

“Get Back” to Reality: Deconstructing a Common Narrative in Beatles’ Biographies

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Abstract

Biographies written about the Beatles have helped define the widely-accepted “truth” regarding the band’s history. In effort to adhere to this truth, Beatles’ scholars and fans may not question the legitimacy of these biographies or the constructed narratives that are commonly considered to be Beatles’ canon. This paper explores the Beatles’ musical sessions for their single “Get Back” and album *Let It Be* through biographical narrative versus filmed reality. Relevant sections from prominent Beatles’ biographies are compared to corresponding scenes from the recently-released documentary series, *The Beatles: Get Back*, in order to identify any major discrepancies between the two portrayals. This paper finds that the biographies heighten the most negative and dramatic aspects of the “Get Back” sessions to account for the band’s alleged tensions and coming breakup, whereas the series scales down those same aspects and shows more of the joy, harmony, and brotherly love shared between the Beatles while they made music. This paper also finds that the biographical depictions of Yoko Ono and her role in these sessions are heavily influenced by discriminatory stereotypes set forth and perpetuated by the media. This paper presents enough new information from the series to deconstruct the common narrative around the sessions and expose the biographies’ reliance on misconstrued information. By identifying the major factors that contribute to a constructed narrative (dramatic influence, distorted quotations, limiting characterizations, and negativity bias), this paper ultimately calls into question the biases that commonly influence stories about the Beatles, as well as the motivations and credibilities of those who choose to tell those stories.

1. Introduction

The Beatles' insurmountable fame came with a price: millions of eyes watched their every move, and many used them as fuel for obsession. The media often skewed the truth in their reports on the Beatles, grasping at straws to sell a satiating story for those hungry eyes. The Beatles were also known to skew the truth, but not necessarily on purpose. The general public was so invested in the Beatles' story that the press conducted a copious amount of interviews, in which the Beatles were asked the same questions so many times that the "anthology" of their life soon became a "mythology"; Bob Spitz, notable biographer of the Beatles, argues that "even McCartney is no longer certain where the truth begins and ends."¹ Biographers like Spitz have shouldered the responsibility of squashing this "mythology" through their work, sorting through substantial research to assemble a definitive story that flows like a narrative.

Because of their fame and important contributions to the artistic scene, the Beatles were subject to interpretation their entire career and beyond. Interpretation can vastly affect the way stories are conveyed; just like fans use interpretation to shape the Beatles into their desired fantasies, biographers use interpretation to piece together their versions of the Beatles' story. Skewed media reports or distorted quotes from the Beatles themselves could be interpreted as sheer truth and incorporated into biographical stories. A Beatles' story therefore becomes a constructed narrative when, purposefully or not, it perpetuates a fabricated set of information that is influenced by one or many cognitive biases. The primary danger lies in those constructed narratives being passed down and accepted as fact by all their interpreters.

In 2021, the Beatles got another chance to accurately tell their story, this time through a documentary-style film series instead of written or spoken word. The series titled *The Beatles: Get Back* specifically documents the decision-making, songwriting, rehearsing, recording, and performing that occurred during the Beatles' "Get Back" sessions, which was in early 1969. Because these sessions were held shortly before the Beatles' breakup in 1970, biographers have depicted them in a negative light and attributed them to being a leading cause of the band's coming demise. There is significant value in comparing scenes from the new series to the "Get Back" stories written by biographers; a better understanding arises on how the sessions are portrayed in both settings and why a constructed narrative might have formed and been perpetuated for so long. Through comparative research, a significant conclusion can be drawn: in the series, the highs are amplified and the lows are toned-down; in the narratives, the opposite is true. There are many factors that contribute to this negatively-skewed narrative surrounding the "Get Back" sessions, all of which can be examined through the work of Jonathan Gould's *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America*; Bob Spitz's *The Beatles: The Biography*; and Steven D. Stark's *Meet the Beatles: A Cultural History of the Band That Shook Youth, Gender, and the World*.

2. Background

The period between 1967 and 1969 found the Beatles nearing the end of their reign as arguably the most popular and influential band of all time. Coming down from the high of the release of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* during the "Summer of Love," news broke of manager Brian Epstein's death in August 1967 while the Beatles

were attending the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's lecture in Bangor, Wales. Epstein's death was a tragic shock to the Beatles' mental and professional states, but the output of new material continued nevertheless. Paul McCartney spearheaded the making of the *Magical Mystery Tour* compilation album and film as a way to shake the band "out of paralysis" after Epstein's death,² but the film was considered a flop by public opinion and the first real failure in their career.³ The Beatles were back in rock-and-roll mode in 1968, with early singles moving away from the "psychedelic" sound that inhabited the year prior. *The Beatles*, commonly known as "The White Album," was where a real shift occurred in their music-making process; the band focused less on collaboration and more on individualized conception and recording. Many songs and instrumental styles were developed earlier in the year during their time with the Maharishi in Rishikesh, India. The White Album sessions are said to have revealed growing differences within the band, amplified by their individualistic mentalities, a disorganized nature, and the introduction of Yoko Ono's studio presence. Supposed issues that arose from the White Album sessions would soon bleed into the following year.

The "Get Back" sessions spanned the entire month of January 1969. Like *Magical Mystery Tour*, it was Paul's idea to motivate the band toward a new facet of creation. Paul hoped to get the Beatles back to their rock-and-roll roots and perform in front of a live audience again, something that would harken back to their early rocker days in Hamburg, Germany. The original plan was to write and rehearse several songs to be featured in a live show, a TV special, and later an album. Since Denis O'Dell, head of Apple Films, had already booked Twickenham Studios for Ringo Starr's upcoming movie *The Magic Christian*, he suggested that the Beatles use the studio space and be filmed during their creation process. Michael Lindsay-Hogg, director of past Beatles' promotional films, agreed to fill the role of director. Ideas on the logistics—what to do with the film footage, where to stage the performance, and which songs were going to be involved—were painstakingly mulled over throughout the entirety of the sessions. The Beatles were under a time crunch since, in the next month, Ringo was set to film his movie and producer Glyn Johns was leaving for America. With the mounting pressure to create, Paul composed "Get Back" from scratch during the time at Twickenham while the rest of the members pulled older tunes, such as one written before 1960 called "One After 909."

Apart from song creation, alleged tensions and hostilities arose between the Beatles during the rehearsal sessions at Twickenham; the most notable incident was George walking out and quitting for about a week. Their decision to move from Twickenham to Apple Studios near the end of January, as well as the addition of Billy Preston on the keyboard, proved to be beneficial to their camaraderie and musicianship. The Beatles worked to record their prepared songs at length, without any cuts or edits, which was similar to the recording style they used for their early albums. These recordings would later be featured on *Let It Be*, the album produced by Phil Spector, as well as *Let It Be...Naked*, a 2003 remixed version that stripped Spector's lavish production. The "Get Back" sessions culminated into the famously bittersweet "Rooftop Concert," where the Beatles performed their first live show since 1966 and their last one ever as a band. Weeks of discussions and disagreements finally concluded with the decision to simply perform on the roof of Apple Studios. In the middle of an English workday, the Beatles played a short setlist of songs—"Get Back," "I've Got a Feeling," "Don't Let Me Down," "Dig a Pony," and "One After 909"—to an audience consisting of irritated businesspeople,

unfazed pedestrians, a few “Apple Scruffs,” and some enthused watchers—before ultimately being shut down by the police. The film footage directed by Lindsay-Hogg eventually turned into the documentary *Let It Be*, released to the public in May 1970 until becoming unavailable in the early 1980’s. The footage has since been re-emerged and revitalized by filmmaker Peter Jackson, who sifted through about sixty hours of film and over 150 hours of audio to create a three-part documentary series featured on Disney Plus called *The Beatles: Get Back*.⁴ Since the release, critics and fans alike have begun to reexamine the legitimacy of the stories considered to be Beatles canon.

3. Narrative vs. Reality

3.1. Biographies on the “Get Back” Sessions

A real predicament arises from the release of *The Beatles: Get Back*: the series presents the Beatles visibly acting out the scenes that biographers Gould, Spitz, and Stark⁵ thought they had accurately captured with their words. These words might play a significant role in the construction of a negative narrative, so it is necessary to first determine how the sessions are portrayed in the biographies before comparing them to the series and deconstructing any narrative they might support.

There are a few points to keep in consideration while analyzing the work of Gould, Spitz, and Stark. The biographers take artistic license to retell the Beatles’ story in a way that is unique to their writing style—one must get creative to compete against the host of other Beatles’ biographies. Spitz’s biography in particular reads like a novel as he adds an element of drama that could exaggerate how the stories unfolded in reality. Each of the biographies also contain quotes from each of the Beatles on how they felt about the “Get Back” sessions, but it is important to keep in mind that the quotes could be biased toward how each Beatle felt after-the-fact instead of in-the-moment during the sessions. In effect, these considerations could enhance the way the “Get Back” sessions are perceived by the reader and perpetuate a negative narrative even further.

The three biographers all introduce the “Get Back” sessions with a discussion, including quotes directly from the Beatles, that encapsulates the feeling of 1969. Spitz focuses on John Lennon’s perspective shift after meeting Yoko Ono, adding John’s thoughts from his interview with *Rolling Stone*:⁶ “The togetherness had gone...there was no longer any spark...I decided to leave the group when I decided that I could no longer get anything out of the Beatles. And here was someone who could turn me on to a million things.”⁷ Another quote is pulled from John’s interview with Ray Coleman,⁸ where he said “the boys became of no interest whatsoever, other than they were like old friends. It was ‘Goodbye to the boys in the band!’”⁹ John had little-to-nothing good to say about the Beatles in the early 1970s, so it is significant to note how well his perspective supports the beginning of a negative narrative.

Stark precludes his discussion by writing, “The Beatles, however, were no longer capable of agreeing on anything; the collectivity and one-for-all mentality that had governed the group had dissipated,”¹⁰ and then includes a quote from Paul: “John’s in love with Yoko and he’s no longer in love with the three of us.”¹¹ Gould provides his own thoughts before his discussion, writing, “In all but a name, the Beatles had begun with the friendship of John Lennon and Paul McCartney. And in all but a name, the Beatles ended

with the collapse of that artistically fertile yet emotionally fragile friendship over the course of 1969.”¹² Gould’s introduction includes a quote from George Harrison: “The saddest thing was actually getting fed up with one another. It’s like growing up with a family. When you get to a certain age, you want to go off and get your own girl and your own car, split up a bit,” and another from Ringo Starr: “From 1962 to around 1969, we were all just for each other. But suddenly you’re older, and you don’t want to devote all that time to this one subject.”^{13, 14}

The timestamps of these quotes are significant, with each of them being pulled from interviews conducted *after* the Beatles had broken up; this is cause for egos and biases to get in the way, as each Beatle had their own perspective that was likely soured and inflated after the breakup. Coupling each discussion of the “Get Back” sessions with these quotes successfully preps the reader for the negative narrative that biographers will soon provide.

The commonly retold story is that the “Get Back” sessions were incredibly tense and contributed to the eventual demise of the band; when tasked with covering these sessions, Beatle-biographers have used words with negative connotations to adhere to this negative narrative and imply that the end is, in fact, near. The biographers first capture the atmosphere of Twickenham Studios, where the Beatles planned to write and rehearse songs for a live show. Spitz writes, “The climate inside the studio turned even frostier the moment they began running down songs,” and, “By the second week of rehearsals, tensions were at an all-time high.”¹⁵ Gould writes, “Yet the mood in the room remained tense, for there was still a great well of resentment left over from the White Album sessions.”¹⁶ Stark writes, “Because the cameras and tapes were rolling constantly, the disaster— eventually released as *Let It Be*— was well documented,” and, “Though the public learned of it only later, these sessions confirmed that the Beatles could no longer stand to be in the same room with one another.”¹⁷

Each Beatle is then written with a specific attitude during the sessions. John was disengaged because he was “constantly preoccupied with Yoko”¹⁸ and, in his words, “stoned all the time,” and “just didn’t give a shit.”¹⁹ George was “disillusioned with the interactions of the group”²⁰ and “infuriated by his bandmates’ lack of enthusiasm for his new songs.”²¹ Paul was an “insufferable dictator” because he was “determined to motivate them, which made him come off as controlling and bossy.”²² Ringo, for lack of better coverage, was “bored.”²³ The biographers effectively pigeonhole the Beatles into these four specific characterizations, which leaves little room for readers to imagine the Beatles in any other way. The biographies certainly highlight how the Beatles *might* have been feeling during those sessions, but again it is important to consider the biographers’ use of dramatic flair and quotes from the musicians in hindsight. Overall, the language that the biographers employ only seems to elevate the feeling of hostility and negativity, giving off the impression that there were no good moments shared between the Beatles during the “Get Back” sessions.

3.2. The Documentary Series on the “Get Back” Sessions

While the biographies tend to lean toward the dramatic when discussing the sessions, it is unfair to completely discredit their narratives after watching the series. To some commentators, it is evident that “sometimes, the Beatles indeed seem to be in hell,

or at least some kind of purgatory.”²⁴ When the Beatles initially meet at Twickenham, commentator Jayson Greene notes that “they are rusty, they are estranged, they are wary,” and there does seem to be some unspoken, “smoldering resentments” lingering in the air.²⁵ With its extensive run-time, though, Jackson’s documentary series works to reveal the moments of interpersonal harmony and delicate dynamics between bandmates that were either less acknowledged or even unknown to biographers at the time. The series is dominated not by the squabbles, hostilities, and tensions described in the biographies, but instead by the infectious joy, love, and energy that came from music-making. After watching hours of the Beatles’ song-creation and rehearsal process, viewers of the series can come to a general consensus: the band was happy while playing together, especially their goofier numbers, and still summoned the magic that had kept them going for almost a decade.^{26,27} Even John, the Beatle with the most negative recollection of the sessions, corroborated this energy in the series while saying, “I mean, you see what happens when we’re just grooving to the music. The whole place changes.”²⁸ Any and all coldness aside, music was the rhyme and reason that brought the fire back to the Beatles’ dynamic, igniting their sibling-like love and fueling their creative energies as they passed glances, exchanged smiles, rehashed memories, and cracked jokes while playing.

The specific location also plays a role in the tensions described by biographers, as the Beatles’ environment proved to be conducive to their overall feelings. Twickenham was “cold,” “daft,” “drab,” and “impersonal,” which can redirect the biographers’ tone to fit those descriptors.^{29,30} The series reflects this energy and provides a greater understanding of why most of their issues arose from Twickenham’s environment—no wonder tensions were elevated while being expected to play music in the middle of a gigantic studio, under harsh lighting and camera surveillance, with constant distraction from the many moving parts of a movie set. The Beatles’ switch to Apple Studios in mid-January created a much more personal feeling with higher spirits in general—George commented that there were “good vibes, man.”³¹ The fact that Apple was a real, enclosed studio made the Beatles more comfortable to converse, collaborate, and be fully themselves. George explained to the others, “I think this is the nicest place I’ve been for a long time, this studio... this is the most I’ve ever played by playing every day.”³² The series shows tensions easing at Apple Studios and more positive progress being made in the musical front, as well as the brotherly front.

3.3. The “Argument” and “Walkout”

The most striking examples of biographies exaggerating stories from the “Get Back” sessions are the infamous “argument” between Paul and George while rehearsing, and then George’s “walkout” of the band. Each biographer paints the scenes a different way. Stark writes, “George grew sick of repeatedly being told by Paul how to play. He fought constantly too, with John, walking out on the group midway through the sessions.”³³ Gould writes, “By the end of the Beatles first full week at Twickenham, Harrison had enough. During a break for lunch on Friday, he got into an argument with John and stormed out, announcing that he was quitting the group.”³⁴ Spitz incorporates the longest and most dramatic depiction, describing it as a “tense and hostile” session where “Paul badgered George on how to play a simple guitar solo”; George’s “anger and

frustration...finally boiled to the surface,” so he “grunted with clenched teeth” and said, “Look, I’ll play whatever you want me to play, or I won’t play at all. Whatever it is that’ll please you, I’ll do it!” Spitz then describes how “the two Beatles squared off in the studio canteen,” where “tempers rose” during the “miserable confrontation.” Spitz notes how Paul’s “niggling directions...seemed suddenly unbearable,” so George “fought the futility out of it with rage” and “packed up his guitar, snapping the case shut with sharp, angry blows,” then walked out the door after saying, “that’s it, see you ‘round the clubs.”³⁵ Spitz’s account displays the most astounding differences from the documentary series. Paul and George were at odds during this scene in the series, but it does not unfold as dramatically as Spitz depicts.

The series reveals that during Paul and George’s argument, George’s tone of voice and facial expressions showed no anger, and Paul’s demeanor was never aggressive. They both spoke in hushed tones, using as few words as possible to get their points across; surrounding dialogue from this scene is necessary to provide more context:

Paul said, “I’m trying to help, you know. But I always hear myself annoying you, and I’m trying to...”

George interrupted, “No, you’re not annoying me. You don’t annoy me anymore.”

Paul said, “I can’t do it on camera. I’m scared of being the boss. And I have been for a couple years. I always feel as though I’m trying to put you down and stop you playing. But I’m not. I’m trying to stop us all playing until we know what we’re playing.”

George replied, “But you’ve got to play in order to find which fits and which doesn’t. You see, that’s all we *can* do.”³⁶

George’s infamous line (“I’ll play whatever you want me to play...”) is often taken out of context. Paul explained why he kept stopping the band, and George then said, “Okay, well, I don’t mind. I’ll play, or I won’t play at all if you don’t want me to play. Now whatever it is that will please you, I’ll do it. But I don’t think you really know what that one is.”³⁷ Watching this scene unfold in the series, he could have been showing some passive aggression, but given his calm nature and genuine remarks, this was likely George’s way of making a point on how he felt about Paul’s assertions.

The Beatles showed discomfort in the series while having honest conversations, or arguments, on camera, so they moved onto a new topic or a new song as quickly as possible—meaning that any tensions during the sessions never lasted long. In this fashion, George and Paul ended their argument by playing a different song, ultimately squashing the tension. The series importantly provides more context of the situation, confirming that Paul and George did disagree on how they should rehearse a song but never escalated to the point of shouting; instead, they expressed their feelings in, Greene notes, a “tentative” way, “stepping gingerly around each other’s feelings” until moving onto the next thing.

Spitz also inaccurately places the two separate events—the argument and the walkout—together on the same date, either for dramatic effect or an honest error. The series reveals that the argument between Paul and George happened on January 6th, then George’s walkout happened on January 10th. On the day of the walkout, Paul assumed his more dominant role of arranging songs despite George’s past recommendations. The series shows Paul focusing on John—laughing and dancing

together, playing “Two of Us” directly at each other—and neglecting George’s feelings by continuing to stop his playing and provide suggestions. This left George to sit and play without a word, wearing a stern but solemn look on his face. They broke for lunch and then George calmly said, “I’m leaving the band now.” John asked, “When?” and George replied, “Now,” and casually walked out after telling Mal Evans, the Beatles’ road manager, to “get a replacement.”³⁸ There is again no physical anger displayed in this scene and there is no argument with John that led George to walk out—which is said to have occurred by both Gould and Stark. From the perspective of commentator Adam Gopnik, there were no “fistfights or shouting matches,” but rather a “series of smoldering hurt feelings and strangled misunderstandings”—George’s case especially is a “study in the damaged feelings of an open heart.”³⁹ After George’s departure, the series shows Paul, John, and Ringo experiencing a rollercoaster of emotions, violently playing their instruments, and screaming as a form of catharsis. They stewed on their anger, hurt, and confusion for a few days, but then decided to resolve conflict in a more mature way.

The Beatles’ form of conflict-resolution is presented in an entirely new piece of information, known as the “lunchroom tape,” where a hidden microphone captured a private conversation held between John and Paul on January 13th. They confessed the power struggle they had been experiencing within the group and openly acknowledged what they had done to cause George’s upheaval; Greene notes, “the two of them admit that their egos have blinded them to George’s feelings and caused them to minimize him.” Gopnik notes that John and Paul “do not call him a prima donna but only regret that,” in John’s words, “it’s a festering wound that we’ve allowed... and we didn’t give him any bandages.” This was also where John admitted he had been “frightened” of Paul and his controlling nature, to which Paul explained that he had always thought of John as the “boss” and himself the “secondary boss.”⁴⁰

This honest and vulnerable conversation between the considered bosses of the band was what sparked the decision to mediate with George and eventually make the move from Twickenham to Apple Studios. More humanity is revealed in the series, particularly in this lunchroom tape, when compared to the biographies that are strict in their characterizations throughout their “Get Back” discussions. The secret tape provides deeper insight into the Beatles’ relationships with one another and the dynamic of the band as a whole; at one moment they could be butting heads with each other, and the next having an honest conversation to understand each other’s feelings and try to resolve a situation.

The characterization of Paul’s control is true to an extent; commentators like Greene and Gopnik have analyzed his role in these sessions, with Gopnik noting that his “compulsive musicianship is everywhere evident” in the series, “but he dominates mostly by cajoling and including rather than by insisting.” Paul is seen as the antagonist in the biographies, but the series works to dismantle that by revealing more of his humanity. Gopnik notes, “Far from being actually bossy, he tries to act bossy—and then apologizes for acting bossy.” Greene points out the “real pathos” in his struggle to fill the role of the late Brian Epstein; Paul tried his best to motivate his friends “without becoming the overbearing father figure,” so many viewers may find themselves empathizing with the “so-often hated Beatle.”

There are many moments displayed in the series as to why the Beatles were noticing their differences more often in this stage of their career. Their dynamic closely

resembles a family's, meaning that without a parental figure like Epstein around, Paul's desire for discipline left the other Beatles feeling annoyed rather than receptive. They acted like siblings that wanted independence even *more* than they wanted connection with each other.⁴¹ At this point in their lives, they had many new career opportunities, friends, and romantic relationships that caused rifts in their band's dynamic, and one romantic relationship stands out during this time that many believe is responsible for that dynamic's end.

4. The Impact of Yoko Ono

4.1. In the Beginning

Yoko Ono's involvement in the Beatles' final years has left an indelible mark on popular culture and has scarred her reputation ever since. By default, knowing the Beatles means knowing Yoko—the association of the two is impossible to ignore. Yoko and John were inseparable in 1969, which consequently shifted the band's dynamic during musical sessions. First noted in the "White Album" sessions and then again in the "Get Back" sessions, Yoko's regular studio presence has been widely considered a significant contributor to the tensions and eventual breakup of the band in 1970. Further research into her typical depiction in the biographies and media suggest that this notion—of her contribution to the band's downfall—is deeply rooted in racism and sexism and can be broken down using evidence in the new documentary series.

4.2. In the Biographies

Biographers Gould, Spitz, and Stark take note of Yoko's influence in their discussions of the "Get Back" sessions. Stark writes that John was "constantly preoccupied with Yoko."⁴² Gould writes that "Paul was once again inhibited by Yoko's constant presence. John was once again irritated by the 'coldness' with which the other Beatles treated Yoko."⁴³ Spitz writes that Yoko was "all over" John, "distracting him with kisses whenever possible or whispering in his ear."⁴⁴ Though Gould and Stark mention Yoko considerably less than Spitz, each of their accounts support a similar conclusion: Yoko's distracting and controlling nature drove John further away from the band.

Spitz then takes liberties to characterize Yoko throughout his dramatic retelling of the sessions, painting her out to be the villain with malicious intent and witch-like control over John. Spitz argues, "Yoko's interference continued to make a bad situation worse. More than ever, according to George, she was putting out 'negative vibes.'"⁴⁵ Spitz narrows in on Yoko's almost-supernatural power over John, including a quote from Tony Bramwell, a source closely linked to the Beatles:

"'Yoko had him under her spell,' recalls Tony Bramwell. 'She was always in his ear, telling him what to do, how to sing. If she couldn't get into the act, she was certainly going to influence it through John.' Out of these discussions, many of them in the studio, many of them while high on a dangerous drug, John's antipathy toward the Beatles solidified."⁴⁶

Spitz depicts her as “resentful, even scornful” toward the Beatles; her powers worked as she “fed and fueled” John’s “dark self-doubts” and “told John exactly what he wanted to hear” to drive him further away.⁴⁷ Following George’s walkout of the band, Spitz describes Yoko’s singing in a dehumanizing manner—“...clutching the mike with both hands and screeching into it like a wounded animal”—and insinuates that she had a master plan to sabotage the Beatles— “The others, especially Paul and Ringo, may have missed the implication of Yoko’s grand triumph, but they understood her will enough to know that it had nothing to do with music.”⁴⁸

Spitz supports his claims with a later quote from George, pulled from the Anthology interviews conducted in the 1990s, where he said, “I don’t think [John] wanted much to be hanging out with us, and I think Yoko was pushing him out of the band.”⁴⁹ By skillfully pushing the blame onto Yoko, Spitz provides a solid reason as to why John was drifting away from the Beatles. The alienation, demonization, and dehumanization of Yoko is therefore justified while reading Spitz’s biography as he uses claims and quotes based on assumptions and stereotypes circulated by the media at the time.

4.3. In the Media

Spitz’s hostility toward Yoko is common and arguably inspired by the media, as it has cast an extremely negative shadow over Yoko ever since her initial involvement with John. NBC Asian America released an article in December 2021, where journalist Kimmy Yam traces Yoko’s media presence over time.⁵⁰ Yam finds that the press and Beatles fans alike had a difficult time accepting a Japanese woman’s affiliation with the Beatles, so they resorted to discrimination. Esquire magazine wrote an article about Yoko in 1970 with a title that mocked her Japanese accent: “John Lennon’s Most Exclusive Groupie.” Documented in the book *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star*, fans often harassed Yoko by surrounding the Apple Corps in London and calling her a “nip,” “Jap,” “Chink,” and other insinuations that “she should get back to her own country.” This discrimination reaches as far as 2018, where Yoko is featured in the TV show *Family Guy* as the “woman crawling out of the well from *The Ring*,” which is a “reference to a supernatural being in the popular horror film.”

Amanda Hess, journalist for *The New York Times*, supports Yam’s findings and explains that Yoko was routinely cast “as the groupie from hell, a sexually domineering ‘dragon lady’ and a witch who hypnotized Lennon into spurning the lads for some woman.”⁵¹ Yam notes how her appearance was frequently described as “ugly” because of how different her hair and features were from the “European standards of beauty” and the other Beatles’ female partners who seemed to embody “a more glamorous aesthetic.” The ceaseless fire upon Yoko’s race, Yam argues, coincided with Britain’s “resurgence of nativism” in the 1960s, encouraging the white majority to weaponize their “demeaning stereotypes about Asian women” as a misguided attempt to gain a sense of pride.

Yam interviewed three experts to further explore the origins of Yoko’s discrimination. Loren Kajikawa, music professor at George Washington University, explains that Yoko’s label as “dragon lady” stems from the belittlement of “Asian female power” and “the idea that Asian women are conniving beings who use seduction in manipulative, dangerous ways.” Grace Hong, director of women’s studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, speaks on Yoko’s “ugly” appearance, disclosing that

“Yoko’s purported ugliness has all sorts to do with expectations about white femininity, and the ways in which she wasn’t fitting into that.” Nadia Kim, professor of Asian and Asian American studies at Loyola Marymount University, reveals the discrimination that lies behind the notion that Yoko “broke up” the Beatles, importantly identifying that “women are too often blamed for men’s failures and given no credit when men succeed.” Yam includes that Yoko herself noted in a 2010 interview with CNN that it was “sexism” and “racism” that singled her out, arguing that it was her, instead of the other Beatles’ partners (who were white), that was “used as a scapegoat” for the blame.

Rampant accusations of women “intruding on male genius”⁵² has skewed the way media and society view Yoko, making it easier to characterize her as an omnipotent entity with divisive, manipulative powers instead of giving John and the other Beatles any authority in the situation. Yoko’s powers were nothing of the supernatural; instead, she took her stand by *not* taking a stand, disengaging in the face of such animosity. Her “subtle yet powerful act of resistance” came from her refusal to meet the expectations of white Europeans and Americans, which made her a “threat”; Kim explains,

“Nothing angers the people who are...native-born members of Great Britain, or the United States, more than an immigrant who seems to be eclipsing them or overtaking their place. She never pandered or genuflected, and especially for someone who was a public figure, that just enraged people...It’s the idea that she can’t fully have her personhood, that we have to dehumanize her in some way because she’s, in our eyes, not equal anyway.”

Yoko is depicted as a threat to the Beatles’ longevity in what is considered to be the “definitive” Beatles biography; Spitz could not write his story without dehumanizing Yoko (“...screeching into it like a wounded animal...,” “Yoko had him under her spell...”), which exposes his reliance on the aforementioned discriminatory tropes and his intention to negatively alter the view of Yoko in readers’ minds. This vicious characterization that stems from racism and sexism has been widely accepted as fact in Beatles’ history due to its numerous reinstatements by accredited (male) authors, the media, and even quotes from some members of the Beatles (“...I think Yoko was pushing him out of the band,” and her “negative vibes”). It is therefore important to uncover the roots that lie beneath the constructed narrative and hostility surrounding Yoko Ono—a woman who, aside from her art, did virtually nothing but exist alongside John—in order to hold accountable those who choose to retell the Beatles’ story in a way that perpetuates this discrimination.

4.4. In the Documentary Series

The decades-long mistreatment of Yoko Ono is rightfully being questioned after the release of *The Beatles: Get Back*. Critics and fans are analyzing Yoko’s behavior in the series and calling for a “collective apology toward her” after realizing she acts contrary to the way she had previously been portrayed in the media and biographies.⁵³ The biographers’ general conclusion of her “constant presence”⁵⁴ is accurate, but the narrative becomes faulty in regards to her distracting and controlling nature; Yam notes how, in the series, Yoko “never appears to meddle in the band’s affairs or opine on any of their decisions.” Hess argues that director Michael-Lindsay Hogg was the most “meddlesome”

character out of anyone by sparking conversations that would offer more intriguing content for the film. Instead of distracting John, Yam finds that Yoko kept herself busy with “mundane activities like knitting, reading the newspaper, or eating what appears to be a chicken cutlet as the band rehearses.” Her witch-like control over John is nowhere to be found in the series, as one commentator notes that she was “largely out of the spotlight, ...not fighting for overall attention, certainly not as the group actually made music.”⁵⁵ Peter Jackson, who was in charge of piecing together the hours of footage to create the series, concurred with this perspective shift on Yoko; on the show *60 Minutes*, Jackson explained, “She never has opinions about the stuff they’re doing. She’s a very benign presence and she doesn’t interfere in the slightest.”⁵⁶

Throughout the series, John was staying focused on the other Beatles and the music they were making instead of being constantly preoccupied with Yoko. She did not distract John “with kisses whenever possible”⁵⁷—the cameras caught the couple kissing twice in total: once in Part 1 after dancing to the band’s rendition of “I, Me, Mine”⁵⁸, and again in Part 3 while the band played “Oh, Darling.”⁵⁹ While watching, it becomes abundantly clear that discrimination is a significant motivation behind her depiction in these narratives. Viewers can now see Yoko in a new and endearing light, one that contrasts the shade she has been painted by the biographers.

Compared to the series, the biographers were right about one key aspect in their narratives: Yoko was always there, and it did affect the band’s dynamic during sessions. The series *does* reveal Paul’s honest thoughts about John and Yoko’s relationship as an inhibitor to the band’s dynamic and namely Paul’s own dynamic with John, but there were no signs of “coldness” or negativity in his tone.⁶⁰ In John and Yoko’s absence, Paul voiced his thoughts on Yoko being an inhibitor to the song-creation process: “It’s difficult starting from scratch with Yoko right there, ‘cause I start writing songs about white walls”—this warranted a laugh from the group surrounding him.⁶¹ Paul’s comments should be taken lightly, though, because he jokingly followed-up with, “It’s going to be such an incredible sort of comical thing, like, in fifty years’ time, you know: ‘They broke up ‘cause Yoko sat on an amp.’”⁶² Although the band members never conversed directly with John about his relationship with Yoko, they knew it was none of their business to intervene. Paul concluded, “She’s great. She really is alright. They just want to be near each other. So I think it’s just silly of me or anyone to try and say, ‘No, you can’t.’”⁶³ It is true that Yoko’s presence affected the band, but it was not the end-all-be-all; the band was still able to make great music for a year, even in her perpetual presence.

Yoko’s presence in these sessions has not only been notable to the band and the biographies, but also the documentary series’ viewers. Her skillful ability to catch the eye on the screen is compared to a performance art—Yoko’s specialty—by Hess in *The New York Times*:

“At first I found Ono’s omnipresence in the documentary bizarre, even unnerving. The vast set only emphasizes the ludicrousness of her proximity. *Why is she there?* I pleaded with my television set. But as the hours passed, and Ono remained—painting at an easel, chewing a pastry, paging through a Lennon fan magazine—I found myself impressed by her stamina, then entranced by the provocation of her existence and ultimately dazzled by her performance. My attention kept drifting toward her corner of the frame. I was seeing intimate, long-lost footage of the world’s most famous band preparing

for its final performance, and I couldn't stop watching Yoko Ono sitting around, doing nothing."

Yoko's power grows stronger the longer she is captured on film. She becomes the centerpiece because she does exactly the *opposite* of what everyone expects her to do; Hess argues, "The fact that she is not there to directly influence the band's recordings only makes her behavior more ridiculous. To deny this is to sap her of her power." Yoko had a reason for her omnipresence, and the reason is a powerful statement against societal norms. In an interview conducted in 1997, she explained how she was "afraid of being something like" the wives of rock stars who were typically "sitting in the next room while the guys were talking," so she did the opposite.⁶⁴ The Beatles' significant others—Maureen Cox, Pattie Boyd, and Linda Eastman—were all featured in the series but did not have such a presence as Yoko's; Linda stuck around more often to photograph the band, but Maureen and Pattie could be seen as, Hess notes, "modelesque white women in chic outfits who occasionally swoop in with kisses, nod encouragingly and slip unobtrusively away." A new layer is added to her already-impressive performance from her refusal to fall into yet another stereotypical role that would box her in for life.

Yoko's behavior in the series sheds critical light on the discrimination that populates the media and biographies like Spitz's. Critics and fans are recasting Yoko as a "gentle, quiet, and unimposing"⁶⁵ character throughout the sessions, rather than the distracting, controlling, and manipulative character that Hong, Kajikawa, and Kim argue derives from racism and sexism. Kajikawa finds fault in fitting Yoko into *any* of these roles, though:

"That vindication, in some ways, is moving her from being the dragon lady that broke up the Beatles to being the submissive passive Yoko Ono, which is also not fair necessarily. The idea that that vindication has wrested on how she's not doing anything in the documentary, also, for me, falls back on a familiar, stereotype of Asian femininity. In reality, Ono was known to be anything but quiet."

Even the "quiet" and "passive" labels, Kajikawa argues, play into common Asian stereotypes. Thus, boxing Yoko into any of these categories will cause more problems and may contribute further to racist and sexist tropes that have dominated her legacy.

Jealousy is also a factor in the perpetuation of these tropes; Yam notes that John was "one of the most desirable men from Britain" at the time, and fans grew envious of and confused about John's choice to be with Yoko. Kim targets the "racial hierarchy" that fans would create by asking why it was Yoko who deserved to be John's girlfriend instead of a "nice English white girl, or a nice white American girl." After all, the Beatles were the culmination of fans' projections. When something went awry in those projections, like John dating a woman that did not meet their standards, the fans gathered their defenses and spread hate based on discrimination. The biggest issue lies in the public being too quick to blame Yoko—using her as the scapegoat—instead of considering that John had a choice in the matter. A relationship is mutual rather than one-sided, and it was John's choice to distance himself from the band and pursue other outlets, like his relationship with Yoko. Since Yoko had so much going against her already, it was easier to knock her down when she was low; blaming the woman for men's failures was the easy way out.

Yoko became an open target for the public to hail all their fires onto because she stood out from the crowd— and did nothing about it. The series importantly allows Yoko to reclaim the power that was stolen from her for years, and now that power shines through. Yam and Hess's analyses help to conclude that Yoko's constant presence in the sessions actually provides an incredible representation of "something nonwhite in the frame of this history" that "challenges the ownership" of an idyllically white-washed, British-centric version of the Beatles' story.⁶⁶

5. Further Impacts and Conclusions

5.1. Narrative Construction

Constructed narratives certainly make stories interesting, but they become extremely problematic when discovering their obstruction of the truth. A greater scope of the truth⁶⁷ can be found in the new documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back*, holding enough power to break down the constructed narratives previously written and believed about the Beatles and Yoko Ono during the "Get Back" sessions. Comparative analysis of the biographies and series, supported by additional research, reveals that four major factors play into the construction of Beatles' narratives: dramatic influence, distorted quotations, limiting characterizations, and negativity bias.

5.2. Dramatic Influence

Though it is best for biographies to be free of them, dramatic flairs are inevitable when writing about Beatles' stories. Writers may find the source of drama within themselves, as they have the creative freedom to captivate their readers, or they may find it elsewhere. The Beatles themselves could be dramatic in their recollections during interviews (the impact of their quotes will be discussed later), but the media could be even *more* dramatic in their reports on the Beatles. Newspaper articles and magazines were rife with drama and falsities for many reasons, making them a troublesome source for biographers to use in their stories.

Humans have always had a fascination with anything that stands out from the boring, mundane parts of life. Celebrities, a primary source of human fascination, are used as pawns in the media's game for profit. The more celebrities are exploited, the more readership is secured for media outlets like newspapers and magazines. As the biggest celebrities of their time, the Beatles were constantly featured in the media, but not always in the best light. Britain, the Beatles' homeland, is particularly notorious for fueling "toxic behavior" in their media, as they take a more aggressive approach on their reporting styles.⁶⁸ This toxicity is in part due to the "small and cut-throat media environment" that operates in Britain, as well as the "British social tensions over class, race, immigration, and status" that "may provide easy targets for reporters to exploit."⁶⁹ Like Yoko Ono, the Beatles received their fair share of this toxic media coverage throughout their career, but reports became increasingly dramatic toward the end.

For instance, George's walkout of the band during the "Get Back" sessions caught the attention of the press and "within days, George's resignation was widely reported

around the world.”⁷⁰ The original report in the Daily Sketch spun the story to say that “John and George swung, at the very least, a few vicious phrases at each other... On one occasion for certain they traded a few punches”;⁷¹ this caused mass, everlasting confusion of whether the two Beatles were in a verbal or physical fight. Biographers Stark and Gould may have fallen victim to these reports as they both cite that George got into an argument with John before leaving, sharing a similar pattern with Spitz being influenced by the media’s racist and sexist reports on Yoko Ono.

The series is so extraordinary because it not only demonstrates that there was no fight between George and John, it also shows the Beatles mocking these fabricated news reports after reconvening at Apple Studios. At the beginning of rehearsals, Paul read aloud a newspaper article about the fight and the coming end of the Beatles, called “The End of a Beautiful Friendship,” gaining some laughs after reading about how “drugs, divorce, and a slipping image” were contributing to the band’s downfall.⁷² George and John’s response to the reports was to throw fake punches at each other in jest.⁷³ George then shared insightful commentary on this report and the Beatles’ relationship with the media: “It’s amazing the way it goes on without anything to do with you. It’s like as if you can just give them a plastic dummy of you to push around and play with.”⁷⁴ The series reveals how aware the Beatles were of the media, but also how uninvolved they were in the formation of dramatic stories like these.

Biographers are interpreters of these stories and perpetuating them is sometimes unavoidable when there is no better information out there. The air is finally cleared in the series, exposing the media’s dependency on celebrity gossip and the biographers’ dependency on stories created by the media. Pinpointing the probable causes of drama in the biographers’ narratives is therefore necessary to call out any biases and understand why the reality portrayed in the series is so drastically different from the reality portrayed in the constructed narrative.

5.3. Distorted Quotations

Each biography is filled with Beatles’ quotes. It seems harmless to pull information straight from the source—the Beatles were the ones who lived through their story and were willing to tell the tale. Unfortunately, a few issues arise from putting full faith in the Beatles’ words.

As mentioned in an earlier section, biographers pulled many Beatles’ quotes from interviews conducted *after* the “Get Back” sessions and the breakup, which could drastically affect the Beatles’ perspectives. The breakup was emotionally and professionally tough on all of them, as they had yet to experience a musical career without each other. This life-altering change likely soured their memories and inflated their egos to ensure the success of their solo careers. For instance, George recalled in the *Anthology* interviews from the 1990s that the sessions were “stifling” and “painful”;⁷⁵ John recalled in *Rolling Stone*’s “Lennon Remembers” interview from 1971 that the sessions were “dreadful” and posed for interviewer Jann Wenner to “sit through 60 sessions with the most bigheaded, up-tight people on Earth and see what it’s fuckin’ like.”⁷⁶ Their feelings should not be invalidated, but it is important to note how much sway their words had on the creation of this narrative and how their feelings might relay differently in the series.

John was written in the biographies, particularly by Spitz, as completely uninterested in being a Beatle around the time of the “Get Back” sessions because of Yoko, drugs, and musical differences. Spitz uses John’s words: “their sound was something he ‘didn’t believe in’ anymore. He was just going through the motions, ‘just doing it like a job,’ he explained. Musically, he was ‘fed up with the same old shit.’”⁷⁷ The series directly contradicts his quotes in hindsight; when uncertainties were high after George’s walkout, Michael Lindsay-Hogg said this in John’s absence: “Funny enough, the other day when we were talking, John had said that he really did not want to *not* be a Beatle.”⁷⁸ Michael’s quote implies that John was still interested in being a Beatle during the “Get Back” sessions, refuting his characterization in the biographies and revealing how much his perspective altered after the breakup. John was certainly less engaged in the sessions at Twickenham Studios—all of them were—but he was especially excited at Apple Studios when playing their new songs (“...when we’re just grooving to the music. The whole place changes”), talking about the future of the Beatles (“It will be fantastic with this whole build-up... It will be the third Beatles’ movie”⁷⁹), and performing a live show (“I would dig to play on stage...”⁸⁰).

John’s quotes hold a significant power over the biographies and the overall constructed narrative—and for good reason. Connections can be drawn between each biography’s description of the sessions and John’s quotes from the “Lennon Remembers” interview.⁸¹ Stark’s main point (“...could no longer stand to be in the same room with one another”) correlates with John’s quote: “I really couldn’t stand it... you’re doing exactly what you don’t want to do with people you can’t stand.” Gould mentions the other Beatles’ “coldness” toward Yoko, and Spitz’s description of the cold feeling between bandmates (“...climate inside the studio turned even frostier the moment they began running down songs”), correlating to two of John’s quotes: “She was jamming, but there would be a sort of coldness about it,” and, “We put down a few tracks, and nobody was in it at all.”

Much of the biographers’ characterizations could come from this interview as well. Paul’s controlling nature could be attributed to John’s quotes: “Also I felt... that film was set-up by Paul for Paul. That is one of the main reasons the Beatles ended,” and, “He’s looking for perfection all the time... we couldn’t get into it.” George’s irritation with Paul could stem from, “I can’t speak for George, but I pretty damn well know we got fed up of being side-men for Paul.” Each biographer also used John’s quote, “I was stoned all the time and I just didn’t give a shit,” to describe his passivity and lack of interest in the Beatles.

John had a lot to say in this incredibly long interview but only spoke positively about Yoko and his new album, proving how much the breakup affected his mindset. This interview is most relevant to the topic but not the only one used by the biographers—there were almost too many to choose from. John and Yoko dominated the press in the 1970s. According to Barry Miles, author of the biography *Paul McCartney: Many Years From Now*, they “did as many as ten interviews a day,” effectively overpowering the Beatles’ story with their “one-sided account.”⁸² He was the one who controlled the narrative since, in a way, he controlled the press. *Rolling Stone* worshiped John because of his sheer honesty and iconic status in the counterculture, giving John the upper hand in the available information about the Beatles. John Kimsey, a notable Beatles’ scholar, notes that Wenner saw John as a “founder, leader, and truth-teller” because his willingness to share his story “was the first time that any of the Beatles... stepped outside that protected,

beloved fairy tale and told the truth.”⁸³ Questioning John, though, is a “delicate business”; Kimsey argues that, since John’s death, he “has been canonized as ‘St. John,’” meaning that any “objective assessment of his role in the Beatles” is frowned upon in popular culture. In this way, biographers or Beatles’ storytellers in general may be more enticed to take John’s word to respect his legacy. His thoughts and moods have ultimately set the tone for the negative narrative, as he was the main source of perspective on these sessions.

The Beatles may not be the most trustworthy of sources, though. Each of them faced intense pressure to share their perspectives after the breakup. With the amount of times they were asked the same questions about their story, there were bound to be mix-ups, confusions, and false memories—all of which have contributed to the Beatles’ “mythology.” Even John (later) acknowledged how his own words may have been misleading in the “Lennon Remembers” interview:

“You know, we all say a lot of things when we don’t know what we’re talking about. I’m probably doing it now, I don’t know what I say. You see, everybody takes you up on the words you said, and I’m just a guy that people ask all about things, and I blab off and some of it makes sense and some of it is bullshit and some of it’s lies and some of it is—God knows what I’m saying.”

The Beatles had a mounting pressure for answers—the right answers at that—but John proved that even *they* might not have known them. Fans have always had outlandish expectations for the Beatles, often forgetting that their musical and cultural heroes were humans too.

It is understandable why biographers have used an abundance of direct quotes throughout their work. There are not many sources out there that can describe the Beatles’ story better than the Beatles themselves, and biographers would be remiss if they did not include the available information from their own subjects. Biographers also had less to work with—the documentary series changes everything, as seen through this research. It is important, though, to highlight how the narrative might be skewed due to these quotes, and biographers should be wary of the ways that the Beatles’ dramatized words, inflated mindsets, and flawed memories could be altering the real story.

5.4. Limiting Characterizations

As revealed in the analysis of Yoko Ono’s role above, fitting people into boxes limits their potential as human beings who are capable of more than what they have been written out to be. There must be some way for biographers to describe the Beatles, but their characterizations are very limiting when compared to the documentary series and follow trends of how the Beatles have been pigeonholed in narratives for some time. The series shows that the Beatles’ characterizations are true to an extent, but there is much more depth to their personalities that other narratives have not quite grasped. Paul, depicted as an overbearing control-freak, showed apprehension, fear of being the “boss,” and deep care for his bandmates and their music. (He should be given a bit more credit; without his motivational advancements, there would likely be no content from this period at all.⁸⁴) John, depicted as an uninterested dropout, was actually invested in the music

they were creating, the moments they shared together, and the future of his band. George, depicted as the irritated sideman, was shown to be more involved in the music's composition, more honest and upfront about his feelings, and genuinely happy while he was collaborating with the band. Ringo, barely depicted at all in other narratives, was shown in the series as being the lovable, agreeable, "missing piece" that made the Beatles' music better.⁸⁵

John and Paul have been pitted against each other in rock history because of narratives like these that perpetuate a certain kind of characterization for each musician. With the help of Kimsey's analysis, John's apparent lack of care adheres to the "uncompromising rocker" trope and Paul's excessive amount of care adheres to the "calculated showman" trope, both of which can be attributed to the "version of rock's neverending story, the conflict between real and selling out... that reduces both parties to caricature." Because it has been ingrained in the press—originating primarily from Lennon's interviews and overall media dominance—this fight between extremes has followed John and Paul's legacies for decades, leaving no choice but for the biographers to lean into it.

Characterization *does* help to understand the possible personalities of the Beatles at the time, but it is effectively removed in the new series by presenting the Beatles as they were, as human beings. Ever since their rise to fame, the Beatles have served as symbols for their fans to project their fantasies onto and interpret any way they please. Viewing the Beatles in this way strips them of their humanity and authority, thus making it easier to shape them into characters and fit them inside a narrative. What makes the series so remarkable is seeing the Beatles play themselves instead of these characters. They are so refreshingly human that it can almost be shocking seeing them in this lens. It might be lost on some viewers that a wealth of history had occurred before these sessions were filmed; the four sometimes appear as brothers, but sometimes as strangers who, Gopnik notes, "seem scarcely aware that they are the Beatles." The fan-culture of holding the Beatles to higher-than-human standards is importantly broken down by the series, resulting in a reality that is stripped of any projected fantasies, interpretations, or biases and presents the Beatles in a new, eye-opening way that allows a deeper look into their personalities and dynamic as a band.

5.5. Negativity Bias

Everyone knows how it ended. The biographers introduce the downfall and demise of the Beatles before even mentioning the "Get Back" sessions. The Beatles still had a full year of content creation ahead of them, but the biographers chose to rip the band aid off early. Negativity bias, focusing on the bad instead of the good, is another significant contributor to the negative narrative surrounding these sessions. The narratives are so focused on the darkness at the end that they might neglect the light along the way. This light outshines the darkness in the series and removes the Beatles from a negative lens. Besides their casual mention of a "divorce" (after Paul said he wanted a decision about the live show, George mentioned, "Maybe we should have a divorce"⁸⁶), their breakup was unknown to them at the time; they still looked forward to the future and showed that they deeply cared for one another and their music despite their growing differences.

5.6. “And in the end...”

The goal of this research is not to understate any moments that could be perceived as negative; the band was at odds plenty of times, and their disagreements outnumbered their agreements. Hopefully, this research has shifted the “Get Back” sessions to a more positive lens and deconstructed the ways of thinking about the Beatles that rely *solely* on drama and negativity—all thanks to the hours of footage that prove to mellow-out the most notable moments.

This research is also not intended to discredit the biographers and the incredible work they have done. The series is brand new to everyone, and they, along with other accredited Beatles’ scholars, should not be held responsible for information that they had no access to. Even Mark Lewisohn, author of numerous, well-researched books on the Beatles, had a perspective change after viewing the series:

“No one knows everything about anything. Even in this instance, where I’d listened to close-on 100 hours of the audio spools from the month, I knew that seeing the footage in *Get Back* was going to tell me a huge amount. If anything, I underestimated that. It’s nothing less than the Beatles education primer, ultimately instructive to me and anyone else who really wants to see and hear who they were and how they worked. *Get Back* provides an immeasurable contribution to our understanding of what made the Beatles so remarkable.”⁸⁷

With *The Beatles: Get Back*, nobody needs to guess anymore. A bigger picture is provided through the footage, which helps to eliminate the need to piece together information using the imagination. A new light shines on the Beatles and Yoko Ono, one that informs everything previously believed about them and inspires the reexamination of potentially-biased narratives. Viewers now hold the power to look at the narrative with a skeptical eye and decide for themselves how they want to interpret each scene. Even the biggest Beatles’ fans can have their minds changed after watching hours of their heroes existing as normal humans, hopefully encouraging them to identify any biases they might have carried along with them.

The series teaches one final lesson that should be more often praised in Beatles’ history: they were not done yet. The weeks of misunderstandings and hurt feelings were the obstacles they had to face to “get back” to where they once belonged; they achieved this “ungettable”⁸⁸ feat, if only for a moment, by standing up on that rooftop and presenting themselves as the one-and-only fab four. They found their way back as a unit with, in Paul’s words, “majority decisions, and all.”⁸⁹ Maybe they were losing grip of each other from the wayward pulls of independence, but connection came while making those majority decisions that would later manifest into the “Rooftop Concert,” *Let It Be*, and *Abbey Road*. The series serves as an important reminder that there is beauty in the long and winding road, and that sometimes dissonance is necessary to find harmony again.

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- ⁵⁰ Yam, K. (2021, December 21). *Yoko Ono was called 'dragon lady,' blamed for Beatles breakup. Now, her legacy is re-examined*. NBC Universal. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/yoko-ono-was-called-dragon-lady-blamed-beatles-breakup-now-legacy-re-e-rcna9534>.
- ⁵¹ Hess, A. (2021, December 8). *The Sublime Spectacle of Yoko Ono Disrupting the Beatles: Critic's Notebook*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/08/arts/music/yoko-ono-beatles-get-back.html>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Yam. *Yoko Ono was called 'dragon lady,' blamed for Beatles breakup. Now, her legacy is re-examined.* NBC Universal.

⁵⁴ Gould. *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America.* (pp. 534).

⁵⁵ (2020, August 27). *Jan. 10: See You 'Round the Clubs.* They May Be Parted.

Wordpress. <https://theymaybeparted.com/2020/08/27/jan-10-see-you-round-the-clubs/>.

⁵⁶ Hess. *The Sublime Spectacle of Yoko Ono Disrupting the Beatles: Critic's Notebook.* New York Times.

⁵⁷ Spitz. *The Beatles: The Biography.* (pp. 807).

⁵⁸ Jackson. *The Beatles: Get Back.* ("Part 1: Days 1-7" 1:31:05).

⁵⁹ Ibid. ("Part 3: Days 17-22" 30:30).

⁶⁰ Spitz. *The Beatles: The Biography.* (pp. 807).

⁶¹ Jackson. *The Beatles: Get Back.* ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 6:17).

⁶² Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 7:30).

⁶³ Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 6:30).

⁶⁴ Hess. *The Sublime Spectacle of Yoko Ono Disrupting the Beatles: Critic's Notebook.* New York Times.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Yam. *Yoko Ono was called 'dragon lady,' blamed for Beatles breakup. Now, her legacy is re-examined.* NBC Universal.

⁶⁷ The documentary series does not necessarily present the whole "truth," but rather a bigger picture than what has been provided in the past. There has been significant commentary on Peter Jackson's edits and how they might incorporate potential bias, as well as how the nature of being filmed would affect how the Beatles normally operated—this discussion is beyond the reach of this paper, but it would serve as a great opportunity for further research.

⁶⁸ Eleode, E. (2020, March 18). *We Need to Talk about Britain's Toxic Press Culture.* Medium. <https://emieleode.medium.com/we-need-to-talk-about-britains-toxic-press-culture-883980ee773>.

⁶⁹ Bryant, K. (2022, November 8). *Here's Why British Tabloids Are More Extreme Than American Tabloids.* Reader's Digest. <https://www.rd.com/list/why-british-tabloids-are-more-extreme-than-americas/>.

⁷⁰ (2020, August 27). *Jan. 10: See You 'Round the Clubs.* They May Be Parted. Wordpress.

⁷¹ Jackson. *The Beatles: Get Back.* ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 48:17).

⁷² Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 1:01:39).

⁷³ Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 47:40).

⁷⁴ Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 1:16:35).

⁷⁵ Spitz. *The Beatles: The Biography.* (pp. 808).

⁷⁶ Wenner, J. (1971, January 21). *Lennon Remembers, Part One.* Rolling Stone.

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/lennon-remembers-part-one-186693/>.

⁷⁷ Spitz. *The Beatles: The Biography.* (pp. 814).

⁷⁸ Jackson. *The Beatles: Get Back.* ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 5:40).

⁷⁹ Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 1:36:00).

⁸⁰ Ibid. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 2:31:00).

⁸¹ Wenner, J. *Lennon Remembers, Part One*. Rolling Stone.

⁸² Kimsey, J. (2009). "An abstraction, like Christmas": The Beatles for sale and for keeps. In K. Womack (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles* (Cambridge Companions to Music, pp. 230-254). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CCOL9780521869652.015.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Lindbergh, B. (2021, December 14). *Five Lingering Questions About 'The Beatles: Get Back.'* The Ringer. <https://www.theringer.com/music/2021/12/14/22833925/beatles-get-back-documentary-questions>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Jackson. *The Beatles: Get Back*. ("Part 1: Days 1-7" 1:12:53).

⁸⁷ Lindbergh, B. *Five Lingering Questions About 'The Beatles: Get Back.'* The Ringer.

⁸⁸ Stark. *Meet the Beatles: A Cultural History of a Band That Shook Youth, Gender, and the World*. (pp. 256).

⁸⁹ Jackson. *The Beatles: Get Back*. ("Part 2: Days 8-16" 2:32:11).