

## ISSUES OF STYLE, GENRE, AND IDIOLECT IN ROCK<sup>1</sup>

The experience of apparent exclusion from a body of knowledge can be both painful and instructive. The operative distinctions between the terms 'style' and 'genre', seemed largely transparent during both my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, a transparency which appeared to be of no concern to my peers. Recently, however, it has become clear that the foundations of these apparent certainties were insecure. So, as a result of my enduring positivism (another legacy from those studies), it appeared to me that the terms had either to be so loosely employed as to be useless, or that they would be susceptible to a certain amount of 'shoring up'. This article thus focuses on the issue of *style*, in order ultimately to question the hierarchical relationship between levels of style which most commentators expound. In doing so, I shall necessarily raise two related issues, that of *genre* and that of what I have come to understand as *idiolect*.

The issue has come into clearest focus in comparing working definitions of 'style' and 'genre' from conventional musicology with those of popular music scholars, whose usages tend to derive more from film, cultural, and literary studies. Both terms are concerned with ways of identifying similarity between different pieces (, songs, objects, performances, 'texts'), but the unresolved question is whether the similarities thereby identified exist on the same hierarchical level. For example, different writers have identified 'heavy metal' as both a *style* and a *genre*. Does this mean that it has both *style* and *genre* characteristics (in which case the descriptor itself is inadequate to the task of identifying which), or that it is both *style and genre* (in which case either the terms are identical, or one concept is necessarily subsidiary to the other)? In media and cultural studies, *genre* appears to have priority (as in Hayward 1996, Neale 1983 and O'Sullivan et al 1983), while in musicology, priority is assumed for *style*, as in Crocker (1986) or even the outspoken Shepherd (1987).

'Common sense' will provide a starting point for this investigation, whereby we can describe the symphonies of Beethoven and Brahms as belonging to the same *genre*, while inhabiting different *styles*. Comparing the symphonies of Beethoven and Lutoslawski, conventions of *genre* are still vaguely present, while the distinction between styles is greater, because of the intervening weakening of tonality. On the other hand, Beethoven's sonatas for piano and his symphonies use different conventions of *genre*, but are written within the same *style*. This seems to represent the terms' everyday usages.

In a study of popular music genre, Franco Fabbri offers a definition. Genre is "a set of musical events ... whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (Fabbri 1982:52). *Genre* is the key term in his discussion, although he notes its frequent interchangeability with others (he specifies *style* and *form*) in common discourse. While this focus on genre is historically situated (being an early attempt to broach precisely the kinds of questions which concern me in this article<sup>2</sup>), its presence in this influential article has, itself, had important consequences. The 'rules' of *genre* subject to social acceptance include formal and technical ones, but Fabbri also has in mind rules emanating from semiotic, behavioural, social, ideological, economic and juridical spheres. He is largely silent on defining *style* (which appears not to have been an issue in 1982) but Philip Tagg, claiming to follow Fabbri "precisely", situates *style* as a subsidiary of *genre*, noting that "... although the steel guitar sound of Country and

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<sup>2</sup> Fabbri, discussion at the Bologna seminar cited in note 1.

Western music acts frequently as an indicator of the 'country' genre, it started its life inside that style as a style reference to the Hawaiian guitar ..." (Tagg 1992:376, 378)

The position taken by Leonard Meyer, in his extended attempt to come to grips with the notion of musical *style* is encapsulated in his opening definition: "Style is a replication of patterning, whether in human behaviour or in the artifacts produced by human behaviour, that results from a series of choices made within some set of constraints." (Meyer 1988:3). In this definition, *genre* becomes a passive subsidiary to *style*, for Fabbri's rule-bound events appear to be none other than Meyer's constrained choices. At first sight, then, the terms might appear interchangeable (or at least equivalent, viewed from different disciplinary perspectives) were it not that those different disciplines persist each in using both terms. This contradiction presents three opportunities: acceptance, refutation, and resolution. We can simply accept that meanings for *genre* and *style* are purely intra-disciplinary, we can insist that one set of meanings is actually more productive than another, or we can attempt to find a ground whereon these differences can be resolved.

Observation of a range of views on this debate, from writers coming from a variety of intellectual traditions and disciplines, suggests such an attempt may be problematic. David Cope refuses to problematise *style*, viewing it simply as the utilisation of particular patterns, with no cultural component: "'musical style' [means] the identifiable characteristics of a composer's music which are recognizably similar from one work to another." (Cope 1991:30). This carries an implication of style as an innate quality in the work of an individual, an implication not widely found outside traditional (positivist) musicology. For Vic Gammon (1982), for instance, writing from a position within folklore studies, *style* is a system of codes and conventions, wherein perception involves deciphering what has already been encoded, the standard 'communication' model. Gammon argues that this allows illusory comprehension (*misunderstanding*) to take place through ethno- or class-centrism. From a position within communication studies, and with explicit reference to a Madonna video, John Fiske (1987) identifies *style* with modes of dress and activity, a notion closely allied to 'lifestyle', and perhaps with notions of 'stylization' and 'fashion' and, hence, 'artifice' and 'superficiality'. This is also the meaning of *style* employed by cultural theorist Dick Hebdige (1979), particularly with reference to punk culture.

Writing from such positions, *style* seems to operate with little autonomy. Rather than being innate in an individual, *style* here is available for all to appropriate. For musicologists, it often operates with quite a degree of autonomy. For Lucy Green (1988), it is the literal foundation of musical experience, while Jean-Jacques Nattiez gives notice of his intention to theorise the 'remarkable anti-reductionism' found in Meyer (Nattiez 1990:144). Note that these positions do not seem incommensurate with a post-structural questioning of the identity of the creative subject. Meyer insists that definitions of *style* have fundamental cultural characteristics, in that *style* posits a series of choices to be made within a specific set of constraints. These constraints are learned, largely by enculturative processes. Meyer's hierarchy works down from quasi-psychological 'laws' to matters of *style* which are not open to appropriation (in Hebdige's sense), but which constrain a composer both within and between works. A similar hierarchisation of concepts of style is developed by Levarie and Levy (1993). They define three levels, the *material* (out of which the work is fashioned, i.e. scale, rhythm etc.); the *historico-geographic* (a conflation of Meyer's second and third levels) and the *individual*. They disagree with Meyer, however, in upholding what has thus far appeared the standard musicological view. Although *style* is 'deeper' than *fashion*, both terms identify a particular manner of articulation: "Style ... concerns the manner of a work, not the essence." (Levarie and Levy 1993:263-4).

Although the term 'genre' seems to be somewhat under-used in musicology, Lewis Rowell's position appears normative. The issue is clearly not problematic: he refers to "multimovement genres such as the symphony, concerto, sonata, and quartet", to the fact that

"many Japanese vocal genres are narrative styles" and to the qualitative change marked by the Romantic era, wherein "the classification of music into a set of clear types and genres was replaced by the idea of music as a unified, amorphous, transcendental process, manifested by a vast number of individual works, each containing its own rules." (Rowell 1983:114, 192, 122). Note that, although Rowell appears to view *genre* and *style* as somehow equivalent, this last citation points to a key difference: whereas *style* can be posited for all music, no matter what its historical or geographical origin, *genre* has come under increasing attack in the Romantic and Modern periods. This is the core of Carl Dahlhaus' (1988) concerns. Prior to the seventeenth century, he declares that *genre* was defined primarily by a piece of music's function, its text (if present) and its textures. Secondly, matters of scoring and form might also be cited. The determining factors appear to be social rather than technical. Developments in the twentieth century have challenged the centrality of the concept, resulting in the predominance of a work as an individual entity, rather than in relation to its *genre* background. A similar point is made by Nicholas Cook (1990), who suggests that for the contemporary concert tradition, *genre* has become a musicological rather than a musical fact, by which he means that we listen to individual works rather than abstractions of a type (and his proffered list includes courante, waltz, Charleston and reggae). The eighteenth-century concentration on *genre* suggested that an individual item was ephemeral, and that the *style* of each was necessarily derivative. In this opposition of ephemerality to autonomy we find the roots of the concern of mass culture theorists with *genre*, of texts as tokens, and with a like concern among performers too. When a dance band is required to play a Charleston, it generally matters not which tune is taken! And even among autonomous works, the process does not work consistently: it still makes sense to discuss operatic conventions in Tippett, or symphonic conventions in Lutoslawski. The historical implications of *genre* in European music are, however, fundamental. Dahlhaus goes further, insisting on a degree of 'community acquiescence', such that the notion of the masterpiece emerges out of *genre* conventions. For Cook, contemporary programming and composition thus denies *genre* by denying the mediocre.

Outside musicology, *genre* is crucial. The standard English-language text in film theory is by Stephen Neale. He employs a key definition by Tom Ryall, that "genres may be defined as patterns/ forms/styles/structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the film maker, and their reading by an audience." (Neale 1983:28). In this, although we can see *genre* erected unproblematically above *style*, we can also see a concern with reception absent from much musicological work. Neale offers an extensive criticism of this key position, primarily on the grounds that no mechanism for the supervision of meaning is involved, summarising his position in these terms: "genres constitute specific variations of the interplay of codes, discursive structures and drives involved in the whole of mainstream cinema" (1983:48), but he insists that there are no generic 'essences' - genres are sites of repetition and difference. In his final summary, he notes that "both [*genre* and *authorship*] provide limited variety, both engage similar economies of repetition and difference, and both regulate the display of cinema, its potential excess, whether on the one hand as a generic system or, on the other, as personal style" (1983:54-5), wherein *genre* acts both as a body of texts and as a system of expectations. Here, as in literary studies, *style* specifies the work of individual authors, roughly equivalent to Meyer's *idiom*. There seems little understanding of, or need for, *style* as a wider concept. Such a position is supported by Susan Hayward's dictionary (Hayward 1996), which contains an extended entry for *genre*, but no entry for *style* (the same is true of Shuker's equivalent work for popular music - Shuker 1998).

Aside from her uncontentious assertions that genres are neither pure nor divisible, Hayward notes that one of the defining features of a particular genre pertains to its outcome. This is an important point for, as we know, prior to their dissolution under modernism, all concert and

chamber genres shared the same *dénouement*. It is also supported by Bauman's 'communications-centred' dictionary (Bauman 1983), where *genre* is seen as socially-grounded, and its importance traced particularly to Vladimir Propp's work on folk-tale classification and Bakhtin's linguistic work.

Robert Walser's study of 'heavy metal' grows out of this tradition of enquiry. For him, "the purpose of a genre is to organise the reproduction of a particular ideology, and the generic cohesion of heavy metal until the mid-1980s depended upon the desire of young white male performers and fans to hear and believe in certain stories about the nature of masculinity." (Walser 1989:109). He accepts a clear distinction between the ways that *style* and *genre* are constituted: *genre* is socially constituted, while 'stylistic traits' are autonomous, a position which would find support from Cope, although not from Meyer. Despite this, Walser sees *style* subsumed within *genre*, particularly because of the importance to the music industry of rigid genre definitions and coherence, definitions impossible to sustain in practice.

In the standard dictionary of communication studies by O'Sullivan et al (1983), both *style* and *genre* receive entries. While both are recognized as dynamic concepts, *genre* appears subject to the effect of *style*, but *style* itself contributes not to *genre*, but to *form*. This lack of clarity between these two ideas *style* and *genre* (and also, parenthetically, between *form* and *structure*, although for reasons of space I omit consideration of these from this particular article) should by now be self-evident. One possibility, as I have suggested, is that the two terms simply arise from different terminology which has developed out of different intellectual traditions. In English etymology, both terms can be traced back to the fourteenth century (Hoad 1986). Then, *gender* had connotations of *type*, and grammatically meant any one of three *kinds* - *genre* developed from *gender* by the nineteenth century. *Style*, on the other hand, developed from *stilus* (Latin for 'pen'), and was used to describe a 'manner of discourse'. Today, both terms describe sets of socially-constituted conventions and, frequently, the sets of conventions referred to cover the same ground. Think only of the examples of 'heavy metal' and 'white metal'. These share the same musical techniques, modes of dress and performance, iconographic techniques, etc. They differ in lyrics and subject matter (the former is secular with a tendency to misogyny and the demonic, while the latter is usually confrontationally evangelical), but share an apocalyptic tone. The sharing of musical techniques would encourage a musicologist to declare a similarity of *style*, while the distinction in subject matter calls attention to a difference of *genre*. However, the similarity of modes of dress and performance might suggest to a cultural theorist a similarity of *genre*, while the difference of subject matter indicates a difference of *style*.

As we have seen, different traditions suggest the two terms are related hierarchically, although it is rare to find single writers employing both. Johan Fornäs suggests that "a genre is a set of rules for generating musical works", while "a style is a particular formation of formal relations in one single work, in the total work of an artist, or in a group of works across many genres." (Fornäs 1995:111, 124). Although these definitions may seem insufficient in the face of all that has gone before, we have a glimpse here of some more equal and complementary relation between them. This complementarity is also suggested by Edward Lippmann. He notes, perhaps confusingly, that *genre* "carries with it not only a group of subordinate conceptions - theme, medium, harmonic idiom, form, emotional character, and so on - but also a group of more general ones, which are essentially comprised by the notion of style. [This] is not the idea of style as subordinate to the genre... along with the adoption of the concept of a genre ... the composer also implicitly accepts the commitment to think and create within a style of the times, and often also within a local, national, and personal idiom; the genre becomes the focal point of these more general styles..." (Lippmann 1977:335). Lippmann conceives of *style* as abstract, as requiring the adoption of a specific *genre* to make musical thought concrete.

From a background in social anthropology and folklore studies, Philip Bohlman defines musical *style* as "an aspect of the sharing of repertoires by groups of individuals formed on the basis of social cohesion" (Bohlman 1988:4-5), a definition which raises questions about the recognition of such a style by a listener unfamiliar with it. Viewed as *genre*, on the other hand, 'folk music' would be seen as a genre of 'folkloristics', or as a genre of 'national music', where commonality of origins is necessary for the identification of an item of music within a specific genre. This commonality is not requisite for the identification of a style in a repertoire. In addition, Bohlman accepts separate genres of folk music such as *narrative*, *lyric*, *ballad*, *epic* and *blues*. *Genre* is identifiable here through melodic grammar and syntax. Writing from a position within historical musicology (specifically studying the Elizabethan period), David Wulstan (1986) also employs both terms, implying that *style* is the reordering of experience to suit the artist's viewpoint, while a *genre* consists of the elements that bind items together (explicitly, here, that of the cries of Elizabethan street vendors, the then equivalent to today's shopfronts and television adverts). This equates to the notion of *style* as a manner of discourse, although chosen to a particular end, while *genre* remains a set of conventions enabling communication. For most writers from outside musicology, *form* is subservient to *genre*: Fabbri insists that *form* is perhaps wholly included in *genre*: "... each genre has its typical forms, even if ... a form is *not* sufficient to define a genre." Fabbri suggests that new genres are born by transgressions upon accepted conventions but, he also talks of a number of genres based on the form *canzone* (song), which calls into doubt his inclusion of *form* within *genre*, unless he is proposing some sort of orthogonal relationship (1982:64).

Lucy Green implies the priority of *style*, in her declaration that without it, there is no sense to be made: "Style is the medium by virtue of which we experience music, and without it we could have no music at all. No piece of music is ever stylistically autonomous. Whether particular individuals hear all music in terms of either pop or classical styles alone, or whether they make finer distinctions between late Haydn and early Beethoven, Tamla Motown and Disco, whether such activity is self-conscious or intuitive, it cannot be avoided ... *we must have some knowledge of the style of a piece of music in order to experience inherent meanings as distinct from non-musically meaningful sound, at all.*" (Green 1988:33-4) But, if we cannot make sense without *style*, can we make sense without *genre*? The implication of Alan Durant's discussion of David Bowie's song 'Fashion' (Durant 1984:188-90) is that we cannot. Understanding 'Fashion' is dependent on understanding its irony, which in turn is dependent on understanding the *genre* conventions of uptempo dance music (such songs as 'Locomotion'), against which 'Fashion' works. We might argue whether *genre* categories are less crucial than Green's emphasis on *style*, but clearly a rich understanding is dependent on both sets of conventions. As we have seen, the music of high modernism evades *genre* conventions, but it may be that in doing so, the music becomes aesthetically (as opposed to structurally) poorer.

For Gino Stefani, the concept of *code* is clearly antecedent to both *genre* and *style*. Stefani (1987) proposes a hierarchically organized set of levels of code from the *general code* (perceptual/mental schemes etc.), through to *social practices* (i.e. cultural institutions), *musical techniques* (roughly equivalent to 'syntax'), *styles* (i.e. the ways the above are concretely realized) and the *opus* (the single musical work). For Stefani, *genres* are aspects of *social practices*, a definition which makes obvious sense of distinctions between opera, symphony and *lied*, but probably not between *nocturne* and *prelude* (examples Meyer chooses). There are clear points of contact with Meyer's hierarchy: Meyer's *laws* seem to equate to Stefani's *general codes*, and also to his *social practices*, although this aspect is understated in Meyer's account; Meyer's *rules* equates approximately to Stefani's *musical techniques*, while Stefani's *styles* covers the various lower levels of Meyer's hierarchy: *strategies*, *dialect*, and *idiom*. Richard Middleton (1990:174) further subdivides Stefani's lowest three levels into *langue* (e.g. functional

tonality), *norm*, *sub-norm*, *dialect*, *style*, *genre*, *sub-code*, *idiolect* (i.e. the style of the individual), *work* and *performance*. With the exception that these appear directly hierarchical, his definitions of *style* and *genre* are standard. However, discussing the significance of lyrics, he suggests that they are organized by the conventions of genres: progressive rock, pop, disco, Broadway song, soul, etc. Considering these lists, it appears that Meyer's theory is less a theory of *style* than of *code*, which raises the question of exactly where *style* fits within Meyer's hierarchy, understood in this way. Meyer does, after all, aver that "style analysis is ... concerned to identify the traits characteristic of some work of group of works, and to relate such traits to one another" (1989:65), whether those traits are of *style* or *genre*. Stefani's definition of *style* is of the type that Meyer eschews: "'Style' is a blend of technical features, a way of forming objects or events." (Stefani 1987:65).

The lower levels of all these style typologies reserve a space for 'individual fingerprints', those ways that individuals articulate their expression. As we have seen, for cultural theorists, this frequently takes the form of a mode of presentation which can simply be appropriated, while within musicology it is more normally seen as some kind of innate individual quality. In order to describe this, Meyer, employs the term *idiom*, which is situated orthogonally to, rather than subsumed within, *dialect*. In trying to put into practice some of his detailed hierarchisation, John Covach (1991) offers a list of *dialects* which includes classical (Boccherini) and heavy metal, while the early rock of the 'British invasion' and the psychedelic era are (sub-)dialects. The practical problem with the detail of this list, Stefani's, Middleton's, even Meyer's perhaps, is one of excessive precision. At what points, for instance, does a norm become a sub-norm, a sub-norm a dialect, or a dialect a sub-dialect? The level of categorization here is much more detailed than that of the *style/genre* distinction, which seems more fundamental.

How, then, might we come to a synthesis of these competing constructions of the relationship between *style* and *genre*? Most of these writers tend to see these categories as resident in the music we hear, but this is surely not the case. When we listen (or even when we compose), we are not ordinarily aware of listening to *style* or *genre*, but we are normally aware of listening to *content*. In other words, what we hear are simply sounds (although any normal member of society hears the same set of sounds, in the same order and of the same relative durations). Any organization we impose on those sounds is literally that - it is an organization which we impose, according to our level of competence. Thus, we can regard concepts like *style* or *genre* as decisions to slice the musical data in a particular way. Looked at like this, the concepts are not hierarchically related, as so many writers appear to assume, but are orthogonally related. Each will tell us something different about the uninterpreted musical content, but we probably cannot apply more than one of these categories at any particular time. To return to the example with which I began, we can ask of 'heavy metal' what its style conventions are (statistical patternings of chord sequences, melodic contours etc.) and we can ask of it what its genre characteristics are (modes of dress, venues, etc.). Accordingly, 'heavy metal' as a descriptor *is* inadequate to identifying whether we are discussing *style* or *genre*. A term like 'ballad', as in 'heavy metal ballad' is perhaps more interesting, in that the greater degree of specificity affects the *style* (particularly in terms of tempo and textural density) but not the *genre*. It will have a particular location in any performance.

To conclude, then, *style* and *genre*, and the contents of those concepts, are best understood as not hierarchically related. What of those stylistic features which are closer to the notion of the style of the individual? Recall Middleton's hierarchised listing, in which the concept of *idiolect*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. the 'style' of the individual, is nested within the concept *style*. In order to unpack this, I shall focus first on the work of Richard Thompson.

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<sup>3</sup> This seems to me a more useful, because more precise, term than Meyer's equivalent, *idiom*.

Thompson's career began as the guitarist in the folk rock group Fairport Convention in the 1960s, before going solo in the early 1970s, since when he has worked with a wide range of artists from blues aficionado Ry Cooder to jazz bassist Danny Thompson. Thompson appears to be a 'musician's musician', a valorisation which comes through the craft with which he writes and records. As a songwriter, Thompson's *idiolect* includes the practice of retaining a particular melodic motif while changing the harmony underpinning it, such that it appears dissonant to one or other harmony. Examples 1-5 are taken three from a single recent album, and two more from earlier points in his career. By using different periods, I want to establish this practice as an aspect of his idiolect.

According to Middleton's schema, if these songs issue from the same *idiolect*, they must necessarily be part of the same *style*. And yet, Thompson's *oeuvre* utilises at least four distinct styles: something close to 'rockabilly' ('Fire in the engine room' and 'Fast food'), to 'folk rock' ('When I get to the border' and 'Beeswing'), a more intimate 'bedroom folk' ('King of Bohemia'), and a gutsy, southern USA r&b-tinged 'swamp rock' reminiscent of J.J.Cale and Tony Joe White.

A more detailed set of examples occurs in the work of the Beatles. The issue is again one of idiolect, but of a different order. It is widely recognised that a dominant feature of the musical success of the Lennon/McCartney songwriting partnership was their fusion of disparate styles: aspects of Tin Pan Alley, r&b and gospel, Irish folk melody and European impressionist harmony can all be clearly found. My particular concern here is with the first two. The melodic structure of 'Can't buy me love' is outlined in example 6. The structure of the song is: Introduction, Verses 1 & 2, Bridge, Verse 3 and Solo, Bridge, Verse 4 and Payout. The verses are based on the pattern of the 12-bar blues, but substituting chord IV in bar 11. The introduction, bridge and payout are all based on III-VI-II-V-I. It therefore appears that the song utilises two stylistic bases with reference to its harmony: the blues (in the verse), and more elite practices (the 5th cycle in the bridge). Note, however, some attendant melodic differences. In the verse, the melodic contour is uniformly downward and scalic, while it tends to rise and to outline arpeggios in the bridge. Moreover, the melody uses a blue third during the verse, and again on chord I in the bridge, but elsewhere a precisely pitched major third. The illusion of fusion is given by the use of the same instrumentation throughout, of course, but the fusion is surely questionable if it can be so easily deconstructed.

In order to contextualise the point, examples 7-9 indicate related cases. The verse of 'We can work it out' is characterised by a mixolydian (i.e. blues-based) VII. The bridge, however, sets off in the relative minor with its sharpened dominant (a reference to tonal practices). Again, the instrumentation and the shared reference to the melodic pitches E and D help smooth over the difference between the styles. 'Hello goodbye' is perhaps more interesting. The verse uses primary triads and a prominent chord VI. The refrain uses a descending scalic bass with contrapuntal imitations, but bottles out via an aeolian VI-VII-I, again reminiscent of the blues. It is only at this point that the melodic gapped surface becomes replaced by a harmonised auxiliary note. 'Hey Jude' employs a similar disjunction. The verse and bridge are simply diatonic, but these get replaced by a mixolydian VII in the payout. My point here is that these styles which, according to received opinion (that of Richard Middleton, for instance, and implicitly that held by Dick Bradley 1992) are 'fused' in the work of the Beatles, are not really fused at all, but retain such strong traces of their origins that they separate out.

The consequences of this issue become clearer, perhaps, in one final, lengthy and slightly confusing, example. Oasis overtly recognise a debt specifically to Lennon and McCartney, particularly on the sleeve-notes to (*What's the story*) *morning glory*. On that album, the song 'She's electric' borrows with a minimum of disguise from three Beatles songs: 'Lady Madonna', 'With a little help from my friends' and 'While my guitar gently weeps', the last of

these actually by George Harrison (as outlined in example 10). The song also borrows, a little more obscurely, from Nirvana's 'Lithium' (example 11), emphasised by the harmonies V/vi and the aeolian VI-VII in close proximity. (It even borrows from the New Seekers' troublesome paean to Coco-Cola, 'I'd like to teach the world to sing'.) In terms of the categories and issues I have been raising, what is going on here? Such quotations are a part of the idiolect of Oasis; they are also found, although to a markedly lesser extent, and by no means with such dominant references to the Beatles, across the range of 'Britpop' bands. So, is quotation a stylistic feature of Britpop? Is it even a generic feature, in that it not only necessarily concerns the manner of articulation of an idea, but the constitution of that idea in itself? Oasis have not, however, 'fused' the Beatles quotations in such a manner as to make them unrecognisable, although perhaps they have succeeded in doing this to the Nirvana quotation. Again, the traces of the song's origins are so strong that they separate out, although the consistency of texture belies the differences.

One clear consequence of these observations is that the notion of stylistic fusion needs to be revisited- Abba and the Spice Girls provide perhaps more blatant examples than the Beatles, but they differ only in degree. A second consequence is that we can no longer simply assert that *idiolect* is a sub-category of *style*, thus tending to support the concept of *style* as something to be appropriated rather than some innate quality. This, in turn, supports a postmodern critical stance. I am not, of course, the first to draw such a conclusion. Lawrence Kramer's deconstruction of Mozart (Kramer 1995:25-32) makes a similar point, although in more detail and certainly with more elegance. The abiding danger with this approach is, of course, that of essentialising the qualities of styles, which is a problem which will have to be addressed on some future occasion.

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