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# *All Together Now: Yellow Submarine* (1968), The Beatles, and Children’s Film

## **Keywords:**

children’s film;  
family film;  
The Beatles;  
animation;  
British cinema

## **Abstrakt**

This article examines The Beatles’ classic animated film, *Yellow Submarine* (dir. George Dunning, 1968) in terms of its appeal to multi-demographic audiences. While it has become *de rigueur* to argue in favour of *Yellow Submarine* as an artefact of the late-1960s counter-culture, its status as a children’s film has largely been overlooked. This article will argue that *Yellow Submarine* invites, and is able to sustain, a range of interpretations, particularly regarding its dual status as a quintessential film for children and family audiences, and as a much more adult-oriented production that captures the revolutionary spirit of the period. While *Yellow Submarine* embodies aspects of late-1960s British and North American culture, the author argues that the narrative transcends national cultural specificities and attempts to appeal to universal human desires and emotional states through its balancing of utopian consensus and cultural diversity, and through the galvanizing presence of The Beatles.

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*As innocent as a box of crystallised daisies.*<sup>1</sup>

Nigel Gosling, July 1968

*The best vision of the revolution that I have ever seen.*<sup>2</sup>

Jerry Rubin, April 1969

The two quotations above, one by the British film critic Nigel Gosling and the other by the American counter-cultural figurehead Jerry Rubin, represent apparently irreconcilable positions on *Yellow Submarine* (dir. George Dunning, 1968), both of which have been reaffirmed many times in the intervening years. This article is concerned with how the film is able to hold these apparently antithetical ideas in balance. While it has become *de rigueur* to argue in favour of *Yellow Submarine* as an artefact of the late-1960s counter-culture, its status as a children's film has largely been overlooked, with only brief discussions by scholars such as Stephen Glynn and Noel Brown.<sup>3</sup> I will argue that *Yellow Submarine* invites, and is able to sustain, a range of interpretations, particularly regarding its dual status as a quintessential film for children and as a much more adult-oriented production that captures some of the revolutionary spirit of the period.

In so doing, this article builds on a number of recent publications that discuss the ways in which children's films frequently operate at multiple levels of textuality, engaging with serious social, cultural, and political issues while remaining meaningful for young children.<sup>4</sup> While children's films are usually understood as those intended for audiences up to the age of around 12,<sup>5</sup> productions such as *Yellow Submarine*, which also hold aesthetic, thematic, or ideological attractions for grown-ups, are often termed "family films". Children's films and family films substantially intersect, but the latter typically employ strategies of multivalent address to allow them to cross over to older (teenage and adult) audiences without disturbing the engagement of younger children.<sup>6</sup> The common slippage between "children's film" and "family film" in popular discourses on *Yellow Submarine* is more significant than it might seem. Rather than critical imprecision, I will argue that it reflects the plurality of interpretive positions that the film invites: it functions as a children's fantasy musical, but also as an allegory of counter-cultural politics in Britain and the United States in this period. Through close analysis of its multi-layered modes of address, supported by reference to a range of critical, journalistic, and paratextual discourses, this article positions *Yellow Submarine* as a children's film that contains multiple avenues of access for family audiences, including teenagers and adults, too. More broadly, through a sustained discussion of these various facets, it aims to show that the boundaries between movies for children and grown-ups are much less concrete than they may, at first sight, appear to be.

## Production and distribution

A British-American co-production, *Yellow Submarine* was an important film even before it was released: it was only the third animated feature made in Brit-

ain, and it starred the world's most iconic and commercially successful band, The Beatles. It was produced over an eleven-month period (across 1967 and 1968) by the London-based animation studio TVC, which was sub-contracted by the film division of US publisher King Features, headed by producer Al Brodax. In turn, the film was funded and distributed by the Hollywood major, United Artists, which had also distributed the previous Beatles movies, *A Hard Day's Night* (dir. Richard Lester, 1964) and *Help!* (dir. Richard Lester, 1965). *Yellow Submarine*'s script was written piecemeal in a fevered flurry of activity, with its narrative sections serving as connecting material between eleven musical numbers. The filmmakers conceived of a loose good vs. evil fantasy storyline in which the "Fab Four" must overcome the villainous, music-hating Blue Meanies, which have invaded the idyllic Pepperland and drained the land of colour with their immobilising giant green apples (an inside joke: Apple was the name of the Beatles' own publishing company).

Although the real-life Beatles appear only briefly at the end of the movie in a live-action coda (and their animated personalities are voiced by actors), their presence and their music are central to the narrative. Another source of the enduring appeal of *Yellow Submarine* is its striking, often avant-garde style of animation (designed by the Czech-German illustrator Heinz Edelmann and overseen by the Canadian-born animator George Dunning), which represents a substantial departure from the conventional, mainstream hyper-realist style associated with Disney.<sup>7</sup> Brodax conceived of the film as a relatively straightforward children's animation in the style of *The Beatles* TV cartoon series (dir. Al Brodax, Sylban Buck, 1965-67) – also partly produced by TVC on behalf of King Features – but Dunning and his team of mostly young and ambitious animators were determined to craft a more challenging, adult-oriented work that made use of the artistic potentialities of animation.

The apparent disjuncture in these competing visions for *Yellow Submarine* informs some of the ambivalence in how the film was promoted and perceived by critics. Having received its initial theatrical release in July 1968, it made a healthy profit, with estimated international grosses of just over US \$9 million from an outlay of approximately \$1 million.<sup>8</sup> However, a number of critics expressed confusion as to the intended audience. In Britain, in particular, *Yellow Submarine* provoked a decidedly mixed response; the British distributor, Rank, reportedly pulled the film from general release after it underperformed at selected London theatres, a studio official reporting that *there seems to be some doubt about its appeal*.<sup>9</sup> United Artists fiercely rebutted this claim, insisting that *all the critics and the trade press liked the film and compared it with [Disney's] "Snow White" [Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, dir. David Hand, 1937]*.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, one cinema – the Odeon in Wood Green, London – withdrew it prematurely because *people were walking out* and replaced it with Disney's *Peter Pan* (dir. Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, 1953); one insider observed, *At least the children understand that. You can't say that for "Yellow Submarine"*.<sup>11</sup> The Beatles themselves were *puzzled* by the decision.<sup>12</sup> However, although animation was viewed at the time, at least in many Western countries, as primarily a children's medium, it is clear from the film's marketing and publicity campaign that *Yellow Submarine* was not regarded

as traditional children's or family fare. The press book – produced to coincide with the film's theatrical release – goes to strenuous lengths to avoid giving the impression of a children's film; indeed, it does not discuss intended audience demographics at all. Instead, exhibitors were encouraged to emphasize the presence of The Beatles and the film's avant-garde aesthetic (highlighting the artistry of Dunning) and its pop art credentials, describing Paul McCartney, curiously, as a *mod Mozart*.<sup>13</sup>

This apparent attempt to elide the film's appeal to children almost certainly reflects the fact that, with the exception of Disney releases, the children's film genre in the late 1960s had a very poor reputation, and was associated by many industry figures in Hollywood and Britain with box office failure.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the press book still offers valuable clues as to whom the distributors thought the film would appeal. Two full pages are given over to merchandising, with *Yellow Submarine* described as *undoubtedly the greatest motion picture promotional opportunity to come along in years*.<sup>15</sup> This is particularly significant as very few films of the period were seen as having much 'ancillary' market potential. In fact, Disney had been the only major Hollywood studio that had actively licensed its brands, having recognized the huge demand for toys, games, clothing, and other products based on its intellectual properties as early as the 1930s, when it partnered with Kay Kamen to licence characters such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck for a broad range of mostly child-oriented products. Equally, the licensed *Yellow Submarine* products detailed in the press book include trading cards, lunch boxes, pyjama bags, board games, inflatable vinyl pillows and play balls, die-cast submarines and other models crafted primarily for juvenile consumption.<sup>16</sup>

## The Beatles and children's culture

In many regards, *Yellow Submarine* functions as a distillation of the qualities frequently said to be held by the Beatles themselves. The four lads from Liverpool transgressed established boundaries of class (particularly in Britain), gender, national identity, and ethnic background, and their international popularity rested partially on their ability to overcome or nullify difference. At times, as we have seen already, this ability to project utopian consensus appears paradoxical, since it rests on bridging apparently antithetical positions such as childhood and innocence with revolutionary counter-cultural politics. I will explore how both the Beatles and *Yellow Submarine* accord with youth counter-culture in greater depth below, but in order to understand the film's appeal to children and family audiences it is first necessary to examine The Beatles' deep, established relationship with children's culture (a topic that has been the source of much anecdotal observation but little in the way of sustained scholarly enquiry). As John Kimsey rightly observes, *the Beatles are now at home in the nursery: generations of parents have introduced their children to the music in what has become a secular ritual, something that's not the case with, say, the music of the Rolling Stones. In the words of Ritchie Unterberger, "waves and waves of kids continue to discover and get enthusiastic about [the Beatles] year after year, decade after decade"*.<sup>17</sup>

However, contrary to Kimsey's implication that The Beatles' popularity with children is a retrospective phenomenon, there is clear evidence that young people were always attracted to the band. The *Sunday Times'* review of *Yellow Submarine* likened The Beatles to Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck as appealing to audiences of all ages.<sup>18</sup> As early as 1964, US rock magazine *Billboard* reported that *over the past three weeks, kids come into the [record] store[s] with a \$10 bill and spend it exclusively on Beatles records, singles and LPs. Parents, too, are under continual badgering from their children for Beatles records.*<sup>19</sup> The Beatles (and their management) were acutely aware of the importance of children as consumers. Several Beatles songs, of course, were explicitly written for children; their most famous, *Yellow Submarine* (1966), was selected as the starting point for the film for this very reason. According to Beatles authority Martin Lewis, the group's manager, Brian Epstein, decided to grant King Features the rights to use the group's name and appearance in *Yellow Submarine* because he saw the long-term potential benefits of a film which would enshrine them for children of future generations.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Beatles press officer Tony Barrow claims that the animated TV series was important in recruiting children as current and future fans and consumers: *Whilst generally helping to sustain The Beatles' record sales at a healthy level between concert tours (and beyond that short-lived era), the cartoon programs also preserved in Peter Pan fashion the early carefree and playful "Four Mop Tops" image, which children loved and parents approved of, and which the real-life Beatles were abandoning during these years in favour of druggy lyrics and a "hippier" appearance.*<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, even as they began to embrace the counter-culture, The Beatles had an abiding interest in the symbolic properties of childhood. They were especially attracted to Romantic notions of childhood as a realm of innocence and pre-sexual freedom and as a bulwark against the corruptions of adult civilisation. As Alfred G. Aronowitz observed in his *Life Magazine* review of the *The Beatles* (aka *The White Album*, 1968): *Many of the songs in this album were written of, by and for children. The Beatles are still trying to lead the fight against the older generation that acts as if youth has been purse-snatched from it by the kids.*<sup>22</sup> David Buckingham points out that some of the band's most enduring songs of the late 1960s, such as *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* and *Strawberry Fields Forever*, offered up *acid-fuelled accounts of a return to childhood innocence and the abandonment of adult repression.*<sup>23</sup>

The band's preoccupation with childhood, according to Iain Ellis, *had professional and psychological roots as much as social ones*, reflecting a desire to regress to the relative sanctuary of their formative years *before the pressures of Beatlemania, before corporate interests had forced the boys into premature adulthood.*<sup>24</sup> As individuals, John Lennon and Paul McCartney held strong, if divergent, interests in children's fiction. McCartney has described himself as a *big fan* of classical-era Disney animation and lobbied the producers of *Yellow Submarine* to make a *great kids' cartoon* of a more traditional kind, although he later conceded that the film's avant-garde approach had been the correct one.<sup>25</sup> McCartney was also The Beatles songwriter most drawn to simple, nursery-rhymish compositions, and *Yellow Submarine* itself evokes the kind of alternative world featured in many canonical works of children's fantasy literature.

Lennon, for his part, was drawn to the oppositional potential of childhood. Ellis points out that: *Lennon's quasi-literary infantilism was illustratively showcased in his first two books, "In His Own Write" (1964) and "A Spaniard in the Works" (1965). Each had the schoolboy pun-twisters seen in song titles like "Eight Days a Week" and "A Hard Day's Night," and each inhabited a child's play world where adults were absent or ridiculed and made-up words danced with linguistic play and sonic charm across the pages. Part Lewis Carroll, part e.e. cummings, and part James Joyce, Lennon disrupted sense in order to disrupt adult rules, creating a language zone that rational adulthood could not colonise.*<sup>26</sup> Verbal nonsense was in vogue at the time, with the work of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll widely praised for their subversions of overbearing adult authority (the celebrated young British theatre director and polyglot, Jonathan Miller, produced a highly-regarded adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* for the BBC in 1966). Some critics noted a similar quality in *Yellow Submarine*, with the British satirical magazine *Punch* describing it as a *nonsense story in the Lear or Carroll convention*, its strength laying in *its combination of visual and verbal inventiveness*.<sup>27</sup>

## The counter-cultural Beatles

In many regards, then, *Yellow Submarine* grew organically from the Beatles' long-standing interest in childhood and their established popularity with children. It contains a number of additional elements that align it strongly with existing traditions of children's fiction and film. These include its central, Manichean battle between good and evil; its moralistic tone; its bright, colourful aesthetic; the presence of music, much of which has an uplifting, nursery-rhyme quality; the Lewis Carroll-esque moments of verbal nonsense that (deliberately or coincidentally) recalled Lennon's poetry; the fantastic setting, which vaguely evokes MGM's quintessential family film, *The Wizard of Oz* (dir. Victor Fleming, 1939); its status as animation (which, as already noted, was strongly linked in the popular consciousness with children's culture); and its utopian happy ending, which provides a strong sense of moral and narrative completeness and attempts to project a sense of unity between characters and spectators alike.

However, it also is true that *Yellow Submarine* wilfully transgresses some of the traditional boundaries of mainstream children's cinema, an arena increasingly dominated by Disney. Al Brodax, the film's American producer, later recalled that it was *unanimously agreed to seek out an art form unlike Disney's... as far removed from Disney as possible*, pointing out that (post-adolescent) audiences at this point found the *Disney style to be profoundly stupor-making*.<sup>28</sup> *Yellow Submarine's* eclectic design and style of animation were underpinned by pragmatic as well as aesthetic considerations; the limited budget and time frame (less than 12 months, compared to the standard Disney production schedule of around three years) meant that the more fluidic, hyper-realist style that mainstream audiences were accustomed to was beyond the filmmakers' resources. This was also a case of product differentiation, based on the perceived need to tap into The Beatles' huge popularity with teen and young adult audiences. This partial incongruity with established patterns of children's film, I would suggest, accounts for much of the critical confusion that







surrounded its intended audience on initial release. While the British daily *The Telegraph* compared *Yellow Submarine* with Disney's *Snow White and Make Mine Music* (1946), and *The Listener* predicted that it *should attract children as well as the ultra-sophisticated adult, Sight and Sound* felt that *the children have been left behind*.<sup>29</sup>

A much more positive appraisal of the film's repudiation of the Disney aesthetic can be found in Richard Schickel's *Life* magazine review. Schickel had recently completed his ground-breaking book, *The Disney Version* (1968), which found much to admire in Disney's early period but was generally hostile to the studio's more recent traditions of cut-price *limited animation*.<sup>30</sup> He seems to have viewed *Yellow Submarine* as an antidote to Disney's reduced aesthetic horizons, highlighting its *wondrous visual freedom* and praising Dunning and Edelman for having *cast aside all the cartoon conventions – the cuddly animals, the too-realistic backgrounds, the patronising coyness – that have marked our animated features ever since the Disney studio persuaded us that there was only one way, Walt's way*.<sup>31</sup> However, in his suggestion that the film *might very well blow a mind that approached it high*, Schickel also recognizes its considerable aesthetic and political cachet with youth audiences.<sup>32</sup> The common observation that *Yellow Submarine's* psychedelic animation resembles a freak out is perhaps most succinctly expressed by the US teen and young adult rock magazine *TeenSet* (which had recently published a special issue devoted to the film), whose review described it as *a trip and the most visually enchanting experience I have ever shared with a screen*.<sup>33</sup>

*Yellow Submarine's* association with late-1960s psychedelia is so deeply embedded in the popular consciousness that Geoff Loynes, one of the film's animators, recalled hearing that it owed its initial success to *druggers*, and several people involved in its production have had to publicly refute the assumption that they were high on LSD at the time.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to (but not wholly irreconcilable with) this association with hippie youth culture is John Russell Taylor's suggestion, in his contemporary review in the British broadsheet *The Times*, that the film's pleasures lie primarily in its modishness. Taylor's byline does concede that "*Yellow Submarine*" *should please nearly everyone*, but also emphasizes that what the film is about is *British popular design in the late 1960s and a panorama of everything that every colour supplement has done in the last two years*.<sup>35</sup> Edelman's design for *Yellow Submarine* certainly draws heavily on the pop art movement, particularly the work of Milton Glaser. In turn, Edelman's artwork influenced a trend described by the *New York Times* in August 1969 as "Now Art" or "Yellow Submarine Art," later popularized by Peter Max (often misidentified as the creator of *Yellow Submarine's* visual style).<sup>36</sup> According to Young and Rubicam executive Stephen O. Frankfurt, *this art has great influence on young people and companies want to be "with it" today because young people influence everyone else*.<sup>37</sup>

Running alongside these resonances with aesthetic trends in youth culture is *Yellow Submarine's* trippy anti-establishmentarianism, which also captured the zeitgeist. The Sea of Holes episode in *Yellow Submarine*, as Stephen Glynn points out, has similarities to the equally trippy stargate sequence in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1968), and there are narrative parallels between *Yellow Submarine* and Patrick McGoohan's celebrated ITC series, *The Prisoner* (1967), both of which centre on the battle between freedom and self-determination and

a seemingly intractable autocratic establishment, and feature central protagonists who *pursue a lengthy quest, the solution to which proves to embody their own physical form*.<sup>38</sup> There is little evidence to suggest that *Yellow Submarine's* association with childhood and children's fiction sullied it in the eyes of contemporary audiences, particularly in the United States (where its critical and commercial reception was notably more positive than in Britain). It ranked second – sandwiched between two classics of late-1960s Hollywood youth cinema, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Graduate* (dir. Mike Nichols, 1967) – in a readers' poll of best movies of 1968, published by the underground paper *The Los Angeles Free Press*.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, it is a measure of the film's ability to speak to the in-crowd that its London premiere in July 1968 was attended by members of the rock groups Cream and the Rolling Stones as well as James Taylor and Twiggy, while Yoko Ono made her first appearance with Lennon at an 'official' event.<sup>40</sup>

In political terms, as Arthur Marwick observes, the 1960s counter-culture was a period in which *the social controls established by the Victorians were overthrown*.<sup>41</sup> In the United Kingdom, this cultural break led to the passing of new legislation that granted additional freedoms to women (the Abortion Act, 1967 and the Equal Pay Act, 1970), homosexuals (the Sexual Offences Act, 1967), and young people (the Representation of Young People Act, 1969, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18). By this point, The Beatles were firmly embedded within this counter-cultural movement. The watershed was the release in May 1967 of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, an album described by the band's producer, George Martin, as *enormously timely. Those young people in the 1960s identified with it immediately because I guess the young people had been having years of repression, really. They felt that after the war everything was very austere ... "Sgt. Pepper" gave them an opening there, along with all the other things of the '60s, the Mary Quant period, and the Carnaby Street era. People were realising that they had their lives in their own hands*.<sup>42</sup> The following month, McCartney publicly admitted that the band had experimented with LSD (and had done so with the explicit approval of their manager, Brian Epstein), drawing outright condemnation from the British Home Office.<sup>43</sup>

The band's immersion in the counter-cultural scene was confirmed by the release of *Magical Mystery Tour*, The Beatles' self-shot TV movie which was broadcast on British screens on Boxing Day, 1967. A virtually plotless melange of musical hall whimsy and dramatic non sequiturs interspersed with periodic musical interludes, the film is scarcely devoid, as Glynn notes, of *drug-infused psychedelic enactments*, and it triggered a backlash against The Beatles in the British media: *While happy to accept the group's (more abstract) musical experimentation, the critical majority were not yet ready to see their family favourites move from lovable young mop-tops over into the counterculture, certainly not in front of the children, and certainly not at light-entertainment-expectant Christmas time*.<sup>44</sup> In this context, the fictionalized, animated versions of The Beatles in *Yellow Submarine* represent a far less tendentious brand of anti-authoritarianism, with the rough edges that so alarmed the adult establishment appropriately smoothed over. Indeed, the film served, in Bob Neaverson's words, as *a tonic for the group's increasingly bewildering and erratic output and behaviour*.<sup>45</sup> Legendary American film reviewer Pauline Kael evidently

thought the film leaned too heavily in this direction, lamenting The Beatles' reversion from *yesterday's outlaw idols of the teenagers* to a *quartet of Pollyannas for the wholesome family trade*.<sup>46</sup>

It is true that the real-life Beatles had become much more radical than their fictional counterparts. However, much of their music (and the sentiments they expressed in interviews) espoused similar politics of utopian consensus to those at the heart of the film; the old autocracy must be torn down, but what emerges in its stead will be peaceful, harmonious, and communitarian. Furthermore, the antithesis that Kael implies between children and adulthood is one that *Yellow Submarine* – and, indeed, the counter-cultural movement as a whole – actively collapses. In fact, concepts of childhood were deeply entrenched in the hippie manifesto. David Bowman, in a quasi-academic article on *Yellow Submarine* published in the early 1970s, says of the period: *This is Childhood's End, when everyone becomes a child, born again, under the sign of Aquarius*.<sup>47</sup> Far from being antithetical, childhood and counter-culture had much in common. In particular, the Romantics' vision of childhood (as Blake, Wordsworth, and others understood it) commonly construes it as a realm of pre-social innocence before the inevitable corruptions of adult civilisation; it was precisely the urge to escape – or undo – the damage inflicted by the socialisation process that undergirded much of the counter-culture movement.

The imagery of childhood – in the social and symbolic rather than biological sense of the word – permeates much of this ideology. David Buckingham observes that *hippiedom valorized a child-like state of mind, a state of wonder and simplicity. The hippies aimed to be at one with nature and the earth, in a kind of primal, pre-technological innocence: they were, after all, the flower children*.<sup>48</sup> Part of this embrace of childhood may be rooted, as Buckingham postulates, in a desire to evade responsibility by regressing to womb-like arcadian fantasies of purity. However, it may also be taken as a naïve, but hardly unjustified, yearning for a prelapsarian way of life from an imagined time when structural inequality and oppression had not yet taken seed.

### ***Yellow Submarine* and the politics of utopia**

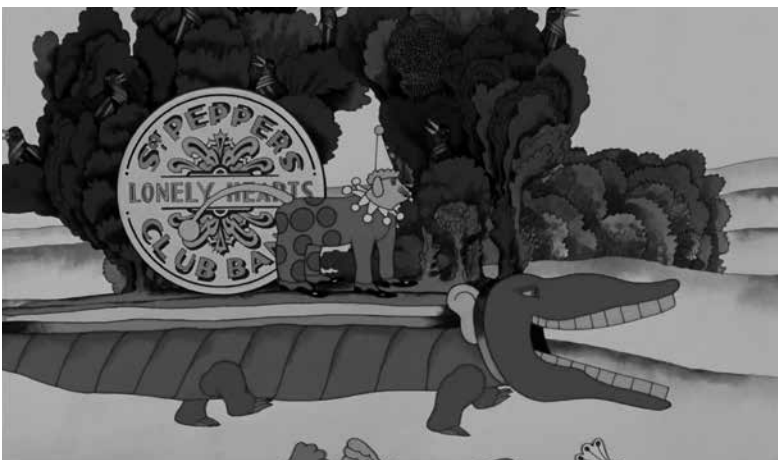
On one level, then, *Yellow Submarine* is very clearly a product of 1960s socio-cultural trends and political discourses: the rise of youth culture and, relatedly, the 1960s counter-cultural break from the stultifying conformity of middlebrow adult society; the modish, pop art aesthetic; the psychedelic, even narcotic resonances of the so-called Summer of Love of 1967; and the bourgeois fantasy of escape from the tyranny of modernity to a simpler existence marked by freedom, self-expression, and the pursuit of happiness and personal fulfilment (tellingly, several hippie communes in the late 1960s and 1970s took their name from the film). Crucially, though, *Yellow Submarine* also taps into more enduring mythologies that transcend those specific socio-cultural resonances, particularly that of a society marked by consensus, freedom, sincerity, and various other markers of utopianism.

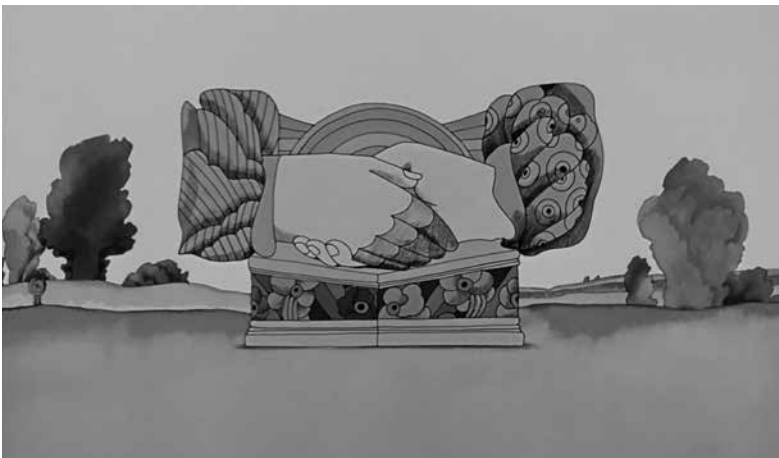
In a now-classic exploration of the utopian sensibility that he considers to be at the core of the Hollywood musical, Richard Dyer argues that the genre

evokes a sense of *what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized*, offering up *the image of "something better" to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide*.<sup>49</sup> Dyer delineates five broad, but overlapping, registers of utopianism in the musical genre: 1) community (representing togetherness, evoking a sense of belonging; developing networks of phatic relationships); 2) energy (representing the capacity to act vigorously; human power, activity, potential); 3) abundance (the conquest of scarcity; having enough to spare without a sense of the poverty of others; enjoyment of sensuous material reality); 4) transparency (a quality of relationships between characters, such as true love, or between performers and audiences); and 5) intensity (the experiencing of emotion directly, fully, unambiguously, and 'authentically,' without holding back).<sup>50</sup>

These markers of utopianism, of course, are not confined to Hollywood films, nor to musicals. Nonetheless, many musicals – particularly those intended for children – depend for their utopian sensibility on the intersection of satisfactory narrative closure and uninhibited representations of emotion through song and dance, which give free rein to the expression of the characters' inner feeling in a way that dialogue can only imply. They also have the capacity to elicit these emotions in a more powerful way because the pleasures they arouse are partly physiological.<sup>51</sup> Music, as Dyer reminds us, gives expression to these kinds of feelings because it is *a tonal analogue of emotive life*.<sup>52</sup> The link between these aesthetic pleasures and emotional affect was grasped, if only intuitively, by the filmmakers. Brodax later recalled a production meeting in which it was decided that *this is not in any way to be a conventional production. ... M u s i c , m u s i c , m u s i c is to become the language of our film, m u s i c the libretto, the words*.<sup>53</sup>

But the film's much-vaunted ability to transcend boundaries (of age, class, language, nationality, and historical period) rests upon the *intersection* of philosophy, musical style, and visual aesthetic. The means by which these various elements are orchestrated is hinted at in Gavin Millar's description of *Yellow Submarine* in *Sight and Sound* as *lush, lilliputian, indulgent, childlike, dramatic; straining, like nostalgia, after impossible victories of emotion over reason*, which recognizes the film as essentially childlike but still meaningful for adult audiences in ways that cannot always be satisfactorily articulated.<sup>54</sup> As with many animated musicals, the seemingly unbounded possibilities of the visual style work in synchronicity with the affective qualities of the music. Writing in the early 1940s, the great Russian director Sergei Eisenstein argued that the appeal of the early Disney features rests on the inherent elasticity (or *plasmaticness*) of animation as an art form, noting its *pre-logical attractiveness* that is *not yet shackled by logic, reason, or experience*.<sup>55</sup> The feelings of *pure ecstasy* aroused by experiencing films of this type, of course, are not purely aesthetic, but are also bound up in questions of narrative.<sup>56</sup> *Yellow Submarine*, as with many of the Disney features, actively builds towards the kind of utopian representations outlined by Dyer, where groups of people come together in perfect relationships distinguished by absolute truth and sincerity, underpinned by the unalloyed joy of the pre-linguistic pleasures of music and dance. Positive feelings aroused by the ultimate acquisition of utopia (or what utopia might *look* or *feel* like) are surely heightened by the knowledge that the victory must be worked for through the defeat of dark forces, represented in





*Yellow Submarine* by the contemptible Blue Meanies. The seeming weightlessness of animation may, as Eisenstein postulates, create the sense of a space *from which e v e r y t h i n g c a n a r i s e*, but it is the work of the film to defer utopia by creating obstacles that challenge even The Beatles.<sup>57</sup>

Several scholars have pointed out that the narrative form of *Yellow Submarine* corresponds fairly closely to Joseph Campbell's "Hero's Journey," as outlined in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949).<sup>58</sup> The Hero's Journey is a home-away-home narrative pattern that, Campbell argues, recurs throughout Western oral and written storytelling in virtually infinite permutations.<sup>59</sup> Homer's *Odyssey* is one such example, and according to Brodax, *Yellow Submarine* scriptwriter (and Yale classicist) Erich Segal took direct inspiration from it: *Our story too would centre on a hero's return from a conflict that brought him to various menacing seas populated by unseemly creatures and buffeted by extraordinarily high winds.*<sup>60</sup> This basic narrative structure – also referred to by children's literary scholars as the "circular journey" – is utilized in many canonical works of children's fiction, including *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Peter Pan* (1911), both of which have been adapted as animated musicals for family audiences. In this sense, too, the film invites comparison with mythological pre-texts that transcend the more specific cultural politics of the late 1960s, while also blurring the line between fiction for children and grown-ups.

While *Yellow Submarine* is self-consciously an 'odyssey,' it is also an inherently heteroglossian text that mixes sincerity with irony, whimsy, and allusiveness. The opening voiceover narration announces that *nothing is real*, a phrase taken from Lennon's *Strawberry Fields Forever* (1967) and used to promote the movie on the official poster and in the theatrical trailer. This announcement provokes a range of possibilities. On the one hand, it extends an invitation to partake in a whimsical fantasy wholly divorced from the prosaic realities of the 'real world,' and perhaps suggests an essentially childlike denial of the brand of seriousness represented (in the movie) by the Blue Meanies and (in the 'real world') by the adult establishment. On the other hand, it carries undeniable narcotic resonances, suggesting an LSD-inspired trip. Not unrelatedly, the phrase *nothing is real* was also heavily associated with Eastern mysticism and it was adopted as a mantra, of sorts, by the late-1960s counter-culture movement.

This kind of apparently wilful ambiguity is also evident in several of the Beatles songs featured in the movie. Seven of these were compiled from earlier releases, including *Yellow Submarine*, *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*, and *Nowhere Man* (1965), while four were newly composed: George Harrison contributed *It's All Too Much* and *It's Only a Northern Song*, while Lennon and McCartney provided *Hey Bulldog* and *All Together Now*, respectively. Though outwardly innocent, the lyrics of several of these compositions allude to contentious or even illegal activities. *It's All Too Much*, as Harrison later conceded, was written as an ode to LSD, and the swirling psychedelia of its animated number in *Yellow Submarine* is described by Glynn as akin to a "happening" that sought to create a totalising mind-expanding environment involving music, light and people.<sup>61</sup> Lyrically, it juxtaposes the Buddhist concepts of transcendence and negation of ego with quintessentially English whimsy (*Show me that I'm everywhere, and get me home for tea*), but Glynn

suggests that the imagery in the animation for both *It's All Too Much* and *It's Only a Northern Song* only makes sense when interpreted as attempting an audio-visual recreation of the hallucinogenic state.<sup>62</sup> Of course, this psychedelic imagery can also be enjoyed entirely innocently as a visually impressive light show, not unlike the bursts of colour in a children's kaleidoscope.

Even the children's songs exhibit this duality. *All Together Now* begins with the simple, almost nurse-y-rhyme couplet *A, B, C, D / Can I bring my friend to tea?*, but later in the song McCartney libidinally sings *Black, white, green, red / Can I take my friend to bed?*, inviting (adult) sexual as well as (childlike) social union. *Yellow Submarine*, also outwardly a children's song, was also a slang term for the barbiturate Nembutal (thus chiming with the notorious apocrypha that *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* – also rendered trippily by Dunning in his animation accompanying the song – celebrates LSD). It is possible that not all of these 'adult' readings were actively intended by the filmmakers (or songwriters), but this is beside the point; *Yellow Submarine* is able to sustain – and invites – a range of sometimes conflicting 'innocent' and 'knowing' interpretations. As we have seen (and as the band understood), there is accord rather than conflict between the counter-culture and conceptions of childhood in many important aspects.

Given the socio-cultural context, it is natural to view the callous, blue-greyish Meanies as representing the adult establishment, militantly clamping down on new generations of counter-cultural youth finding new and sometimes illicit forms of self-expression. The view of *Yellow Submarine* as a pitched ideological battle between the repressive establishment and freedom-loving counter-cultural youth is given weight by the depiction of Pepperland. The land is bright, verdant and filled with music, and its inhabitants might as easily be the participants of the near-contemporaneous Summer of Love, though indulging in more wholesome forms of intoxication through song and dance, not drugs. Equally, the Blue Meanies are angry, depressed, and seemingly drained of colour, much like the middlebrow establishment the film tacitly opposes. Their means of attack, by immobilising their victims and draining their colour, surely symbolizes the establishment's mean-spirited, seemingly inexplicable suppression of the real-life activities paralleled by the film. However, it is another measure of *Yellow Submarine's* strategies of constructive ambiguity that the Blue Meanies could stand for virtually any force to which viewers are ideologically or emotionally opposed. Robert R. Hieronimus's retrospective interviews with members of the film's production crew reveal that even people intimately associated with *Yellow Submarine* have different perspectives on what they represent: designer Heinz Edelmann, who is credited with the idea as well as the look for the creatures, envisaged them as Soviet communists (originally, they were Red Meanies), while animator Denis Rich claimed they were based on Al Brodax, an unpopular figure with many TVC employees.<sup>63</sup>

In many ways, the most important character in the film is not The Beatles but Jeremy Hillary Boob, PhD, a strange 'nowhere man' who resembles a small, furry creature with a short pink tail and blue face. Jeremy is recognizable as the kind of benignly childlike anthropomorphized non-human figure that often features in children's narratives (indeed, Brodax initially intended to pair him with an explicitly Disneyesque pink seal).<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, 'the Boob' ultimately emerg-



es as a more abstract, ambiguous character. He is first encountered by The Beatles in a featureless white void, the Sea of Nothing, just prior to the commencement of the *Nowhere Man* number. Jeremy's significance lies in the fact that he is (or has the capacity to be) anyone and everyone. His initial exchange with the band, which captures the mutability at the heart of the character, is worth reproducing:

Jeremy: *Eminent physicist, polyglot, classicist, prize-winning botanist, hard-biting satirist, talented pianist, good dentist, too.*

John: *Lousy poet.*

Jeremy: *Critic's voice. Take your choice.*

Ringo: *Must be one of those angry young men.*

Paul: *Or a daffy old creep.*

Jeremy: *I, daffy old creep?*

George: *Do you speak English?*

Jeremy: *Old English, middle, a dialect, pure...*

Paul: *Well, do you speak English?*

Jeremy: *You know, I'm not sure.*

Ringo: *He's so smart, he doesn't even remember what he knows.*

...

John: *Must you always talk in rhyme?*

Jeremy: *If I spoke prose you'd soon find out I don't know what I talk about. Ad hoc, ad loc and quid pro quo. So little time, so much to know!*

Paul: *Hey fellas, look.*

Jeremy: *The footnotes for my nineteenth book. This is my standard procedure for doing it. And while I compose it, I'm also reviewing it.*

George: *A boob for all seasons.*

Paul: *How can he lose?*

John: *Were your notices good?*

Jeremy: *It's my policy never to read my reviews.*

John: *There must be a word for what he is.*

At this point, the *Nowhere Man* sequence begins. The dialogue carries residual traces of Lee Minoff's hostile parody of the British theatre director Jonathan Miller in his draft script, as well as Erich Segal's more knowingly satirical self-portrait of a pretentious academic. However, the figure of Jeremy is not so easy to pin down. He may have a male first name (though his middle name, Hillary, is gender-neutral) and present himself as a fusty old academic, but as a 'Boob' he carries obvious feminine associations (emphasized by voice actor Dick Emery's high vocal register). Furthermore, his pink tail has a possible queer coding, as does the alternative interpretation of Paul's description of him as a *daffy old creep* as an allusion to homosexuality, which had only been decriminalized in Britain in July 1967, just prior to the film entering production. (Jeremy's response, *I, daffy old creep?*, could also be misheard as *Aye, daffy old creep*: an admission of Paul's diagnosis.) Conversely, his head, blue face and the shape of his body vaguely resemble those of a Blue Meanie, a figure of social and sexual repression. Consequently, the character embodies, quite literally, the contrary tendencies of authority and officialdom with those of childhood (his colourful appearance, plasmatic physicality and tendency to nonsense wordplay) and the counter-culture (his use of

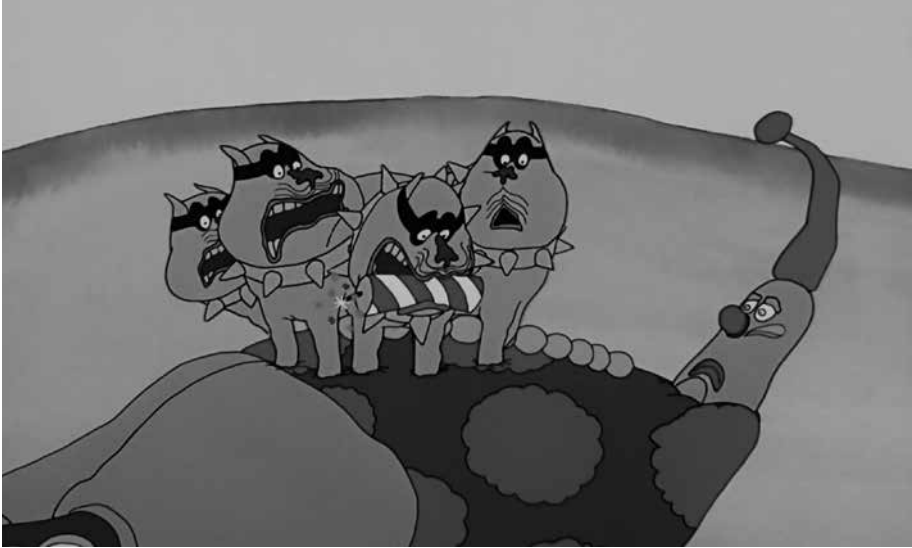
flower power, his subsequent partaking in quasi-narcotic trips and, arguably, his repudiation of heteronormativity). This nowhere man, in short, is everyone – *a bit like you and me*.

But for all his talents, until he is rescued by The Beatles, he is still trapped in a featureless void that he fills with impressive distractions from the essential emptiness at the core of his being. One of the most memorable recurring images in the *Nowhere Man* number is Jeremy spinning, apparently involuntarily, on a gigantic vinyl record, literally 'going round in circles.' He is later seen, in long-shot against a white background, openly weeping, hinting at a fundamental unhappiness outwardly occluded by his near-constant stream of obfuscating verbiage. This short sequence perhaps reminds us that the division between the self-assurance of the adult and the emotional vulnerability of the child is more tenuous than it often appears. More broadly, it establishes his essential humanity. Like The Beatles, he represents the fulsome bodily displays of emotion that underpin, in Dyer's terms, much of the appeal of the classical-era Hollywood musical. The scene is also a prelude to Jeremy's open, and decisive, displays of emotion in the final act when he reads romantic poetry to the Blue Meanie Chief, causing pink blooms to erupt spontaneously on the latter's body and thereby forcing him, finally, to come to terms with his own suppressed emotions.

Jeremy's non-violent overcoming of the Blue Meanie Chief signals the ef-feminization of the (emotionally-repressed) establishment and thus its ultimate defeat; the old order is recreated in the image of the new, which was precisely what the revolutionary spirit of the 1960s counter-culture sought to achieve. Ultimately, the film allows the possibility of the Blue Meanies and the people of Pepperland living together. John calls out to them: *Hello, blue people. Won't you join us, hook up, and otherwise co-mingle?* The Meanie Chief plaintively muses, *it's no longer a blue world*, and, to his dismay, begins using the previously-outlawed word 'yes.' Delightedly, Jeremy responds: *Yes! Ah, "yes" is a word with a glorious ring! A true, universal, utopious thing! Engenders embracing and chasing of blues, the very best word for the whole world to use!* This utopian vision of peaceful co-existence between the Pepperlanders and the transformed Meanies reflects the universalism of The Beatles themselves.

Less acknowledged in previous accounts of the film is the queer coding of both Jeremy and the Blue Meanie Chief. Whereas Jeremy appears relatively liberated (at least within the confines of what was possible at the time in a film of this type), there is a hint of maniacal repressed homosexuality in the portrayal of the film's primary villain. Like Jeremy, he speaks in an unnaturally high register but, in contrast, his emotions are entirely sublimated. He wears multicoloured trousers and what appears to be red lipstick and is seen licking, then eating, the flower of a rose. He also forcibly suppresses music, recoils from physical contact, forbids the use of the word 'yes' and demands that everyone use the word 'no' (even when they're giving assent). Collectively, his actions represent an insistence on negation; he represses himself as well as everyone else. After breaking out in pink flowers at Jeremy's instigation, he agrees to join the Pepperlanders and finally admits: *My cousin is the blue bird of happiness*. In the penultimate number, *It's All Too Much*, Jeremy, once again, is the key figure. He and the Blue Meanie Chief face each other





in a two-shot framed against a psychedelic background. A smiling Jeremy grabs hold of the Chief and pushes their noses together in an approximation of a kiss; tears run down the face of the Chief in a final, cathartic acknowledgement, perhaps, of repressed feeling. The next shot sees them joyously dancing together as a crowd of similarly dancing Pepperlanders observe jubilantly.

It is entirely in keeping with the film's broader philosophy that Jeremy Hillary Boob, the nowhere man who seems to speak gibberish, should be the eventual harbinger of peace between the warring factions. An unknown, taxonomically unclassifiable creature who appears not to belong anywhere (and is almost callously abandoned by The Beatles until Ringo takes pity and decides to take him with them), he is eventually revealed as a bridge between races: his blue face suggests the regimented order and sobriety of the Meanies and his pink tail gestures to the breadth of human diversity. He is also essentially childlike, and his predilection for nonsense wordplay is more significant than it may appear. As we know from practitioners of literary nonsense such as Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, its ability to break down semantic complexities that uphold established power structures is essentially universalising. Nonsense operates as a linguistic leveller, comprehensible by children and adults across social borders and boundaries. Maria Nikolajeva argues that nonsense (alongside wordplay) is used by children's authors as a *didactic implement to teach children the use of language ... To accentuate that words have different meanings and shades of meaning, that language has certain rules of grammar and syntax.*<sup>65</sup>

This may be so, but it is also employed in children's fiction as an instrument of subverting these very linguistic structures, inclusively engaging children and adults on the same level. Subversions of this kind appeal (or we s u p p o s e they do) to children still learning – often unwillingly and under duress – the rules and codes of adult discourse, while withholding from those adults the logical syntactic and semantic structures to which they are now accustomed. Sentiments that appear to be woolly nonsense, delivered by an insignificant individual, may contain basic and elemental truths obscured by selfish human drives. Jeremy's 'nonsense,' despite its verbosity, is deceptively simple-minded; he concedes that *if I spoke prose, you'd all find out I don't know what I talk about*. But he succeeds in using a variation of this strategy to rehabilitate and to transform the Blue Meanie Chief.

If Jeremy is the universal nowhere man, The Beatles are the unifying thread that hold the film's multiple philosophical and emotional aspects together. As many Beatles scholars have pointed out, whatever their disparate (and sometimes conflicting) interests as individuals, as a collective whole they are powerful symbols of consensus. Although agents of benign revolution (or restorers of the natural order), they never *take punitive action against the Meanies*, as Neaverson points out; *they merely want to re-establish the utopian peace of Pepperland.*<sup>66</sup> In the *All You Need is Love* number, John repeatedly generates gigantic three-dimensional figures spelling the word 'LOVE' which block the 'barrel' of the Terrible Flying Glove and effectively disarm it, alluding to the contemporaneous flower-power practice of sticking flowers into gun barrels. (During the *Hey Bulldog* number, The Beatles literally fire a flower from a gun barrel into the faces of a many-headed bulldog.) The film's short live-action coda, in which The Beatles sing *All Together Now* directly to

the camera while the song's title is translated into multiple languages in subtitles at the bottom of the screen, is the ultimate expression of the film's child/adult duality. An apparently simple, 'throwaway' children's song, it is also a shorthand distillation of the universalism at the heart of the film's (and the band's) identity. This scene, together with the aforementioned *It's All Too Much* sequence, where the Pepperlanders dance in unison to the music, cut to the heart of the film's vision of peaceful communitarian consensus, and perfectly encapsulate Dyer's registers of utopianism: abundance, energy, intensity, transparency, and community.

## Legacy and influence

Much has been made of The Beatles' cultural work as agents of international, inter-generational accord; the North American poet Allen Ginsberg, for one, believed that The Beatles *offered an inclusive vision which, among other things, worked to defuse the tensions of the generation gap*.<sup>67</sup> *Yellow Submarine* is perhaps the purest distillation of this quality. Several critics recognized this when reviewing the film on its initial release. Richard Schickel, in *Time*, observed that The Beatles' uniqueness lies in ability to *bridge the generations*, while Judith Crist, writing in *New York* magazine, argued that: *It is for the kids ... and it's for the grown-ups and we can have our levels and not utter a word of apology along the way. The glory of The [sic!] Yellow Submarine is that it lets us maintain that generation gap while providing a bridge of delight*.<sup>68</sup> In his memoirs, Brodax claimed that this trans-demographic appeal was planned from the outset. Recalling a conversation with McCartney (who, according to Brodax, was pushing for a film that *only we as adults would enjoy*), he insisted that: *We can have it all, Paul. We hang on to the title. The song "Yellow Submarine" and the natural attraction children find in its rhythm and the understanding nonsense of its lyrics. And, as you correctly note, Heinz's extraordinary artwork will grab their parents, grandparents, and any spaced-out hippies in the neighbourhood...*<sup>69</sup> Ultimately, *Yellow Submarine's* success – then and now – rests on its multivalence. It employs strategies of double address (adult jokes and allusions to politics, literature, mythology, art, and cinema) to engage the interest of more sophisticated palettes, but it also partakes of the kind of utopianism found in classical Disney films, which makes little distinction between the perceived needs of child and adult audiences. The animation supervisor Bob Balser's contention that the filmmakers didn't produce *Yellow Submarine* for children or adults, but for themselves, recalls Walt Disney's *we don't think of grown-ups and we don't think of children, but only that fine, clean, unspoiled spot down deep in every one of us that maybe the world has made us forget and that maybe our pictures can help us recall*.<sup>70</sup>

As we have seen, the counter-culture icon Jerry Rubin, who had recently co-founded the revolutionary Youth International Party ("Yippies"), made the startling claim that *Yellow Submarine is the best vision of the revolution that [he has] ever seen*, in an interview with an underground New York newspaper, *The East Village Other*.<sup>71</sup> It is tempting to regard such a perspective as a naïve relic of a political creed long since consigned to history, as David Bowman did in his 1972 retrospective on *Yellow Submarine*, in which he cast it as *a sad film ... because its happy scenario for the world cannot possibly come true*.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, in the intervening years, *Yellow*

*Submarine*'s status as a charming confection for family audiences has grown considerably, no doubt aided by frequent repeats on television – particularly during family holidays such as Christmas – and by the enduring all-age popularity of The Beatles. For audiences who have only experienced *Yellow Submarine* retrospectively on the small screen in ritualistic moments of family unity, its gently anti-establishment encodings have passed (like the 1960s counter-culture) into accepted cultural history, as safe and commodified as Christmas itself. Certainly, it is easy to imagine that, for most contemporary viewers, the film's anti-establishment credentials, pop art sensibility, and psychedelic trippiness would be sublimated to its more all-inclusive, democratic appeals to utopian consensus. In the 1990s, George Harrison reflected on its codification as a children's film, pointing out that *every baby, you know, a three, four-year-old goes through the "Yellow Submarine"*.<sup>73</sup> The film has also been adopted widely as a teaching aid, and the exploitability of the yellow submarine design as a toy has ensured a lasting place for the film, and its imagery, in the landscape of children's consumer culture.

However, the film's radical potential has never entirely abated. In its conflation of childhood and counter-cultural politics, *Yellow Submarine* can be seen as a precursor to the representations of *communitarian revolt* that Jack Halberstam identifies as central to the narrative ideology of Pixar films, which are characterized by themes of *revolution and transformation*, challenge selfish individualism and agitate for *collective action, anticapitalist critique, group bonding, and alternative imaginings of community, space, embodiment, and responsibility*.<sup>74</sup> While it does not centre on literal children (although Jeremy Hillary Boob and the film's animated versions of The Beatles can be read, at several points in the narrative, as *s y m b o l i c c h i l d r e n*), *Yellow Submarine* imagines a radically utopian alternative world that repudiates adult-coded vices of affectation, bigotry, worldliness, and *realpolitik*. Simultaneously, and not coincidentally, it strongly invokes common associations of childhood such as play, freedom, and imagination, resonating with Halberstam's claim that many *recent animated films actually revel ... in the wonderfully childish territory of revolt*.<sup>75</sup> Relatedly, the film was decades ahead of its time in its explicit celebration of cultural difference and non-conformity, which are now central tenets of Hollywood and British family-oriented animation.<sup>76</sup> This interpretation of the film's politics of inclusion is not simply a retrospective one; in his contemporary review of *Yellow Submarine* in *The Observer*, Tom Milne noted its *genuine concern for the individuality of oddballs, weirdies, and "all those [sic] lonely people"*.<sup>77</sup> More recently, Robert R. Hieronimus and Laura E. Cortner have argued that *each viewing inspires us to change the world by embracing our own inner weirdness, and finding a way to express peace and love through the creation of harmony*.<sup>78</sup>

Both the 'innocent' and 'revolutionary' perspectives outlined in this article remain fruitful approaches to *Yellow Submarine*, not merely as individual interpretations formed by critics and viewers but as discourses that still hold considerable traction in debates on the film, The Beatles, children's and family entertainment, and anti-authoritarian politics more broadly. As Terry Staples observes, one of the dominant, recurring qualities of British children's cinema since the early twentieth century has been its ephemerality; the vast majority of films have a very small theatrical after-life and fail to secure a significant place within the cultural

consciousness.<sup>79</sup> *Yellow Submarine* represents a significant exception to this general trend. In large part, this exceptionality can be attributed to the enduring fame of The Beatles, and the film's aesthetic significance as a dazzling break from the still-dominant hyper-realist conventions of Hollywood children-oriented feature animation. But it is also a consequence, I have argued, of the multiplicity of meanings it continues to embody, and of its compelling duality as a quintessential children's film and as a more radical expression of anti-authoritarian, communitarian discourse.

<sup>1</sup> N. Gosling, "Lessons at the Movies", *The Observer* 28.07.1968, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> J. Kohn, "Jerry – Part II", *The East Village Other* 9.04.1969, vol. 4, no. 19, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Glynn acknowledges that "*Yellow Submarine*" functions fully as a child-friendly fantasy on the forces of good overcoming those of evil, but then concentrates primarily on its counter-cultural aspects; see S. Glynn, *The Beatles and Film: From Youth Culture to Counterculture*, Routledge, London 2021, p. 71. Noel Brown devotes several pages to discussing The Beatles films in the context of British children's cinema of the 1960s, but does not explore *Yellow Submarine*'s inherent ambiguities in detail; see N. Brown, *British Children's Cinema: From "The Thief of Bagdad" to "Wallace and Gromit"*, I. B. Tauris, London – New York 2016, pp. 168-172.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, N. Brown, *The Children's Film: Genre, Nation and Narrative*, Columbia University Press, New York 2017; *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*, eds. C. Hermansson, J. Zepernick, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2019; *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Film*, ed. N. Brown, Oxford University Press, New York 2022.

<sup>5</sup> C. Bazalgette, T. Staples, "Unshrinking the Kids: Children's Cinema and the Family Film", in: *In Front of the Children*, eds. C. Bazalgette, D. Buckingham, BFI Publishing, London 1995, pp. 92-108; P. Rössler, K. Arendt, A. Kalch, F. Spitzner, *Children's Film in Europe: A Literature Review*, University of Erfurt, Erfurt 2009; N. Brown, B. Babington, "Introduction: Children's Films and Family Films", in: *Family Films in Global Cinema: The World Beyond Disney*, eds. N. Brown, B. Babington, I. B. Tauris, London 2015, pp. 1-16.

<sup>6</sup> On the relationship between children's films and family films, see P. Krämer, "'The Best Disney Film Disney Never Made': Children's Films and the Family Audience in

American Cinema since the 1960s", in: *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, ed. S. Neale, BFI Publishing, London 2002, pp. 185-200; N. Brown, *The Hollywood Family Film: A History, from Shirley Temple to Harry Potter*, I. B. Tauris, London 2012; N. Brown, *The Children's Film...* op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> For a fuller explication on the dominance of the hyper-realist aesthetic in mainstream Hollywood animation see P. Wells, *Understanding Animation*, Routledge, London 1998.

<sup>8</sup> R. R. Hieronimus, *Inside the Yellow Submarine: The Making of the Beatles' Animated Classic*, Krause Publications, Iola 2002, p. 303.

<sup>9</sup> D. Marlborough, "Beatles Film Dropped by Some Cinemas", *The Daily Mail* 6.08.1968, unpaginated.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> D. Marlborough, "Rank's Torpedo Baffles the Beatles", *The Daily Mail* 7.08.1968, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> [NN], "Mod Mozart as a Beatle", in: *The Beatles "Yellow Submarine": United Artists Press Book*, United Artists, [n.p.] 1968, pp. 1-8 (p. 5).

<sup>14</sup> For more detail see N. Brown, "The Traditional Family Film in Decline, 1953-68", in: idem, *The Hollywood Family Film...* op. cit., pp. 97-126.

<sup>15</sup> *The Beatles "Yellow Submarine"...* op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> J. Kimsey, "'An Abstraction, Like Christmas': The Beatles for Sale and for Keeps", in: *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles*, ed. K. Womack, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009, pp. 230-254 (p. 253).

<sup>18</sup> [NN], "The Beatles in Pepperland", *Sunday Times* 14.07.1968, unpaginated.

<sup>19</sup> J. Maher, "Nobody Loves the Beatles 'Cept Mother, Capitol, Etc.", *Billboard* 14.03.1964, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> R. R. Hieronimus, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 32.



- <sup>22</sup> A. G. Aronowitz, "Wisdom of Their Years", *Life* 31.01.1969, p. 6.
- <sup>23</sup> D. Buckingham, "Children of the Revolution? The Hippy Counter-Culture, the Idea of Childhood and the Case of 'Schoolkids Oz'", part of: *Growing Up Modern: Childhood, Youth and Popular Culture Since 1945*, October 2017, pp. 1-22 (p. 3), <https://ddbuckingham.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/children-of-the-revolution.pdf> (accessed: 12.07.2022).
- <sup>24</sup> I. Ellis, *Brit Wits: A History of British Rock Humour*, Intellect, Bristol 2012, p. 36.
- <sup>25</sup> R. R. Hieronimus, op. cit., p. 55.
- <sup>26</sup> I. Ellis, op. cit., p. 37.
- <sup>27</sup> R. Mallett, "Cinema", *Punch* 24.07.1968, pp. 29-30.
- <sup>28</sup> A. Brodax, *Up Periscope Yellow: The Making of The Beatles' Yellow Submarine*, Limelight Editions, New York 2004, p. 81.
- <sup>29</sup> [E. S.], "Beatles Find Their Film Feet in Weird and Witty Fantasy", *Daily Telegraph* 17.07.1968, p. 17; E. Rhode, "Pepperland", *The Listener* 25.07.1968, p. 29; G. Millar, "Yellow Submarine", *Sight and Sound* 1968, no. 4 (Autumn), pp. 204-205.
- <sup>30</sup> R. Schickel, *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney*, Elephant Paperbacks, Chicago 1997.
- <sup>31</sup> R. Schickel, "The Yellow Sub Rescues a Drowning Act", *Life* 15.11.1968, p. 12.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>33</sup> J. Milstead, "Flicks – Yellow Submarine", *TeenSet* 1969 (January), p. 8. I would like to thank Dr. Allison Bumsted for her help in sourcing this material.
- <sup>34</sup> R. R. Hieronimus, op. cit., p. 129.
- <sup>35</sup> J. R. Taylor, "A British Cartoon that Should Please Nearly Everyone", *The Times* 18.07.1968, p. 7.
- <sup>36</sup> L. Sloane, "Yellow Submarine Art is the Thing Today", *The New York Times* 24.08.1969, p. F15.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>38</sup> S. Glynn, op. cit., p. 82.
- <sup>39</sup> J. Carpenter, "Pop Poll Results", *The Los Angeles Free Press* 24.01.1969, p. 26.
- <sup>40</sup> R. R. Hieronimus, op. cit., p. 287.
- <sup>41</sup> A. Marwick, *Culture in Britain Since 1945*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1991, pp. 70-71.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 156.
- <sup>43</sup> S. Glynn, op. cit., p. 62.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibidem, pp. 64, 62.
- <sup>45</sup> B. Neaverson, *The Beatles Movies*, Cassell, London 1997, pp. 95-96.
- <sup>46</sup> Quoted in: S. Glynn, op. cit., p. 85.
- <sup>47</sup> D. Bowman, "Scenarios for the Revolution in Pepperland", *Journal of Popular Film* 1972, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 173-184 (p. 181).
- <sup>48</sup> D. Buckingham, op. cit., p. 4.
- <sup>49</sup> R. Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia", in: idem, *Only Entertainment*, Routledge, New York 2002, pp. 19-35 (p. 20).
- <sup>50</sup> Ibidem, pp. 22-23.
- <sup>51</sup> For a more detailed discussion of utopian feeling in children's musical films, see N. Brown, "Children's Film and the Problematic 'Happy Ending'", in: *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Film*, op. cit., pp. 145-166.
- <sup>52</sup> R. Dyer, op. cit., p. 21.
- <sup>53</sup> A. Brodax, op. cit., p. 113.
- <sup>54</sup> G. Millar, op. cit.
- <sup>55</sup> S. Eisenstein, *Eisenstein on Disney*, Methuen, London 1988, pp. 2, 41-42, 46.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibidem, p. 42.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibidem.
- <sup>58</sup> See for instance M. Tatom Letts, "Sky of Blue, Sea of Green: A Semiotic Reading of the Film 'Yellow Submarine'", *Popular Music* 2008, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 1-14; R. R. Hieronimus, L. E. Cortner, *It's All in the Mind: Inside The Beatles' Yellow Submarine*, vol. 2, Hieronimus & Co., Inc. Publications, Owing Mills 2021, p. 33.
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- <sup>66</sup> B. Neaverson, op. cit., p. 90.
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- <sup>71</sup> J. Kohn, op. cit.
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**Słowa kluczowe:**

film dla dzieci;  
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animacja;  
kino brytyjskie

**Abstrakt**

Noel Brown

***All Together Now. Żółta łódź podwodna (1968), The Beatles i film dla dzieci***

W artykule przeanalizowano film animowany *Żółta łódź podwodna* (reż. George Dunning, 1968) pod kątem atrakcyjności dla widowni międzypokoleniowej. Film ten jest zwykle pozycjonowany jako artefakt kontrkultury późnych lat 60., jego status filmu dla dzieci pozostaje w dużej mierze przeoczony. Autor dowodzi, że film ten zachęca i daje podstawy do wielu różnych interpretacji. Tyczy się to zwłaszcza jego podwójnego statusu jako zarazem filmu dla dzieci i widzów kina rodzinnego, jak i produkcji zorientowanej na dorosłych, oddającej rewolucyjnego ducha tego okresu. Autor wykazuje, że choć *Żółta łódź podwodna* ucieleśnia konkretne aspekty brytyjskiej i północnoamerykańskiej kultury późnych lat 60., to zawarta w tej animacji narracja wykracza poza narodową specyfikę kulturową i przemawia do uniwersalnych ludzkich pragnień oraz emocji, tak przez wizję utopijnego konsensusu i różnorodności kulturowej, jak i dzięki elektryzującej obecności The Beatles.