for classifying this hitherto under-theorised and amorphous mass of material.

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The book's structure is designed to reflect the literary genres that have impacted on popular songwriting in the past hundred years or so, from ballad poems to poetry and then to fiction and, finally, drama. Thus, the opening section of the present chapter has sought to contextualise a rationale for the study and the overall argument within a framework of relevant critical theories, particularly in relation to adaptation, appropriation and intertextuality. In the following chapter we trace the roots of the modern-day songs of popular social protest in the ballad form, exploring its intersection with folk literature, as in the Robin Hood outlaw ballad tradition. The pivotal argument of the chapter is that oral literature has always been a performed and popular literature, despite the fact that this literary heritage is rooted in demotic cultures, and authorship of many of the songs has remained anonymous for posterity.

This second chapter explores a cross-section of ballads and their popular and literary qualities; it looks at how the lyricism and power of the traditional English folk ballads and ballads from the Scottish Borders and Ireland, extolling political and personal autonomy and often expressing rebel sentiments, influenced romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge to write more 'culturally highbrow' personalised lyrical ballads. The song-poems of Scotland's great lyricist Robert Burns, which are discussed here in relation to astute modern interpretations by Scottish song artists like Eddi Reader and Paolo Nutini, exemplified this reciprocity. The

19th century literary ballad of the Romantic poets, such as Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', essentially imitated the oral, traditional ballad form and became to an extent a written form. Modern rock and folk music adaptations of some of these great Romantic ballads, particularly 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' and 'The Lady of Shallot', are all explored in this chapter, which is divided into three sections according to typology; these are, traditional ballads in modern interpretation, Anglo-American literary ballads reinterpreted and modern-day ballads.

As the chapter shows, the ballad quatrain rhyme scheme ABCB remained popular with latter-day balladeers, such as Guthrie, Dylan, Pete Seeger, Phil Ochs, Billy Bragg and Bruce Springsteen. Another important development of the form in its 20th century iterations is that traditional ballad songs became associated with particular performing artists, as recordings, copyright and other manifestations of the music industry facilitated a more informed process of transmission. Newly penned ballad songs, such as those of Seeger, Ochs and Dylan, and ballads with a modern literary reference, such as Springsteen's "The Ghost of Tom Joad", have complemented folk-rock traditional ballad songs to greatly enrich the repertoire. Nevertheless, a distinctive link between traditional, anonymous ballads and their modern counterparts is the form's suitability as a vehicle both for impersonal narrative and the indictment of social injustice.

My third chapter explores the direct transposition process from poetry into song, and discusses the intertextual relationship that exists between poems and popular songs. Its core argument is that there can be a very close correspondence between songs and poems, as in the songs of Leonard Cohen, but the significant parallels lie in the performative elements of both, as opposed to their words on the page. In the 20th century such songs became associated with particular performing artists as recordings, copyright and other manifestations of the music industry facilitated a more informed process of transmission. The interface between poetry and popular jazz music and song during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s-to-1940s was one of its defining characteristics, and a significant number of poems were written in twelve-bar blues form; this chapter explores the nexus of intertextual relationships of blues songs with the work of Harlem Renaissance poets, such as Langston Hughes, and discusses the poetics of one of the greatest examples of jazz-blues poetry ever recorded, "Strange Fruit". It also considers the process of transferring the speech rhythms and cadences of poetry to the context of song, where musical rhythms and inflections intersect with verbal expression.

Other case studies of songs based partly, or wholly, on poems in this chapter include settings, homages and variations by a range of artists, including Leonard Cohen, Phil Ochs, Joni Mitchell, Paul Simon, Peter Gabriel, Suzanne Vega, Patti Smith, Stevie Nicks, Robert Plant, Loreena McKennit, Natalie Merchant and The Waterboys, many of them based on works by famous, or in some cases not-so-famous, 19th century or early 20th century poets. What these singers have in common is that they are not only talented and prolific composers, as well as performers, but are also wordsmiths with a strong inclination for literary subject-matter, reflecting the robust cultural tradition from which they emerged. Besides, the influence of French symbolist poets, such as Rimbaud and Verlaine, on the transformation of lyrics-writing from the mid-1960s through to the 1980s was palpable; this is discussed in relation to artists such as Dylan, Smith and Reed. The chapter's major case studies of The Waterboys' W. B. Yeats settings, Cohen's setting of C. P. Cavafy's poem 'The God Abandons Antony' and Joni Mitchell's cool jazzy version of Rudyard Kipling's famous poem 'If' provide more in-depth analysis of the way that music and poetic text are fused by these exceptional song composers. While many examples in the chapter involve reference, quotation, or indirect analogy, these case study songs focus on the art of textual transposition.

In Chapter Four the phenomenon of fictional intertextuality in the form of allusion, reference, quotation and rewriting is analysed and discussed. Despite the plethora of such references and inspirational sources in popular songs, only a few examples of each type of literary intertextuality serve as in-depth case studies. The selected case studies exemplify how the literary source text interacts with the conceptual framework and lyrics of the song in question. Case study examples feature songs transposing sections of source text, such as Kate Bush's "Flower of the Mountain" (from Joyce's *Ulysses*) and Black Star's "Thieves in the Night", with its chorus based on Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, in addition to U2's musical version of Salman Rushdie's fiction-inspired lyrics in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

The chapter also discusses examples of the concept album as a musicalisation of the source work as a whole; examples include Jeff Wayne's "The War of the Worlds" (after H.G. Wells), Rick Wakeman's "Journey to the Centre of the Earth" (based on Jules Verne's geo-fantasy adventure), and Pink Floyd's album "Animals", with its resonances of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. As is evident from this section of the chapter, the literary concept album has proved a popular and enduring phenomenon, encompassing such diverse singers and bands as David Bowie, Mike Oldfield, Lou Reed, Hawkwind, Rush, The Alan Parsons Project, Iron

Maiden, Blind Guardian and Mastodon. Sometimes targeted for its perceived pretentiousness or grandiosity, it has proved a remarkably resilient musical form, one that has done much to cement the relationship between fiction and literature.

Another type of looser adaptation exploits narrative elements from the literary source, with either a more subjective, or a more contemporary, nuance; case study examples of this type discussed in the chapter include songs such as Bush's Number One hit, "Wuthering Heights", focusing exclusively on the Cathy-Heathcliff relationship in Emily Brontë's celebrated novel set on the Yorkshire moors. The Rolling Stones' "Sympathy for the Devil", with its indirect but distinct traces of Bulgakov's masterpiece *The Master and Margarita*, and Led Zeppelin's Tolkien-related "Ramble On" and "The Battle of Evermore"—both evocative of *The Lord of the Rings*—provide material for further analysis of the creative/interpretive type of adaptation. Bowie's unrealised musical project "1984", featuring three songs, "1984", "We Are the Dead" and "Big Brother", offers an intriguing insight into allegorical ideas in the mind of the songwriter and his musical direction and ambitions in the early 1970s. The phenomenon of literary allusion is manifested by song titles or album names, as well as band names, such as The Doors, whose name was taken from an Aldous Huxley title that references a Blake poem. Allusion in literature-inspired but non-eponymous songs, such as "White Rabbit" and "ReJoyce" by Jefferson Airplane or Duran Duran's "Wild Boys"—their hit song indebted to Beat novelist William Burroughs—are explored for their intertextual signification. Another important aspect of this chapter is its focus on allusions and references to children's literature, as well as to science fiction and fantasy; both genres have provided inspiration for singer-songwriters and bands from the 1960s onward, if to a lesser extent for today's artists.

Chapter Five, which is entitled "Shakespeare in the Alley, Composing Hallelujah: The Bible, Shakespeare and Popular Song", conflates the two richest and most common sources of popular song intertextuality in a single chapter. With respect to both collections of canonical texts, settings and quotations are discussed first, followed by a discussion of allusions to and variations on the themes or characters. As we discover, biblical sources are legion throughout the work of a significant number of singer-songwriters, ranging from religiously inspired songs of worship to songs that comment on contemporary personal or social phenomena, with only passing reference to the scriptures. Having said that, the chapter's focus is more on popular songs with an intertextual biblical connection, as opposed to the specific

genre of Christian rock or pop; most popular songs are not dedicated purely to the purpose of worship, even if some by top artists, such as Dylan, U2 and Sinead O'Connor, appear to have been written as much to proselytise as to entertain.

Case studies include direct settings of biblical texts or extracts, such as Pete Seeger's "Turn Turn Turn" based on a passage from The Book of Ecclesiastes, and popularised by The Byrds, and the reggae song, "Rivers of Babylon", based on Psalms 137 and first performed by Jamaican group, The Melodians, but internationally popularised by German group, Boney M. The chapter also explores variations on biblical texts in a colloquial folk, blues or rock idiom. A good example of this phenomenon is Rev. Robert Wilkins' blues version of the New Testament parable of The Prodigal Son. "Prodigal Son" achieved much greater familiarity with pop fans thanks to the Rolling Stones' recording of it on their highly rated 1968 "Beggars' Banquet" album. Comparing Robert Wilkins's vocal delivery and Mick Jagger's, as well as the style and substance of the original and The Stones' cover version, we gain insight into the commercialisation and secularisation of blues songs by white artists in this period.

Further case studies of renowned popular songs that contain allusive lyrical references to The Bible are discussed in depth, particularly Leonard Cohen's and Jeff Buckley's versions of "Hallelujah"; Cohen's take on contemporary male-female relationships is viewed through the prism of the biblical stories of David and Bathsheba and Samson and Delilah. The latter narrative is approached in similarly allegorical fashion in Tom Jones's Number One hit "Delilah", a song that has an interesting history; the resonances created by the use of such biblical names as Delilah and Salome in popular songs prompts a discussion of patriarchy and misogyny in source texts, which may or may not be transferred from the biblical context to the song lyrics. Popular songs employing biblical text as a parallel, and conveying more contemporary and often apocalyptic meanings and twists, such as Hazel O'Connor's "Eighth Day" (her pastiche of the opening creation passage of The Book of Genesis), are considered as more independent of the source text; this type of adaptation often uses the biblical references to engage in a critique of humanity's modern-day hubris.

Next to the Bible, Shakespeare's dramatic characters and sonnets are the most commonly employed sources and references in Anglophone popular song in general. The eminent suitability of Shakespeare's verse, particularly the sonnets, for song adaptation is unsurprising in view of his own facility with song lyrics in popular ballads featured in his plays; both older and more

modern settings of his song lyrics continue to be heard, although these adaptations have mostly crossed the rigid cultural boundary that tends to divide popular from classical music. Having said that, Rufus Wainwright's sonnet settings on the album "All Days are Nights: Songs for Lulu" (2010) and "Take All My Loves: Shakespeare Sonnets" (2016) transcend hard-and-fast distinctions between popular and classical music genres. Again, there is a considerable range, from settings and adapted versions—including concept albums and anthology projects—to individual song settings, allusions to Shakespeare's works in title and/or lyrics and updated versions, loosely based on his dramatic plots and the relationships between his characters.

Case-study settings include a sung version of the ever-popular Sonnet 18, 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day' by David Gilmour of Pink Floyd, Australian troubadour Paul Kelly's quatercentenary celebration album, "Seven Sonnets and a Song" and Florence Welch's luminous rendition of Sonnet 29, "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes", with backing vocals by Wainwright and Ben De Vries. Canadian artist Lorena McKennitt's dazzling verbatim setting of Prospero's farewell speech 'Our revels now are ended' from *The Tempest* exemplifies how certain monologues from Shakespeare plays can be equally conducive to sung performance. Other songs that quote from Shakespeare sonnets, such as Sting's "Consider Me Gone" and "Sister Moon" and Bastille's 2012 song, "Poet", inspired by Sonnet 81, are discussed in relation to the effects of their intertextuality. A cross-section of pop songs inspired by songs or verses featured in the play texts will also be analysed, including Donovan's rendition of Shakespeare's famous song "Under the Greenwood Tree" from the song-rich comedy *As You Like It*. Allusive and referential songs that exploit a Shakespeare phrase, character or plot indirectly for contemporary meaning comprise the latter part of the chapter. These include 2Pac's (the late Tupac Shakur) rap "Something Wicked", MC Lars's whimsical rap song, "Hey there, Ophelia"; other songs, such as Natalie Merchant's "Ophelia" (*Hamlet*) and Taylor Swift's "Love Story" (*Romeo and Juliet*), place Shakespearean characters within an unfamiliar parallel modern narrative based on the suggestibility of their names. The characters' modern counterparts experience similar challenges or difficulties in their love lives.

Finally, Chapter Six discusses the intertextuality and intermediality of stage plays and literary musicals with popular songs. It discusses three aspects in which dramatic songs interface with literature. Firstly stage plays are conventionally considered a literary genre, so any play that employs known popular songs in the public sphere—as opposed to context-driven songs purpose-written for the play—is relevant to this part of the chapter. In the

second category, that of stage musicals, only musicals derived from a literary source, such as *Les Misérables*, *Cats* or *Wicked*, pertain to the discussion, but not, for example, jukebox musicals. Thirdly, songs that relate a dramatic narrative or project a character perspective from a stage play, such as songs based on Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, necessarily involve literary intertextuality.

However, not all songs from literary musicals can be considered popular songs in the public sphere. A few of these songs, such as "The Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha* and "All I Ask of You" from *The Phantom of the Opera*, have become independent pop-chart hits, even though they are derived from plots and characters in works originally written in other literary genres, not necessarily stage plays. In these cases, intertextuality is often created less by lyrical analogies and more by characterological, narrative and thematic links with the literary sources. The outstanding exception to this is the song "Memory" from Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1981 mega-musical *Cats*, which is closely associated with its poetic sources, namely two early T. S. Eliot poems. Although the other songs in *Cats* are straight transpositions from Eliot's verses, unlike "Memory" which is one of the best known and most commercially successful songs from any modern musical, they have not transcended the dramatic context of the show itself, and cannot be considered genuinely popular songs in the wider sense.

In discussing the relationship between popular song and speech drama, I employ insights from Elizabeth Hale Winkler's valuable study of stage plays that incorporate songs or are influenced by them. Although her monograph on the subject only deals with British plays of the Fifties through to the Eighties, it nevertheless offers a framework for critical consideration of much later plays with music, including three of the major case studies of the chapter. These are Tom Stoppard's 2006 play, *Rock and Roll*, focusing on the cultural impact of Pink Floyd and other 1960s groups on young people in then Czechoslovakia around the time of the Soviet occupation, Anna Jordan's 2018 play, *Pop Music*, exploring the potentiality of pop as a form of life-affirming therapy, and Conor McPherson's 2017 *Girl From the North Country*, with its musical score based entirely on Bob Dylan songs.

Much earlier stage-plays that blurred the boundary between so-called 'legitimate' theatre and musicals, such as Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera* and Joan Littlewood and Theatre Workshop's *Oh! What a Lovely War*, and plays incorporating live music, such as Noel Coward's *Private Lives,* give an historical context to the practice. A number of other plays that include songs for diegetic, on-stage purposes, such as the Tennessee

Williams classic *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Alan Bennett's popular stage play *The History Boys* and the Wendy Wasserstein favourite *The Sisters Rosensweig*, provide examples of the different ways songs are effectively assimilated into the dramatic plot. As regards songs based on dramatic plots and characters in the chapter's third section, such as Regina Spektor's "Oedipus" and Noah and the Whale's "Jocasta", the relationship between the poetics and language use of the dramatic source and the song lyrics is explored.

To sum up, my study seeks to establish a critical cultural framework for further exploration of the fascinating, but underdeveloped, area of intertextual, intermedial research. The study also engages with the controversy surrounding the award of the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature to singer-songwriter Dylan, but contextualises the issue within the wider critical debate related to quasi-literary elements in songwriting and the influence of prior texts and ideas on the songwriter. My overarching argument in the study, following the cultural perspectives of Williams and others, is that there is a deeper textual and cultural relationship between literary texts and popular songs than the prejudices and preconceptions of 'highbrow culture' have allowed. Thus, the study is designed to advance the understanding of how the oral and performative culture of songs intersects with literary traditions and practices. Ultimately, it calls for greater recognition of a spectrum of types of literary intertextuality in popular songs, and affirms the significance of the popular song alongside the art song in the Anglophone cultural tradition.

CHAPTER TWO

"WHEREVER PEOPLE AIN'T FREE, MA, THATS WHERE I'M GOING TO BE": THE REGENERATION OF THE NARRATIVE BALLAD

Introduction: What do we mean by 'a ballad'?

This chapter traces the roots of modern-day ballads and ballad-like songs of popular social protest, exploring their intersections with folk literature, as well as more cultivated literary texts. It will also explore the intersections between modern song and ballads of sociopolitical resistance, as, for example, in the Robin Hood outlaw ballad tradition. The pivotal argument of the chapter is that oral literature has always been a performed and popular literature, although its literary heritage is rooted in demotic cultures in which authorship of the songs has remained anonymous for posterity. The chapter explores a cross-section of ballads and their popular and literary qualities, and considers latter-day interpretations of significant works culled from this demotic oral literature.

It explores how the lyricism and power of Anglophone folk ballads and ballads, extolling political and personal independence and often expressing rebellious sentiments, influenced romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge to write more personalised lyrical ballads, which, in turn, proved the inspiration for the English Romantic movement. Similarly, the song-poems of Scotland's great lyricist Robert Burns and Ireland's bard Thomas Moore exemplified such reciprocity between song traditions and poetry. Coleridge's highly influential 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and other lyrical ballads pastiched the traditional ballad style and structure. In the hands of these poets the lyrical ballad became primarily a written, socially elevated and nostalgic form, echoing traditional folk ballads more than demotic street ballads. However, few Anglophone poets, with the exception of Burns and Moore, were adept at writing both songs and poems, which