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Things We Said Today: The complete concordance of the Beatles' song lyrics

Prof Colin Campbell, Dr Allan Murphy

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This work was conceived in May 1976 when the authors were bemoaning the fact that no adequate "authorised" version of The Beatles' song lyrics was available which could be used as the basis for serious critical analysis. Collections were never complete and commonly omitted songs if copyright permission proved difficult to obtain. This usually meant that George Harrison's songs were not included. This book was inspired by scholarly considerations to serve as the basis for serious critical analysis as little serious work could be done until the primary material was set out accurately and with an eye to its serious use. The resultant work is unusual, if not unique, in at least two ways. First, the book contains The Beatles' lyrics and a concordance to them. Second, it is unusual to prepare a concordance to refer to the work of artists who are still alive and hence capable of adding to their "collected works." However, it is because The Beatles, considered as a single entity, are not "alive" that this work is justified. Preceding the lyrics, the concordance, and the word lists are notes on the use of this work, together with a general introduction setting out some of the themes which a critical analysis reveals to be contained in The Beatles' songs. The former are there to help the reader make the most of the material contained in the book and should be consulted before referring to the concordance proper. Sung lyrics constitute musical sounds whilst music can have symbolic meanings (consider the Marseillaise at the beginning of All You Need Is Love). Consequently it would be foolish to assume that the full meaning of a lyric is to be found by a consideration of its verbal and literary properties alone. Despite these difficulties, there is clearly much that a careful analysis of the lyrics can contribute to an understanding of the songs as a whole and it is here that the methods of conventional, literary criticism have a role to play. The construction of a concordance is just such a technique and its use will hopefully extend our understanding of some of the best loved songs of our time.

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