

“Not Your Father’s Eleanor Rigby”: A Comparative Analysis of Cody Fry’s ‘Eleanor Rigby’ and the Original

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Abstract

Although covers of existing songs are common in popular music, Cody Fry's 2022 arrangement of the Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" (1966) stands out for its exceptional transformation of the original. Fusing elements of popular and classical music, Fry elevates the song's narrative to cinematic proportions that exceed the possibilities available to the Beatles. Through the lenses of contemporary literature on pop-rock music, this paper discusses the transformative ways in which Fry utilises chromaticism, expanded tonality, timbre, and form to create a compelling experience for the listener.

Drawing on Richard Bass's model of shadow substitution, Peter Kaminsky's analysis of T¹¹ superimpositions, and Drew Nobile's discussion of the double-tonic complex, the first part of the paper highlights the ways in which Fry's use of chromaticism and expanded tonality combine with his reorchestration to reinforce the lyrical themes of loneliness and isolation. The second portion of the paper presents a formal analysis of the original Beatles' song as a basis for discussing Fry's formal reinterpretation. I argue that the unusual chorus-verse-postchorus structure of the original mirrors the organisation of the verses on a larger scale. Building on the work of Walter Everett, John Covach, Cara Stroud, Drew Nobile, and Christopher Doll, this paper asserts that Fry's version reinterprets the Beatles' postchorus as a prechorus, thus elevating the narrative impact and expressive capacity of the music beyond that of the original.