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**THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL MEANINGS  
OF AMERICAN MUSIC LYRICS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR**

**By  
Erin Ruth McCoy  
B.A., Wingate University, 2003  
M.A., Clemson University, 2007**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of Humanities  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, KY**

**May 2013**

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**A Dissertation Approved on**

**April 5, 2013**

**by the following Dissertation Committee:**

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**Dr. Mary Makris, Dissertation Director**

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**Dr. Mark Blum**

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**Dr. Benjamin Harrison**

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**Dr. Clarence Wyatt**

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Bruce & Linda McCoy

for their unwavering support,

and to the memory of Dr. Alma Bennett.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my dissertation advisor, Dr. Mary Makris, for her guidance, editing sorcery, and steadfast support. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. Mark Blum and Dr. Benjamin Harrison, whose comments and assistance sent my research into new and exciting directions. I would also like to thank Dr. Aris Cedeño, not only for helping me realize many ideas during my time at Louisville, but also for introducing me to his native Panamá, travel in Vietnam, and my dissertation's fourth reader, Dr. Clarence Wyatt (who I also, of course, thank for his help with this project).

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## **ABSTRACT**

### *The Historical and Cultural Meanings of American Music Lyrics from the Vietnam War*

Erin Ruth McCoy

April 5, 2013

This dissertation analyzes song lyrics written in the United States during the country's involvement in the Vietnam War (1945-1975) by using social, historical, political, philosophical, and cultural criticisms. The majority of this dissertation focuses on Anti-Vietnam War protest lyrics, but neutral and pro-Vietnam War stances are also recognized. This work aims to primarily discuss music written in the United States during the Vietnam War era, but does recognize greater spheres of social protest against the war that occurred abroad. This dissertation asserts that the Anti-Vietnam War movement was on to something – an ideology that war was not the answer, and that, given a chance, peace could work. The Anti-Vietnam War movement brought the United States to a previously unseen cultural crossroads, yet those against the Vietnam War were ultimately unable to pronounce the movement as victorious. The horrors of war in Vietnam – depicted in this dissertation through Vietnam Veterans' memoirs as well as through literary, philosophical and multi-media historical artifacts – and the angry cries against it – seen through historical and philosophical artifacts along with song lyrics from the era – present a portrait of



the United States of America in a state of crisis. By combining a close reading of song lyrics with history, literature, philosophy, and other art forms of the era, we can ultimately see that the United States' decision to enter the Vietnam War was a choice, but the option chosen was incorrect according to many American voices.

*Keywords:* United States of America, Vietnam War, music lyrics, Anti-Vietnam War protest music, antiwar protest, historiography, new criticism, new historicism.

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## INTRODUCTION: APPROACHING THE VIETNAM WAR ERA

Some geographical landscapes demand to be called by their proper name: isthmus, peninsula, and estuary, for example. In addition, in February of 2008, I experienced my first mesa. I was at a party in a meticulously and lovingly handcrafted desert home that overlooked a glittering Albuquerque, New Mexico. Our hosts were lovely, and the company included a group of people that can best be described in two seemingly contradictory terms: Grateful Dead fans and university scholars. These were the Deadheads who went to Duke as the idealistic 1960s faded into the disillusioned 1970s; this was an academic conference after-party, complete with live music from David Gans, musician, author, and host of a weekly syndicated radio show on Sirius/XM satellite radio called *The Grateful Dead Hour*. He mostly played his own material, which was musically innovative and lyrically folk-punk. Like many people at the party, he was of a certain generation and made of a certain fortitude that refused to let go of counter-culture ideologies like love, hope, revolution, and a more unified and equal society. He did, however, play a cover of a Grateful Dead song, and it is a testament to my level of Dead fandom that I cannot recall the name of it.<sup>1</sup> When

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<sup>1</sup> Grateful Dead fans, due to the band's encouragement of its audiences recording shows, are musical archivists in a way that is unprecedented. This unique feature of the group's fan base has yet to be matched by any other popular music group in the United States, though Phish and Widespread Panic also encourage audience recordings.

Gans played this cover, the party's mood fell into one of reverence, and group commenced to swaying – sort of dancing – and singing along with the music.

Looking to my friend, a fellow graduate student, my age, who was along for the ride, I raised my eyebrows. He smiled broadly: “Hippies!” he mouthed.

But these were hippies who talked Hegel, had tenured positions at great public and private universities, and published books. It should not have surprised me; academics have always been key figures, even catalysts, in historical accounts of counter-culture events of the 1960s and 1970s. Their influence carried on into notable figures I identified with my generation: Marxist, “New Leftist” Herbert Marcuse fostered radical Black Panther and activist (and now Berkeley Professor) Angela Davis, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. participated in Civil Rights events with a young Jesse Jackson in tow - why wouldn't some members of the counter-cultures go on to academia? And why wouldn't these former-yet-somewhat-current “hippies” hold a professional conference panel examining the music, lyrics, performances, and ultimate legacy of a band they so dearly loved? The discussed aspects of the Grateful Dead represented a fascinating array of panels – musicology, history, performance, variation in instrumentation, lyrics, political philosophy – and the main argument brought forth by the group was that *this music mattered*, often personally but always culturally.

While the swaying and entrancement of the folks to the Grateful Dead cover wasn't very unusual to me, I wondered what the rules were in this social situation – could I join in? The majority of the folks at the conference were in

their late 40s to their early 60s; I was not sure how comfortable I felt essentially “partying” with people my parents’ age. What I did understand, and what I hope this dissertation leads its readers to understand, is that the music of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly rock and folk music with lyrics that spoke up for change in society, *does matter* to our understanding of ourselves as Americans. The vestiges of the hippies, the New Left, the Yippies, the Freedom Riders, the Black Panthers, the Civil Rights activists, the Anti-Vietnam War protesters, the flower children, etc. still form a part of contemporary society. The changes outlined in the Port Huron Statement, written by Tom Hayden for the Students for a Democratic Society in 1962, sound eerily similar to those demanded by the recent “Occupy” Movement (in international operation from September 2011 to the present). The fight for social change – moving toward more open and conciliatory foreign diplomacy, peace, less war, equal distribution of rights and wealth – still resonates. Today’s movements and upstarts, most notably the recent “Arab Spring” protests (2010) and the aforementioned Occupy Movement, owe a great deal to the social unrest seen around the world in the 1960s. *TIME* magazine voted its 2011 “Person of the Year” the protestor in tribute to the mass of social protest that swept the world at the beginning of this new decade, noting that movements and moments that introduce social change often do not get their credit:

History often emerges only in retrospect. Events become significant only when looked back on. No one could have known that when a Tunisian fruit vendor set himself on fire in a public square in a town barely on the map, he would spark protests that would bring down dictators in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and rattle régimes in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. Or that the spirit of dissent would spur Mexicans to rise up against the terror of

drug cartels, Greeks to march against unaccountable leaders, Americans to occupy public spaces to protest income inequality, and Russians to marshal themselves against a corrupt autocracy. Is there a global tipping point for frustration?

Everywhere, it seems, people said they'd had enough. They dissented; they demanded; they did not despair, even when the answers came back in a cloud of tear gas or a hail of bullets. They literally embodied the idea that individual action could bring collective, colossal change... Technology mattered, but this was not a technological revolution. Social networks did not cause these movements, but it kept them alive and connected. Technology allowed us to watch, and it spread the virus of protest, but this was not a wired revolution; it was a human one of hearts and minds, the oldest technology of them all. (Stengal, 2011, n.p.)

Social protest is not new; it has historically accompanied every war or divisive foreign policy decision; but it is exciting to me to be part of a generation that has seen a large segment of the world rise up against established norms and controversial issues. "Individual action [can] bring collective, colossal change" is an idea that has not died – even when protests have been unsuccessful (speaking to current affairs in Syria) – it speaks to an innate hope that remains a core component of the human spirit. The magical aspect of protest is that it is often done in song, and the Vietnam War produced the most extensive body of antiwar music in United States history to date. There are songs and lyrics written for almost every American war, but the number of songs written about the Vietnam War just *during* the war outnumbers the total number of songs written about all of America's other conflicts.

Many antiwar protests of wars after Vietnam simply used songs from that era instead of composing new ones, as the songs against the Vietnam War transcended their time, thus achieving a timeless quality. While many "pro-war" songs were written during the Vietnam War (such as "Battle of the Green Berets"

by Sgt. Barry Sadler; 1966, "Fightin' Side of Me" Merle Haggard; 1969), the antiwar songs, for the first time in American history, dominated popular music. Outside of the United States, international songwriters protested American foreign policy through their music (Jimmy Cliff "Vietnam," 1970; Rolling Stones "Gimmie Shelter," 1969; Plastic Ono Band "Give Peace a Chance," 1969; The Guess Who "American Woman," 1970; Black Sabbath "War Pigs," 1970; Beatles "Revolution," 1968). And many songwriters in the United States and abroad called for a departure from Cold War ideological diplomacy ("I Just Wasn't Made for These Times," Beach Boys, 1966; "Wooden Ships" Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, 1968; "War Pigs," Black Sabbath, 1970). The American soldier's mythology, that of the young man eager to make a martyr of himself for "liberty" and "freedom" and a continuance of the pervasive masculine iconography of American foreign might, policy and national identity became derailed in Vietnam-era lyrics. Songs from the Vietnam War era featured narratives of embattled, wounded, disabled, and disillusioned soldiers (Kenny Rogers, "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town," 1969; Tom Paxton, "My Son John," 1966; Loretta Lynn, "Dear Uncle Sam," 1966; Bob Dylan, "John Brown," 1962; Joni Mitchell, "Fiddle and the Drum," 1969). Amorphous concepts like "liberty," "freedom," and "democracy" were debated during the conflict in Indochina, and songwriters documented the ethos of those who were no longer able to support America's masculine ideology. The enormous impact of these songs and their lyrics on American culture, in conjunction with a look at the American ideology that made them as well as a look at what song lyrics have become in their wake, point to

the need for a critical study of these songs. The cultural identity contained in these song lyrics and the cultural histories they have preserved deserve a venue where their authority and importance can be examined.

Sociologist David E. James argues “content analysis of the lyrics of [popular music during the Vietnam War era] demonstrates that the ideological positions made available by hegemonic industrial culture barometrically reflected the changes in the general public consensus, and conversely that dissident or minority attitudes were mobilized only in marginal musical practices” (1989, 126). While I will argue in “Chapter One: America’s Movement Toward the Vietnam War, Through Song” that the “dissident or minority [attitudes’ mobilization]” was far from marginal in terms of America’s larger historical story of antiwar protest, I do agree with his central thesis regarding analyzing lyrics for “changes in the general public consensus.” James complicates his argument, however, by clearly outlining what he believes to be the definitive guide to analyzing these music lyrics for their political content and cultural ramifications in his article “The Vietnam War and American Music.” In this article, James avers:

Analysis of the political significance of contemporary music is incomplete, then, if it is limited to the recordings of the major companies or to clarifying the ideological limits of commodity production; it demands that the industrial production be understood in its relations to the total field of musical practice – which is by definition generally undocumented. Thus a complete account of the music of the Vietnam War would include at least the following: the different effects on various styles of music and modes of musical production; the ways each of these represented or otherwise addressed the war; the psychological positioning generated in different musics and the articulation of the libidinal economies with wars with other economies; the uses made of music by the various parties involved in the war, including the U.S. soldiers; the domestic resistance; the



Vietnamese patriots, and the South Vietnamese entertainment industry (and the transformation of motifs as they pass amongst all these); the effect of American music on Vietnamese music, notably the growth of South Vietnamese rock and roll bands; the place of music among other American cultural practices in the period of the war, especially the use of music in films and other forms of representing the war; and the relation of the American music industry to the other industries by which the war was prosecuted. (James 1989, 126)

James' argument is not entirely comprehensive; he does not add the perspective of the South Vietnamese veteran, nor are the civilian cultures of North and South Vietnam during the war addressed; additions to James' argument are endless. Furthermore, his argument leans entirely on a Marxist idea of "commodity production," which can be countered through the historical and philosophical position of other cultural historians. As a scholar of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – an era where music can be created and publically distributed as fast as its creator can produce it – I do acknowledge that music is a "commodity" and part of a larger business infrastructure. The recording and production methods of popular music have undergone drastic changes during my lifetime, which began with the tape deck and FM radio and currently includes the terms "streaming" and sharing music through "the cloud" or a "digital drop box" from iTunes accounts on a mobile device such as an iPad or iPod, or "smart phone." The commodity status of music does not detract from its greater cultural meaning. Even if a flawed capitalist structure of consumption and manipulated consumerism is and always has been present in American culture, which will be further explored in "Chapter Two: Who Was Against the War," the music mattered – and still matters – to Americans no matter how it was "sold" to them. *The Historical and*

*Cultural Meanings of American Music Lyrics from the Vietnam War* leaves out much of what David James believes would make a comprehensive historiographical reading of music lyrics. Instead, this work examines the larger cultural implications of popular American music lyrics produced during the Vietnam War era through an exploration of United States' history, cultural identity, national mythology, and through the memories of U.S. Vietnam War veterans. The conclusion of *The Historical and Cultural Meanings of American Music Lyrics from the Vietnam War* is that the United States *chose* to enter an unwinnable, immoral war, and the public outcry expressed through popular music lyrics against the war set a historical precedent for American social protest in music.

***Compromise, conformity, assimilation, submission - ignorance, hypocrisy, brutality, the elite - All of which are American dreams!***  
**Rage Against the Machine, 1992; "Know Your Enemy"**

Music – and, more specifically, lyrics – has always been important to me; the latter have always held meaning beyond the songs themselves. Raised in a household where music was always playing, I did eventually begin to take interest in songs and bands that went beyond my parents' music collection. I received encouragement in the form of an electric guitar, piano and guitar lessons, and relatively free reign regarding a monthly music purchase in our local music store. A fifteen-year subscription to *SPIN* magazine not only exposed me to a world that revolved around music, but also to writers and thinkers who

believed that music lyrics and artists *mattered* to our culture. Eventually, as I progressed in my undergraduate degree in English, I began to believe in the critical lens that Percy Shelley spoke about in his “Defence of Poetry” (1821), where “poets were the unacknowledged legislators of the world” could be applied to a reader-response critique of song lyrics. If song lyrics could be considered poetry, then the same critical ideas regarding narrative tropes, objective correlatives, and other literary concepts could be applied to song lyrics. The American cultural relationship with song lyrics helps us gain a broader understanding of American cultural identity.

While the larger cultural implications and meanings of song lyrics are relatively easy to explicate in conjunction with music journalism and historically contextual artifacts, understanding the concept of “war” in culture presents an infinite source of confusion. While my generation grew up perpetually embroiled in conflicts in and with the Middle East, we also grew up with the shadows of many “conflicts” and wars. The Vietnam War is only one of several confusing skirmishes; we have dallied with Latin American (the 1989 US invasion of Panama, the early 1980s Nicaraguan Contras, covert activity with the Guatemalan Civil War), African (Rwanda and Somalia human rights ventures), and Eastern European countries (tense relationships with Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Belarus, etc.) for complicated, ill-communicated reasons. The Berlin Wall fell when I was eight years old, yet the connection between that event and World War II only became linked in my mind 10 years later. For my generation, the glorious victory of World War II as described in history classes

and textbooks overshadowed the Cold War. One can imagine our shock upon realizing – often in college classrooms – that the U.S. history in our textbooks had glaring omissions and represented a highly culturally biased, hegemonic perspective.

Furthermore, my perceptions on war changed as I experienced Operation Desert Storm, where television battle footage often depicted blips of light followed by brief explosions, or people riding on tanks through decimated cities. My grandfathers' accounts of their service in World War II and the television specials on the Vietnam War featured, in contrast to Desert Storm, soldiers dying on battlefields. Advanced technology made the United States' involvement in the Persian Gulf more distanced from traditional warfare, and it didn't *look* that much different from the video games I played. World War II had always been portrayed as the "good war," because the horrors of the Holocaust appeared to justify the carnage of the war. Still, I began to wonder why my country was involved in all these other "wars?" Why was this necessary? Why is war, as one of my students once said, "something that's just part of life?" Why is war so revered in society when it is so obviously awful for everyone involved?

In attempt to understand the United States' relationship with war, one naturally wondered if song lyrics, combined with a thorough reading of American history, could lend some answers to these questions just as literature could. Perhaps George M. Cohan's World War I anthem "Over There" could give as much insight to the experience of that war as Wilfred Owen's poem from the same war, "Ducle Decorum Est." Our nation's history undoubtedly consists of

more than music lyrics, but it is important to note, especially in a relatively young country, how even a mere 200 years brings cultural change. To answer many of my initial questions, which have surfaced as I conducted my initial research on the rhetoric of American music during the Vietnam War, I found that my preferred methodology combines close reading of lyrics with a new historicist slant. Sub-sections from the field of cultural studies require my dissertation to ultimately be a work that fuses history, philosophy, sociology, literature, and music in terms of its relation to thematic tropes of America's cultural identity during the Vietnam War.

Before moving forward, I find it important to acknowledge my own cultural position as a scholar. I have an uncle who served in the war, and I have spoken with many Vietnam Veterans as I conducted my research, some of whom I now regard as friends, yet I am writing about a war that is over 40 years old. It is easy to point out the flaws of an event that you never experienced. Furthermore, my research in Vietnam revealed that how the country views the "American War" is far different from how I imagined they would. It is helpful that, as a historian, I utilize Paul Ricœur's historical theory of "Same," "Analogous," and "Other" that he presents in his 1984 lecture *The Reality of the Historical Past*. I approach the Vietnam War from the point of view that the Vietnam War Era is another, or "Other" era than my own and can only be understood through an analysis that reflects the separation of the author from the events. Otherwise, I attempt to approach my exploration of the Vietnam War and its music as "Analogous" to my cultural reality. I did grow up with

knowledge of the war, but my perspective bears the shame of cultural pollution; film, television, and literature produced *after* the war and perhaps even during my lifetime inform my opinion of the war, not an experience of the actual era itself. I can draw parallels, but I must also recognize the “apples to oranges” logical and historical fallacy that this type of thinking allows. By attempting to view history from the lens of what Ricœur terms as “Same,” a historian must attempt to get “inside” the event, because “*action* is the union of the inside and outside of an event. This is why the historian is the one who is obliged ‘to think himself into the action, to discern the thought of its agent’” (R.G. Collingwood qtd. Ricœur 1984, 26). Throughout my research, it became clear that this historiographer cannot truly experience the events and actions of the Vietnam War era the way required by Ricœur; the era remains in the past and intangible to an author so far removed from the events.

The first chapter, “America Moves Toward Vietnam, In Song,” reveals how the cultural attitudes toward war in the United States shifted noticeably in the Vietnam War. Revolutionary America sang the cheerfully patriotic “Yankee Doodle,” rallied around the “Bonnie Blue Flag” during the Civil War, sent the “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy” off to battle in World War II, but the Vietnam era youth joined hands and chanted “Give Peace a Chance.” Thus, it is important to establish a linear path of songs representing America’s changing cultural attitudes toward war in order to comprehend fully the unique musical moment of the Vietnam War as it surfaces. Historians Walter Hixson, Howard Zinn, and Melvin Small support my argument that the Vietnam War era’s antiwar

movement and music was a unique moment in the cultural history of the United States through their discussion of the hegemonic historical narrative traditionally presented in American history. By surveying the American cultural experience in the Vietnam War through song lyrics about wars – specifically those written *during* times of war – we can see a clear paradigm shift in national sociological, cultural, and political ideologies. What image of American national identity do these wartime songs reveal? What does the music from differing war eras show us in terms of what American cultural values were and might become? What changes occurred in America that spurred the Anti-Vietnam War movement to produce such a variety of musical protests and affirmations? Why are the antiwar song lyrics so unique in terms of American cultural history? What cultural backdrop made the Anti-Vietnam War movement possible; and, what allowed that movement to have a soundtrack? How do song lyrics from the Vietnam War era differ from others; what precluded them, and legacy did they leave us?

However, in my second chapter, “Who Was Against the Vietnam War,” I recognize my historical limitations and utilize Walter Hixson’s unconventional argument from his 2009 book *The Myth of American Diplomacy*; Hixson argues that national identity *drives* foreign policy. Thus, I argue that the Anti-Vietnam war movement and the antiwar song lyrics from that era point to a time in history where established norms, values, and conventions of American life were challenged in an unprecedented way. Nietzsche’s theories of Apollonian and Dionysian elements of folk music, I argue, directly contribute to the hedonistic

cultural image that has been attached to the Anti-Vietnam War movement. The chapter explores Bob Dylan's antiwar song "Masters of War" to illuminate the various levels of pleasure that antiwar music reflects on an "Other" or "Analogous" listener, as well as the cultural legacy that antiwar songs leave for its future listeners. The "New Left" social movement dovetailed and partially joined the Anti-Vietnam War movement, resulting in a fascinating moment where political and social philosophy echoed the dissenting voices in American government and society. Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse's theories on art, liberation, and social protest underscore my argument for the necessity of antiwar songs like Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young's "Ohio" (1970), which spoke loudly, angrily, and boldly against the Nixon administration. Using Marcuse's arguments regarding art's ability to invoke the illusion of beauty (*schöner Schein*), or the space or promise of a different reality, this chapter also discusses how Jefferson Airplane's 1967 hippie anthem "Somebody to Love" articulates the ethos of the "hippies" speaking out against the Vietnam War. The song's lyrics offer listeners from *any* era a vision of how the United States *could* behave in terms of its general citizenry and its foreign diplomacy – if only it could turn away from its aggressive, masculine, hegemonic, war-driven national identity.



The national identity that historian Frederick Logevall argues led the United States to “chose” war in Vietnam persists in the era’s pro-war music.<sup>2</sup> In my third chapter, “Who Was for the War,” the cultural identity of America during an unpopular war and in a changing social environment. The chapter explores the perpetuation of a hawkish sort of patriotic identity that was reflected in political policy makers, citizens, and musicians during the Vietnam War era. David Halbertstam’s *The Best and the Brightest* reveals the difficulties that President Lyndon Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, faced regarding their own political beliefs as the war escalated. McNamara reveals his more “dovish” views in the retrospective Oscar-winning documentary film about him, *Fog of War* (2005), but both he and President Johnson struggled to remain “hawkish” while they constructed the war. This hawkish patriotism, arguably residual cultural identity steeped in songs like “Over There” and “Patriotic Diggers,” enjoyed continued expression in songs like Merle Haggard’s “Okie from Muskogee” (1969), and leftover anti-communist rhetoric from the Cold War surfaces in Phillip Hall’s “Goodbye My Darlin’ (Hello Vietnam)” (1964). Through prodding the idea of American “patriotism,” this chapter argues that hawkish patriotism is antiquated yet still very much a part of American cultural identity

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<sup>2</sup> “‘The stalemate machine,’ Daniel Ellsberg would call it in reference to the American war; it was fully operational also during the French struggle. Sophistry and vapid argumentation became the order of the day, as leaders sought to save face – or, as they would put it, to achieve an ‘honorable peace’ – while treasure and lives were being lost. [...] America’s intervention, [journalist] David Halbertstam [said], occurred ‘in the embers of another colonial war.’”

Cf. Logevall, F. (2012) *Embers of war: the fall of an empire and the making of America’s Vietnam*. Random House, NY. xx-xxi.

due to the country's inability or unwillingness to change the constructed narrative of its own national mythology.

America's cultural history and identity depends heavily on its own created national mythology. One of the most interesting "myths" in American culture has been the country's mythology regarding the American soldier. Using cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss' ideas regarding poetry and mythology as a point of departure, this chapter combines several sources in an attempt to construct an image of the Vietnam War soldier. In my fourth chapter, "Who Fought in the Vietnam War," voices of Vietnam Veterans regarding their own "musical" memories of their time while *in* Vietnam are introduced. This empirical research reveals friction between the ideology behind the United States' conventional and more "hawkish" view of the American soldier and a more "dovish" image that came from music composed about the soldier during the Vietnam War era. The Vietnam War era soldier, depicted in songs like Sergeant Barry Sadler's "The Ballad of the Green Berets" (1966) and Terry Nelson and C-Company's "The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley" (1971), remains a strong, proud, masculine defender of freedom, thus reiterating the hawkish patriotism discussed in the third chapter. Other songs from the Vietnam War era, such as Eric Burdon and the Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" (1969) and Tom Paxton's "My Son John" (1966), clash with the traditional image of the American soldier, revealing the confused and shaken individuals who remain scarred from the war today. This cultural fissure broadens in the context of the memories of the Vietnam Veterans I interviewed. My Human Subjects

research project, "Compiling an Oral History of Vietnam Veterans' Musical Memories," surveyed 38 anonymous veterans, from several different branches of the military, in order to find out what the cultural and musical experience of the American soldier in Vietnam was like. This chapter finds that the experience and memory of the war from the point of view of its veterans and is perhaps the most important, illuminating, and overlooked point of view regarding the greater, living historical narrative of the Vietnam War. Again, following Ricœur, this dissertation understands that the "German tradition of *Verstehen*" influences historians through the idea that "the understanding of *others* [is] the best analogue of historical understanding" (Ricœur 1984, 16). The information we learn from our Veterans – arguably, the most "other" in this historiography with the exception of the Vietnamese – only further underscores the complicated legacy of the Vietnam War and how we culturally construct our own collective memory.

***This black stone and these hard tears are all I've got left now of you. I remember you in your Marine uniform laughing, laughing that you're shipping out probably; I read Robert McNamara says he's sorry.***  
**Bruce Springsteen (2003): "The Wall"**

After researching part of this dissertation in northern Vietnam in the summer of 2012, I discovered I had a great deal more to do in attempting to come to any sort of understanding regarding the reconciliation of the Vietnam War – the past – with the Vietnam War in American culture today – the present. Touring war sites in Vietnam complicated my research, but it did not lead me to

waver from my initial assertion that the Vietnam War was an unnecessary war, and there are great cultural lessons we could learn from it regarding choosing peace over war – if only we would accept those lessons.

Journalist Dorian Lynskey wrote an insightful book detailing the world of musical protest, *33 Revolutions Per Minute*. He devoted a few chapters to the protest music that came from the Vietnam War era in the United States, though he rightly positions that music with the Civil Rights Movement as well. The Vietnam War was more than just another one of America's war; it was a cultural revolution. The Vietnam War permanently changed how the United States studied itself at war. To Lynskey, as well as many Americans,

Vietnam was not just a war; it was the epicenter of the national conversation during the second half of the 1960s, an unparalleled magnet for dissent. To the ideologues of the New Left, it epitomized the evils of imperialism, the failure of liberalism, and the power of guerilla resistance... To less doctrinate young Americans, it embodied all the sins of their elders – the same people who told you to cut our hair, or threatened to jail you for smoking a joint, also wanted to ship you off to the jungle to die. (2011, 88)

My work seeks to honor those who were “[shipped] off to the jungle to die,” as well as those who protested being shipped. As I have already established, I am not a writer from the Vietnam War generation. My generation did not initiate the greatest protest movement in the United States, but we are a product of that era's movements' residual effects, and this work also pays tribute to that social bravery. In the words of *TIME* magazine writer Kurt Anderson, editor of the magazine's 2011 “Person of the Year” issue,

Once upon a time, when major news events were chronicled strictly by professionals and printed on paper or transmitted through the air by the few for the masses, protesters were prime makers of history. When

citizen multitudes took to the streets without weapons to declare themselves *opposed*, it was the very definition of news – vivid, important, often consequential. (2011)

The music and people involved in the revolutionary actions during the Vietnam War era are still “vivid, important, [and] consequential,” and their work for peace is the point of this dissertation. Those who are “without weapons [and] declare themselves *opposed*,” are still active, but those who set the stage for today’s protestors, at least in the United States, owe a great debt and respect to those who protested the Vietnam War. Many of these folks are still around – as my colleagues, my professors, my friends, and my family – and through this dissertation, I hope to honor their sacrifices and missions with respect and care. The music examined here serves as metaphor, memory, and compliment to what they actually lived; the music allows me to frame their experiences, but ultimately this work is for them, because it is their story, just told through my lens as an observer of one of the most amazing parts of my nation’s history.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **America Moves Toward Vietnam, in Song**

When looking at the Anti-Vietnam War movement as a singular event in United States' history, we must recognize that the movement – as well as its music – has a cultural and historical importance through sheer difference. There was not and has yet to be an event comparable in United States history, though there has always been an element of antiwar protest in American culture. The raucous height of the antiwar movement in the 1960s and 1970s occurred alongside several other unparalleled cultural events and movements. The antiwar era blended its art, literature, political rhetoric, music, and revolutionary behavior into a mixture where individual iconic images – such as marching antiwar protestors, a raised fist, dancers at Woodstock, or soldiers wading through the jungles of Southeast Asia – rarely stand alone in cultural memory. Music and war have been intertwined in American cultural identity, national ideology, and attitudes regarding foreign policy since the nation's founding. While one can easily see that Anti-Vietnam War music was not, in terms of sales and pop music chart rankings, actually “popular”; its mere presence in American culture, as I will demonstrate, was just as an unprecedented event as the movement itself.

As Melvin Small contends in *Antiwarriors*, “no other antiwar [sic] movement was as complex as that which aimed to stop American military

Involvement in the wars in Southeast Asia” which finds support through a sweeping study of popular music lyrics of music from other wars (2002, 3). Moreover, Small’s account of the small number of historic antiwar protests and the majority of America’s citizens’ fleeting, marginal interest in previous antiwar movements in our cultural history underscore the enormity of the Anti-Vietnam War movement. If we compare the lyrics of popular songs of American wars with Small’s account of America’s anti- and pro-war history, it becomes apparent how important the rhetoric of music based on America’s wars shapes and has shaped the country’s cultural experience. Small’s thesis, in conjunction with Walter Hixson’s theory of the “myth of American diplomacy,” an idea that hinges on the United States’ construction of itself as a harbinger of freedom, brings the relationship between foreign policy and war-themed music to the forefront. In his 2008 book *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S.*

*Foreign Policy*, Hixson states:

[N]ational identity is both culturally constructed and hegemonic. I argue, moreover, that national identity drives U.S. foreign policy and reinforces domestic hierarchies. Foreign policy flows from cultural hegemony affirming ‘America’ as a manly, racially superior, and providentially destined ‘beacon of liberty,’ a country which possesses a special right to exert power in the world. Hegemonic national identity drives a continuous militant foreign policy, including the regular resort to war. (2008, 1-2)

Hixson asserts that the United States acts and has acted, in war, under the auspice of its identity as a “beacon of liberty” whose God-given duty entailed “exert[ing] power over the world.” This concept morphed into defending the world from the evils of communism in the 1950s and certainly influenced the country’s rationalization for intervention in Vietnam. Utilizing both the theses

offered by Small and Hixson alongside the United States' most notable war-related music lyrics, this chapter explores the undeniable cultural bonds that the United States' foreign policy, wars, and songs have shared over the course of the country's history.

U.S. existence has always been linked to its triumphs in war. From its inception, the nation has celebrated its initial victory (the Revolutionary War, or "War of Independence") through various cultural manifestations of American iconography and patriotic jingoism. The fledgling country often expressed its burgeoning ethos through the song lyrics written in its honor. Frustrated with its status as a over-taxed and over-ruled British colony, the colonies, as their first official act of business, declared war, and "Yankee Doodle," a dandy who openly thwarted and challenged the authority of England, marched into that war (Shuckburgh 1754). This "Yankee" went on to "have the marrow!"<sup>3</sup> when the nation again fought the British in the War of 1812; the war's anthemic "Patriotic Diggers" reveals a United States rushing eagerly into battle (Woodward 1812). The United States did not lose its appetite for war as it grew as a nation; songs composed during the Civil War, such as 1861's "Bonnie Blue Flag," reflect not only a continued cultural preference for aggression but also allow the listener to hear how the Confederacy rallied around their idea of America. Similarly, the somber martyrdom and hymn-like 1858 song "John Brown's Body" highlights the divide between the North and the South's perspectives of the Civil War as

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<sup>3</sup> During the Revolutionary War period, having "marrow" meant possessing "strength or vigor; vitality" according to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (online).



much as it illustrates themes of martyrdom and Christian piety. United under the umbrella of World War I, the country promised that its soldiers “won’t come back ‘til it’s over *over there*,” seemingly admitting its thirst for war overseas, though the U.S. previously exhibited colonialist zeal during the Spanish-American War. The wistful romanticism and theatricality of George Cohan’s “Over There” (1917) continued into World War II with great gusto, setting the stage for USO (United Service Organization) shows that have been a part of the American war effort ever since. 1941’s “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B” cheerfully accompanied the U.S. through the initial stages of World War II, the “Good War” that seemed to solidify the United States as the greatest power on earth and thusly celebrated its ethos. With the Cold War and the Korean War, U.S. music first considers the confusion and legacy of war on its people and cultural identity, specifically the plight of the veteran and the impending doom of nuclear war. Once the United States escalated its presence in the Vietnam in the mid-1960s, however, most of the country’s music reveals an aversion to involvement in international acts of aggression. Up until then, the majority of the United States’ citizens celebrated its various wars with gusto.

***Better not invade – Yankees have the marrow!***  
**Samuel Woodward, 1812; “Patriotic Diggers”**

By looking more closely at the lyrics to Revolutionary War anthem “Yankee Doodle” and the War of 1812 ‘s “Patriotic Diggers,” we see America’s cultural attitude to the respective wars associated with these songs. The late

1770s promised social growth resulting from global trade and new methods of sharing information. Historian Walter Hixson believes this “unprecedented mobility” eventually “...fueled the rise of an increasingly cosmopolitan world system of buying, selling, cultural exchange, and diffusion of science and Enlightenment thought” (2008, 31). Furthermore, the 1770s marked a period when the United States became *united* for a common cause: defeating imperialist Britain. Hixson asserts that the American Revolution “... was the first *nationalist* revolt, and thus its significance transcended the fates of the United States and the British Empire” (Hixson 2008, 35). The Revolution of 1776 did have its dissenters, as historian Melvin Small notes, “[A]lthough they never joined together to constitute a ‘movement,’ as many as one-third of colonial Americans opposed the break with England” (Small 2002, 2). The two-thirds supporting the Revolutionary War made their beliefs known in the flagship song of the Revolutionary War, “Yankee Doodle.”

“Yankee Doodle” was written *before* the Revolutionary War, though the song’s composition can only be pinpointed to somewhere between 1755 to 1758.<sup>4</sup> According to the most circulated story about the song’s origins, Dr.

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<sup>4</sup> “The original lyrics to one of America's best-known songs, one associated with the American Revolution, were actually written a couple decades earlier during the French and Indian War, although an exact date has eluded historians. Some peg the year as 1755, when the war's first major battles were fought, or 1756. The other year often cited is 1758. Now, a New York state archaeologist, Paul Huey of the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, believes he has narrowed down the date to sometime in June of that year, when a large British-led army was mustering at Albany for an expedition against the French.”

Carola, C. “Dandy new theory suggests 'Yankee Doodle' is now 250,” *Atlanta journal constitution*. May 7 2008. <[http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/news/stories/2008/07/05/yankeedoodle.html?cxntlid=inform\\_sr?>](http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/news/stories/2008/07/05/yankeedoodle.html?cxntlid=inform_sr?>).

Richard Schuckburgh, a *British* army physician, composed the lyrics to make fun of American soldiers. He wanted: “...to mock the ragtag New England militia serving alongside the redcoats [...] after witnessing the sloppy drill and appearance of Connecticut troops [during the French and Indian War]” (“Yankee Doodle Turns 250 – Maybe” 2008). A decidedly pro-British “redcoat,” Schuckburgh, “an upper-crust wag known for his conviviality, mocked the Connecticut fools — ‘Yankee doodles’”— who arrived wearing hats decorated with feathers,” and he held these “Yankee Doodles” in contemptuous comparison to the “spit-and-polish redcoats” (“Yankee Doodle” 2008). But the song, however disdainful or scornful of American troops, became an anthem for them. Perhaps early colonists prided themselves on being represented by this good-natured yet unsophisticated image<sup>5</sup>; “Yankee Doodle” might lack overt masculinity and elegance – his cap is adorned with a feather and he’s on a pony – but the icon certainly contains elements of cheerful indifference and swagger historically embraced by American culture.

Sung to the tune from “a musical play popular in the British colonies in the mid-1700s,” the song invites its listener to see a New England soldier as a rag-tag and somewhat playful figure (“Yankee Doodle” 2008):

Father and I went down to camp  
Along with Captain Gooding

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<sup>5</sup> As a term “doodle” first appeared in the early seventeenth century and is thought to derive from the Low German *dudel* or *dödel*, meaning “fool” or “simpleton” (Oxford English Dictionary Online). The “macaroni wig” was popular fashion in the 1770s and became contemporary slang for “foppishness”; the verse’s implication is that the Yankees were unsophisticated enough to believe that sticking a feather in their hat was equated with high fashion.

Cf. J. Woodforde. (1971). *The strange story of false hair*. London: Taylor & Francis. 40.

And there we saw the men and boys  
As thick as hasty pudding.

Yankee doodle, keep it up  
Yankee doodle dandy  
Mind the music and the step  
And with the girls be handy.

There was Captain Washington  
Upon a slapping stallion  
A-giving orders to his men  
I guess there was a million.  
(Shuckberg)

This figure does not present images of masculinity and aggressiveness that will later become hallmark components of U.S. war songs; this avatar of the United States “[rides] a pony” (not a stallion or even a horse, automatically demoting the character to one of lower rank and status – *children* ride ponies) and “st[icks] a feather in his hat and call[s] it macaroni” (Shuckburgh, circa 1754-1763). This icon of America should “mind the music and the step and with the girls be handy,” rather than fight for America’s freedom from the British (Shuckburgh, circa 1754-1763). ‘Yankee Doodle,’ as a personification of the fledgling nation, is not with “Captain Gooding” at “camp” with the “men and boys,” nor is he fighting alongside “Captain Washington upon a slapping stallion, a-giving orders to his [million] men” (Shuckburgh, circa 1754-1763). ‘Yankee Doodle,’ as an American image, does not project an imposing shadow of Americans; he is “present” at historic events in American history because “he” embodies the chorus. The return “Yankee Doodle keep it up/Yankee Doodle Dandy” always brings the listener back to the happy-go-lucky macaroni-wearing character in the song.

Interestingly, the majority of Americans identified with this image and incorporated it into their revolt of 1776. Because of burgeoning unification among citizens as the rebellion against Britain grew, the song grew in popularity in the colonies. The colonized occupants who built the foundations of the country began to come together to form a shared vision of what the United States could be. According to Walter Hixson, they became nationalists:

Nationalism typically evolves from a homogenous *ethnie*, a preexisting ethnic core identified and articulated by secularizing intellectuals. The Founding Fathers played this role through nation building and cultural hegemony. By 1776 tens of thousands of Americans consented to a new collective identity that fueled the rebellion. ‘The public, as it were, one great family,’ *Boston Magazine* averred in an essay on patriotism. ‘We are all children of one common mother, our country, she gave us all our birth, nursed our tender years, and supported our manhood.’ (Hixson 2008, 36)

*Boston Magazine* cleverly united Americans under the idea of a “common mother” who “supported [their] manhood. However, this “common mother” didn’t simply nurse her citizens; she “supported [their] manhood.” The United States quickly adopted and attributed traits of manliness to its national *modus operandi*. While this masculine identity is not as readily identifiable in “Yankee Doodle,” the song does paint historic figures as masculine and militant, thereby inherently making war heroes a part of America’s legacy, pride, and national identity. As America’s journey toward independence continued through the War of 1812, the country’s musical lyrics went in a direction that placed tropes such as masculinity, aggressiveness, and put militancy into play in the country’s collective memory and national identity.

According to Hixson, the Declaration of Independence (1776), “pronounced the birth of a nation in which ‘all men are created equal,’ a nation chosen by ‘Divine Providence’ to act as a beacon of liberty for all peoples of the world” (2008, 42). But the United States’ vision of itself as a “beacon of liberty” dates back to the Puritan founding of the nation, as historian Sarah Vowell explains in her book *The Wordy Shipmates*, which examines the Christian ideology America modeled itself after in its early colonial days. The early Puritan minister John Winthrop posited the idea of America as a proverbial beacon of liberty for the rest of the world to look upon in his early sermon “Christian Charity,” where he wrote: “[W]e must consider that [America] shall be a city upon a hill” (Vowell 2008, 58). Vowell believes this specific Biblical image reveals a great deal about American cultural identity in its early years and presents an argument for America’s future identity and acts of war:

The image of a city on a hill will get passed down as an all American beacon of hope. But it wasn’t only that to Winthrop. To him, the city on the hill was also something else, something worse – a warning. If he and his shipmates reneged on their covenant to God, the city on a hill would be a lighthouse of doom beckoning the wrath of God to Boston Harbor. (2008, 58)

Winthrop’s interpretation of two verses from the Gospel of Matthew (5:14-6) explicitly places America in a position of power, but only if its citizens received God’s help. Furthermore, by using these verses as a blueprint for American identity, this power possessed by the U.S. cannot be hidden and must be shared; “No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lamp stand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise

your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:15-6). Under God’s watchful eye and believing itself to be providentially destined model of liberty, this “chosen nation’s” first act as a “beacon of liberty” consisted of leading by example, following the directions laid out, biblically, for the nation. Puritanical fear of God’s wrath should not be ignored when considering the United States’ early acts of aggression. The colonists genuinely believed that their great fortune came with a debt to God, and repayment to His generosity was only achievable by *actions* that underscored their dedication to the “covenant” that brought them their new land and good fortune.

Launching into the War of 1812, the country increasingly united under its slowly evolving sense of national identity. The War of 1812, nonetheless, had its “... own band of dissenters, including a sizable number of New Englanders who contemplated secession,” but by and large the war enjoyed support under the guise of patriotism (Small 2002, 2). Patriotism, a new piece of American history, had yet to be fully formed or tested; the country’s newness focused its zeal on building a united collective. Though often “underrated in its significance,” as Hixson explains in *The Myth of American Diplomacy*, the patriotic undercurrents that bolstered the war effort constituted an undeniably important development in American cultural practice:

Innocuously labeled in historical discourse as the War of 1812, the second conflict with Britain is best understood as a patriotic war whose primary significance was an emotional reaffirmation of national identity... The term *Patriotic War* underscores the essence of the conflict, which reflected the *domestic* drives inherent in national identity. (Hixson 2008, 50)

The domestic drives behind America’s growing sense of national identity found

expression in Samuel Woodward's rallying lyrics for the war, 1812's "Patriotic Diggers." The lyrics left the dandy "Yankee Doodle" behind, preferring to begin with a warning: "Enemies beware, keep a proper distance/ Else we'll make you stare at our firm resistance" (Woodward 1812). The United States, in its fighter's stance, projected its steely opposition in song, and the lyrics supported the nation's growing patriotic attitude.

"Patriotic Diggers" asserts its patriotism throughout: "lads who are freedom tasting" vie for fighting positions with their forefathers, who earlier "gave [the British] once a basting" (Woodward 1812). The use of agrarian tools are juxtaposed against the more sophisticated naval and ground armaments possessed by the British. U.S soldiers used "pick-axe, shovel, spade, crow-bar, hoe and barrow" to fight against their former oppressive governors. As Woodward explains, this disparity in arms is superseded by the colonists' nationalistic community, which boasts a cross-section of Americans united against a common cause, under the leadership of their religious leaders:

[P]atriotic teachers, farmers seize their tools, headed by their preachers [...]  
brewers, butchers, bakers - here the doctors toil, there the undertakers  
[...] plumbers, founders, dyers, tinmen, turners, shavers, sweepers, clerks,  
and criers, jewelers and engravers; clothiers, drapers, players, cartmen,  
hatters tailors, gaugers, sealers, weighers, carpenters and sailors!  
(Woodward 1812)

All these folks represent united Americans prepared to use any tool available to fight those who stand in the way of their quest for freedom, and the patriotism of their clergy leads the way. The popularity of this patriotic movement underscores the pervading potency of American patriotism that the War of 1812 produced. These "patriotic diggers" are "seen on yonder heights"; the lyrics



show simple citizens elevated onto a figurative mesa, perhaps attempting to imagine themselves more fully as what John Winthrop preached regarding the United States' role as a "city on a hill." The fact that these various professions represent popular uprising of the average American citizen, and that this motley crew are "digging [patriotically]" underscores their determination to plant their ideology firmly into what they have now claimed as *their* soil. The song's refrain reiterates the culture's developing attitude toward all oppressors of liberty: "better not invade, Yankees have the marrow" (Woodward 1812). The adoption of the moniker of "Yankee" not only nods toward the country's past lyrical landmark, "Yankee Doodle," but also verbally snubs the British. The lyrics – and the country – adopted what it wanted from its colonizers (through an insult), but they see themselves as resolutely separate from their oppressors because they had "the marrow" to fight and win a war with the British. This "marrow," furthermore, suggests the new role America must play as God's chosen "beacon of liberty"; these citizens must have the chutzpah to stand up to *any* oppressors who obstruct their God-given right to be free. The song's repetitive insistence of American "marrow" and the lyrics' reminder to the British that the Revolutionary War set a precedent of American triumph ("Don't forget our dads gave you once a basting") and assures the listener of the United States' providential destiny to win this "Patriotic War." The United States had a patriotic mission as a nation, and 1812's "Patriotic War, in short, offered rebirth, regeneration, and gave rise to good feelings at home" (Hixson 2008, 50).

The lingering “good feelings” in the United States after the “Patriotic War” gave rise to the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, which stated that the affairs of Europe did not concern of the United States... with the exception of colonization. The United States, the doctrine warned, would see any European attempts at colonization in North and South America<sup>6</sup> as acts of aggression, and it thus would react accordingly. Hixson believes this pre-emptive document underscored an inherent national identity that fixated on “preparing for war and *choosing war*” (Hixson 2008, 51). Furthermore, the Monroe Doctrine confirmed more than just the U.S.’s pointed declaration of separation from Europe, “it was also a forceful declaration of hemispheric hegemony already apparent in the appropriation of the term *America* as a signified of the United States alone” (Hixson 2008, 53). The Monroe Doctrine showed its true implications during the Mexican-American War in 1846 – 1848 and the Spanish-American War in 1898.

In the space of the three short months of the Spanish-American War, Spanish forces were defeated in what American Secretary of State John Hay called a “splendid little war” (Zinn 1999, 309). Throughout the war, “the American military pretended that the Cuban rebel army did not exist. When the Spanish surrendered, no Cuban was allowed to confer on the surrender, or to sign [the peace agreement]” (Zinn 1999, 309). Furthermore, the United States exerted its hegemony through the controversial 1901 Platt Amendment, which

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<sup>6</sup> Historians argue that this meant “The United States of America and any countries it is interested in protecting or attaining resources from.”  
Cf. Taffet, J. F. (2007) *Foreign aid as foreign policy: the alliance for progress in Latin America*.

did all but annex Cuba, giving the United States “the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, [and to maintain a] government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty...” (Zinn 1999, 311). According to historian Howard Zinn, “the Platt Amendment was now seen, not only by the radical and labor press, but by newspapers and groups all over the United States, as a betrayal” (Zinn 1999, 311); the Spanish-American War’s intention was to assist Spain’s colonies in their quest for independence, not enforce hemispheric hegemony. While the Anti-Imperialist League and author Mark Twain vocally opposed the war, American’s burgeoning national identity refused to budge. The hemispheric hegemony of the United States, however, had already been disrupted in a form of betrayal. In the wake of the Mexican-American War in the late 1840s, the country became divided as questions regarding slavery and new territories entered the political and social sphere.

Prior to the Civil War, the United States kept itself – and its aggressive, hegemonic national identity – occupied with a series of smaller wars and skirmishes, as it focused “energies and emotions on the vanquishing of external foes, [accommodating] itself to destabilizing changes associated with rapid cultural transformation while at the same time disparaging as subversive the critics of militant nationalism” (Hixson 2008, 51). One of the most notable “external foes” the United States battled was its neighbor, Mexico, under the Christian-driven idea of America’s Manifest Destiny. Democratic President James K. Polk, thirsty for expansion, provoked Mexico into war through various

actions that pushed an agenda for the annexation of Texas into the Union. In February of 1846, President Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to mobilize troops to the Río Grande (the previously recognized border was the Nueces River, 150 miles north of the Río Grande), an act that Taylor called a “[loss] of all respect for Mexican rights” (qtd. Zinn 150, 1999). The position of Polk and the Democratic Party were expressed in clips from the print media. The *Washington Union* asked “Who can arrest the torrent that will pour onward to the West? The road to California will be open to us. Who will stay the march of the western people?” in 1845; similarly, the *Democratic Review* decreed in the summer of the same year: “Our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions” (qtd. Zinn 1999, 151).

By May of 1846, the President, “excited and impatient on the subject” presented casualties of Mexican attacks on General Taylor’s army to his cabinet, who “unanimously agreed that he should ask for a declaration of war” (Zinn 1999, 152). Polk addressed Congress with an “indignant” attitude, claiming that “as war exists, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country” (qtd. Zinn 152). Though Congress approved the war due to Polk’s framing of “the dispatch of American trips to the Río Grande as a necessary measure of defense,” historian John Schroder points out that “the reverse was true; President Polk had incited the war by sending American soldiers into what was

disputed territory, historically controlled and inhabited by Mexicans” (qtd. Zinn 1999, 152). The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) included protests from the Whigs, who wanted California without war, some antislavery Congressmen – who didn’t want to see new territory as a “means of extending the southern slave territory” – and even Abraham Lincoln, a young Senator from Illinois by 1846, questioned the “exact spot blood was shed on American soil” (Zinn 1999, 154). The “thousands [who] rushed to volunteer for the army echoed the bravado of Walt Whitman,” who encouraged the war early on in the Brooklyn *Eagle*: “Yes: Mexico must be thoroughly chastised! Let our arms now be carried with a spirit which shall teach the world that, while we are not forward for a quarrel, America knows how to crush, as well as how to expand!” (Zinn 1999, 154).

Zinn, like Hixson, explains this gusto and “aggressiveness” as a combination of “the idea that the United States would be giving the blessings of liberty and democracy to more people” with the “ideas of racial superiority, longings for the beautiful lands of New Mexico and California, and thoughts of commercial enterprise across the Pacific” (1999, 154). The most noted forms of protest against the war came from writers like Henry David Thoreau, whose essay “Civil Disobedience” drew from his own denunciation of the war through failure to pay Massachusetts’s poll taxes. Frederick Douglass wrote in Rochester, New York’s *North Star* on January 21, 1848 that “the present disgraceful, cruel, and iniquitous war with our sister republic” made Mexico a “doomed victim to the Anglo Saxon cupidity of love of dominion” (Zinn 1999, 157). Zinn states that it is ultimately “impossible to know the extent of popular support of the war” as

there were “no surveys of public opinion” and “the majority of people did not vote”; like all wars, as the Mexican-American War continued, it became less popular. Recruitment “was falling off by late 1846, so physical requirements were lowered” in the military, which signals that families weren’t anxious to send their sons off to war, and by March of 1847, “the army reported over a thousand deserters” (Zinn 1999, 158, 168). The land warrants soldiers received from their service in the war were sold cheaply to spectators eager to swindle the poor veterans out of “their 160 acres for less than \$50” (Zinn 1999, 169). These incidents point to a lack of respect for the soldiers and the war, as well as broader and burgeoning American value: there’s no business like war business. Three years after the war began, the United States took half of the territory it had “won” through February 1848’s Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo for \$15 million dollars. While the war did not last long, it left lasting scars on Americans, though these wounds were quickly tempered as the country turned inward for a battle that had been brewing between its largest constituents.

During the Mexican-American War, United States citizens continued to be divided as to how to best use the new territory acquired through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. “States rights,” partly manifested in the South’s attitude toward slavery, replaced the common patriotic causes that resulted in fervent nationalism; the South wanted the new territory to maintain and expand the slave trade. Northern States disagreed. The ensuing United States Civil War (1861-1865) plunged the country into a bloody five-year skirmish, producing acts of violence, aggression, and disparities in patriotic ideologies between

fellow countrymen. While only fifty years earlier, the United States boasted that its united citizens “had the marrow,” the great schism of the Civil War produced a break in the unity that previously functioned as the country’s hallmark. The United States, still a “beacon of liberty,” had different views as to what “liberty” meant.

The Civil War era also had antiwar protesters, producing “not only northern Copperheads who schemed against the Union’s efforts but also violent antidraft [sic] riots in New York City in 1863” (Small 2002, 2). Historian Howard Zinn contends that protest against the Civil War was suppressed, often confined to minorities in America’s lower classes, and linked more closely to social and class issues that the United States had been embroiled in since its infancy:

Class-consciousness was overwhelmed during the Civil War, both North and South, by military and political unity in the crisis of war. That unity was weaned by rhetoric and enforced by arms. It was a war proclaimed as a war for liberty, but working people would be attacked by soldiers if they dared to strike, Indians would be massacred in Colorado by the US army, and those daring to criticize Lincoln’s policies would be put in jail without trial – perhaps thirty thousand political prisoners. Still, there were signs in sections of dissent from that unity – anger of poor against rich, rebellion against the dominant political and economic forces. (Zinn 1999, 231)

The overwhelming majority of Americans, however, favored the war, though it appears that some might have expressed support out of fear, as insinuated by Zinn. The supporters of the war ardently rallied behind their chosen side. Hixson sees this behavior as the United States simply affirming its aggressive, masculine, and militant national identity:

The unprecedented scope and violence of the Civil War underscored that the Myth of America was the driving force within the imagined community. Only by viewing the nation as the sacred product of providential destiny

could such a mammoth bloodletting have been justified by both sides.  
(Hixson 2008, 75)

Hixson, along with Zinn, asserts that the Civil War and the industrial era “unleashed profound domestic dislocations over the sectional divide, the corporate revolution, mass immigration, rapid urbanization, farmer unrest, and deep divisions fostered by racial, gender, ethnic, and class hierarchies,” which ultimately caused confusion as to the country’s national identity (Hixson 2008, 74). These challenges, as enumerated by Hixson, to the developing idea of the country’s national identity – an agrarian, predominately white and male dominated society – made the Civil War somewhat inevitable. These confrontations over what the United States was and would become “brought challenges to cultural hegemony, yet Americans ultimately powerfully reaffirmed their national identity and assuaged psychic crisis by choosing war” (Hixson 2008, 74). In choosing war, even within its own borders, the United States confirmed an essential part of its national ethos, which Walter Hixson wryly comments is “a pattern evident throughout U.S. history: there was no business like war business” (2008, 79). The songs that accompanied Rebel and Union soldiers onto battlefields, however, shaped the business of the Civil War. The North’s mournful and elegiac “John Brown’s Body” (Dunbar 1858) steadily trod over the South’s optimistic “Bonnie Blue Flag” (McCarthy 1861); the former’s hymnal dirge overcame even the most boisterous of Rebel anthems, and the South did not rally around the “Bonnie Blue Flag” for very long.

The Confederacy charged into the Civil War with gusto, if the lyrics of the Confederate anthem bear any testament to the collective Southern ethos:



We are a band of brothers,  
Native to the soil  
Fighting for the property  
We gained by honest toil.  
And when our rights were threatened,  
The cry rose near and far;  
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag  
That bears a single star!

Hurrah! Hurrah!  
For Southern rights,  
Hurrah!  
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag  
That bears a single star!  
(McCarthy 1861)

The “Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a single star”<sup>7</sup> stood for “the cause” that the South fought for; the song’s lyrics define that cause as “fighting for the property we gained by honest toll” (McCarthy 1861). The decision to fight resulted from “Northern treachery” which threatened the South’s “patriotic heritage” and “rights” (McCarthy 1861). This Southern anthem opens with a familiar image of masculinity that recalls “Patriotic Diggers” – “a band of brothers native to the soil” – and ascribes to the Confederacy the same patriotic traits (especially rights to land) previously seen in “Patriotic Diggers” (McCarthy 1861). These men, “strong...and brave, like patriots of old...” will fight to the death for the cause in which they believe, indeed “rather than submit to shame to die [they] would prefer” (McCarthy 1861); Confederate patriotism did not entertain elements of surrender, especially not to the treacherous Yankees. Rather than enforce the underlying message of the Confederacy, however, “Bonnie Blue Flag” encourages

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<sup>7</sup> The “Bonnie Blue Flag” was the official flag of the Confederacy, and was a solid cornflower blue flag with a single white star in its center. The more recognizable “stars and bars” Confederate flag developed later in the Civil War. Cf. T. Horowitz (1998). *Confederates in the attic*. Vintage: NY.

its listeners to cry a rallying “Hurrah, hurrah! For Southern Rights hurrah! Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue flag that bears a single star” (McCarthy 1861). The song’s lyrics largely consist of bravado as it lists all of the member-states of the Confederacy, which contained “men of valor” gathering around “the banner of the right” (McCarthy 1861). The song’s buoyant marching cadence, marked by “hurrahs” and “rousing cheer[s]” ironically comments on the South’s eventual defeat; the energetic force of the Confederacy proved no match for the better equipped and more industrialized North, and, while General Robert E. Lee remains a mythical figure in United States history, even his majestic battle plans were no match for the North’s supplies and larger armies. The lyrics to “Bonnie Blue Flag” reflect the energy that the South’s secession efforts began with, yet its rollicking rally call could not be sustained under the North’s massive attack.

The North, with its dirge-like “John Brown’s Body,” makes a martyr out of white anti-slave insurgent John Brown.”<sup>8</sup> Brown (1800 – 1859), according to the lyrics, represents an avatar of truth and righteousness, which falls in line with the portrayal of the Union’s mission, despite historical evidence that the fight against slavery was at times a secondary issue during the war. Brown’s legendary crusade for the abolition of slavery reached its peak (and Brown met his death) at the legendary raid on Harper’s Ferry in 1859.<sup>9</sup> By President Lincoln’s admission the primary mission of the North’s war efforts was to *save*

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<sup>8</sup> Julia Ward Howe’s poem “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” appeared in February of 1862 in the *Atlantic Monthly*. It was later set to the tune of the already existing song “John Brown’s Body,” which was published in 1861.

Cf. <http://www.americanmusicpreservation.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. “John Brown: People & Events.” 2013. PBS.org.  
<<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p1550.html>>

the Union<sup>10</sup>. In contrast, John Brown “died so that the slave might be free” and, because of his noble actions, his “soul” marches on to heaven as a hero of the oppressed:

John Brown's body lies a-mold'ring in the grave  
His soul goes marching on!

Glory, Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory, Glory! Hallelujah!  
Glory, Glory! Hallelujah!  
His soul is marching on

He captured Harper's Ferry with his nineteen men so true  
He frightened old Virginia till she trembled through and through  
They hung him for a traitor, themselves the traitor crew  
His soul is marching on!  
(Dunbar 1858)

This “truth” and “soul” marched on in Union memory, reminding the North that it had to save the victims of the South, rather than impose anti-slavery laws upon the South (Dunbar 1858). The ability for “John Brown” to lyrically convey the image of the North as a savoir-figure is only strengthened by the mythology of “John Brown” in the rest of the song. John Brown, as bold and brave as the men in “The Bonnie Blue Flag” “captured Harper’s Ferry with his nineteen men so true” and “frightened old Virginia ‘til she trembled through and through” (Dunbar 1958). This Christ-like martyr, an icon of virtue, upon whose grave “the stars above of Heaven are kindly looking down,” reduced Virginia to a weak woman, “trembl[ing]” with fear of the mighty John Brown, “marching on” with

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<sup>10</sup> “Despite a long tradition of mythical discourse of the Civil War as a crusade for freedom [...] the North’s primary motivation at the outset was to maintain the Union rather than destroy slavery. A Northern wartime ditty crudely but aptly captured the predominant outlook: ‘A willingness to fight with vigor, for loyal rights, but not the nigger’” (Hixson 2008, 77).

the ferocity of the Northern army. The North rejoices in “John Brown’s Body”; the repeated refrain is not a “hurrah” for a flag, but rather a grander “Glory, glory! Hallelujah!” The Biblical allusions in the lyrics to “John Brown’s Body” alongside obvious Christian themes in the lyrics to “Battle Hymn of the Republic,”<sup>11</sup> underscore the pervasive and large role Christianity played in American society and national identity in the 1860s.

“John Brown’s Body” is biblical in its presentation of the Northern ethos, where national identity connects to victory in both a spiritual and tangible form (Dunbar 1858). While the Union soldiers are “marching on,” so is John Brown’s sacrifice; the hymnal like representation with biblical overtones of the North’s Civil War ideological beliefs elevate it to a higher plane than rallying around a cause or a flag. The song and its subject depicts the North as an avatar of sacrifice and steady conquest, where every victory resulted in a “hallelujah” in the name of a great mission of unity, triumph, and historical (and religious) reverence for the fallen. Furthermore, a quick study<sup>12</sup> of the United States’ early evangelical history reveals that hymns frequently passed back and forth between different Christian denominations, giving them audiences in most churches in the Union. “John Brown’s Body’s” broadened the Christian message of righteous victory that the more popular and better-known “Battle Hymn of the Republic” spread into American culture. Yet both songs’ hymnal qualities underscore the cultural relevance of Christian beliefs in early American history.

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<sup>11</sup> “Battle Hymn of the Republic” is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, “Who Fought in Vietnam?”

<sup>12</sup> Marini, S. (2002) “Hymnody as history: early evangelical hymns and the recovery of American popular religion.” *Church history*. Vol. 71, No. 2. June. pp. 273-306.

Christian morals and doctrines – sacrifices, martyrdom, and reverence – remain constant and virtually inescapable aspects of the nation’s identity.

This celebration of the fallen martyrs of freedom is not only a popular theme in the lyrics of most American war songs, but also a likely connection to the United States’ founding documents and its vision of itself as a “church nation” standing for liberty, as envisioned by Walter Hixson. He believes the Christian overtones of American national identity, as evident in its music, historical documents, and burgeoning foreign diplomacy, helped the country navigate the morass of brutality that the Civil War brought about:

The unprecedented scope and violence of the Civil War underscored that the Myth of America was the driving force within the imagined community. Only by viewing the nation as the sacred product of providential destiny could such a mammoth bloodletting have been justified by both sides. (Hixson 2008, 75)

The imagined community of a “nation as the sacred product of providential destiny” demands its own mythological, quasi-martyred figures to fulfill its image of national cultural identity. This use of historical figures in war-related song lyrics can be traced back through “Patriotic Diggers” and “Yankee Doodle,” yet this time “John Brown,” a common revolutionary, undoubtedly appealed to audiences on a more personal level.

***Make your mother proud of you – and the old red, white and blue.***  
**George Cohan, 1916; “Over There”**

Eventually, the country entered the First World War. World War I was

not a popular war in the United States and faced a historically notable as well as vocal resistance:

A significant minority of Americans [opposed] President Woodrow Wilson's call for entry into World War I in April 1917. During the year and one-half of that war, their spirited attacks on both the entry and the draft led Congress to pass [a] series of controversial alien and sedition acts that limited opinions that could be expressed in the United States, while the war raged on in Europe. (Small 2002, 2)

Despite the controversial acts passed in Congress (later repealed in 1800<sup>13</sup>) and President Wilson's vacillation of the U.S.'s entry into the war, the country ultimately got involved. This was partly due to the United States' success in its war-like activity since the Civil War:

A national patriotic boom followed by a 'splendid little war' in 1898 capped off the era of reconciliation and revival. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century a fervid new regime of patriotic representation emerged, as manifested in a new cult of the American flag and reverence for national holidays, historic sites, national monuments, symbols, songs, sermons, prayers, hymns, paeans, parades, fairs, speeches, ceremonies, reunions and social organizations. These pervasive cultural phenomena synthesized a common national identity and established boundaries as to acceptable, and thus unacceptable, ways of viewing origins, history, values, and attitudes, and modes of behavior within the imagined community. (Hixson 2008, 87)

As Hixson explains, patriotism saturated the U.S., and frankly, the country reveled in its status as a united "beacon of liberty" for the rest of the world to look upon as an example. These feelings reached new heights of patriotic nationalism in the First World War.

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<sup>13</sup> "Sedition Act trials, along with the Senate's use of its contempt powers to suppress dissent, set off a firestorm of criticism against the Federalists and contributed to their defeat in the election of 1800, after which the acts were repealed or allowed to expire. The controversies surrounding them, however, provided for some of the first testings of the limits of freedom of speech and press" (<http://www.ourdocuments.gov>)

President Wilson won re-election in 1916 on the premise of keeping America *out* of World War I, but once American merchant ships were attacked, Congress declared war. The reluctant public acceptance of the World War I resulted from a massive propaganda campaign in which newsreels and songs such as “Over There” filtered into its public consciousness. George M. Cohan, known as the “King of Broadway” in the decade prior to the war, penned the war’s rousing anthem “Over There” during a train ride “from New Rochelle to New York shortly after the U.S. had declared war against Germany in April 1917” (Duffy 2009). The song became a “nationwide hit in the months immediately following America’s enthusiastic entry into the war,” no doubt due to Cohan’s already proven ability to write catchy, stirring songs (Duffy 2009). Congress recognized Cohan’s patriotism and nationalist lyrics in 1940, when Cohan received a Congressional Gold Medal for his work. The themes of U.S. war songs past – martyrdom, rallying around a flag, the subservience of women, nods to important moments of American history – appear in “Over There,” but Cohan’s tune strikes chords that present what Hixson describes as the U.S.’s “imagined community” of nationalism and patriotism:

Johnnie, get your gun,  
Get your gun; get your gun,  
Take it on the run,  
On the run, on the run.  
Hear them calling, you and me,  
Every son of liberty.  
Hurry right away,  
No delay, go today,  
Make your daddy glad  
To have had such a lad.  
Tell your sweetheart not to pine,  
To be proud her boy's in line.

Over there, over there,  
Send the word; send the word over there -  
That the Yanks are coming,  
The Yanks are coming,  
The drums rum-tumming  
Ev'rywhere.

So prepare, say a pray'r,  
Send the word, send the word to beware.  
We'll be over, we're coming over,  
And we won't come back till it's over  
Over there!  
(Cohan 1917)

The song begins with a call for an archetypal “John Doe” American everyman – “Johnnie” – to “get [his] gun” and “show the Hun who’s a son of a gun,” with repeated cries for this Johnnie to “hurry right away, no delay, go today!” (Cohan 1917). This urgent call to arms – albeit a jolly one set to energetic, Broadway-style orchestration – contains the tropes that characterize American patriotism – “Johnnie” is a “son of liberty” who, in battle, should “hoist the [American] flag and let her fly, Yankee Doodle do or die” (Cohan 1917). The pointed reanimation of Americans as “Yankee Doodles” speaks to the country’s history as well as its emerging cultural attitudes as a people. Americans flew in the face of convention, and embraced their modest and hardscrabble roots; Americans as “Yankee Doodles” reflect an image of a nation whose people resist and scoff at outside aggressors. “Yankee Doodle[s], do or die!” could be counted on to “show [their] grit [and] do [their] bit” in the name of spreading liberty (Cohan 1917). This uniquely American promise, that the United States could be counted on as a beacon of liberty, is driven home in the last lines of Cohan’s chorus: “The Yanks



are coming... Send the word/send the word to beware/We'll be over, we're coming over, and we won't come back till it's over, over there" (1917).

United against a foreign aggressor and fighting a war in a place so remote to most Americans that the speaker only describes as "over there," the United States' cultural attitude toward war became triumphant, if not cocky. The song trumpets that the "Yanks are coming!" accompanied with the ominous warning for the enemy to "beware" of the might of the United States. Like the war songs previously discussed, fighting for one's country is depicted as one of the most laudatory actions an American could take, and "Over There" convinces listeners that being a soldier for the United States would "make your mother proud of you... make your daddy glad to have had such a lad... [make your sweetheart] proud her boy's in line" (Cohan 1917). While "Patriotic Diggers," "John Brown's Body" and "Bonnie Blue Flag" made lyrical efforts to include every American citizen as a participant the underlying patriotic effort behind a particular cause articulated in these respective lyrics, "Over There" makes the soldier its chief icon in the country's crusade to maintain its status as a beacon of liberty. The soldier is a "Yank," and a "Yankee Doodle do or die," and a "Yankee to the ranks, from the towns to the tanks" (Cohan 1917). This image of a tireless, young, and decidedly male warrior cements the masculine component of American culture that Hixson describes as a cornerstone for the "myth of American diplomacy"; the Yankees in "Over There" are definitely "manly, racially superior" with a "special right to exert power of the world" (Hixson 2008, 1-2). Whereas previous song lyrics depicting America at war moved steadily toward this

attitude and assertion of greatness, the lyrics of “Over There” fully realize Hixson’s thesis posited in *The Myth of American Diplomacy*. The identity of the United States as a purveyor of freedom, as well as a hyper-masculine military force, strengthened the country’s cultural bonds, especially in the victorious end of World War I.

The established cultural image of the United States as a dominating world power carried the country effortlessly into World War II. The bombing of Pearl Harbor allowed the U.S. to claim just cause to enter the conflict, thus involving it in battle theaters across two oceans for four years. The United States, however, remained confident it could see the task through. History was going to be made regarding World War II, and the United States wanted to be part of it. Though historian Hixson believes that the catalyst of Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor on “the day of infamy” only appealed to the United States’ “hegemonic usable past,” he does imply that the United States’ belief that it was “a providentially destined beacon of liberty” urged the country into war more than the Japanese act of aggression (2008, 160). In fact, the historical mythology of American identity as a harbinger of freedom “impelled the United States to condemn and confront Japanese imperialism in East Asia – a foreign policy that led directly to the Pacific War” (Hixson 2008, 161). World War II involved a massive national propaganda campaign that echoed sentiments expressed in “Patriotic Diggers.” Every American citizen had a role in the war effort and was expected to do their part, even if that part meant planting Victory Gardens, paying one’s income taxes dutifully, or simply donating metals to build tanks, ships, and ammunition in

order to “defeat the Axis.”<sup>14</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “fireside chats” further bolstered America’s resolve to be victorious in World War II; these radio broadcasts leaned heavily on America’s shared cultural history and memory, recalling Winthrop’s Puritan interpretation of America’s founding principles and thus infusing the war with a sentimental mission of American patriotism:

Appealing to the nation’s heritage in a fireside chat on December 29, 1940, Roosevelt declared, ‘Never before since Jamestown and Plymouth Rock has our American civilization been in such danger as now.’ Calling on the public to display ‘the same spirit of patriotism and service as we would show were we at war,’ the president called on the nation to serve as the ‘great arsenal of democracy.’ The fireside chat reached 76 percent of the public, either directly or indirectly, and met an overwhelmingly favorable response. (Hixson 2008, 154)

Furthermore, the United States wanted to assert its might, for, as Hixson explains, “the United States, as the world’s providentially destined beacon of liberty, could scarcely sit out the great battle for the soul of Western civilization” (Hixson 2008, 154).

Regardless of the country’s zeal for war and triumph on the battlefield, the U.S. took the casualties of World War II seriously, but the idea that America could *lose* the war remained a foreign concept, at least as far as music from the era was concerned. One of United States’ World War II anthems, “The Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B,” treated war as a lark; the song’s lyrics describe war as a pretty fun experience. A military company does not fight in the woods of Bastone or the jungles of the Pacific, but rather stays in a place where “the company jumps when [the bugle boy] plays reveille”:

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Disney’s “Spirit of ‘43” propaganda cartoons, featuring Donald Duck as an example of patriotic sacrifice and behavior. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xphiYdfd-Tg>). Accessed March 26, 2013.

They made him blow a bugle for his Uncle Sam;  
It really brought him down, because he couldn't jam.  
The Captain seemed to understand,  
Because the next day the Cap' went out and drafted a band.  
And now the company jumps when he plays reveille –  
He's the boogie-woogie bugle boy of Company B!

A-toot a-toot, a-toot diddle-ee-ada-toot –  
He blows it eight to the bar - in boogie rhythm.<sup>15</sup>  
He can't blow a note unless the bass and guitar,  
Is playin' with 'im.  
He makes the company jump when he plays reveille;  
He's the boogie-woogie bugle boy of Company B!  
(Ray & Prince 1941)

Performed by the Andrews Sisters, a comely trio who dressed in feminized military garb in a filmed routine of the song<sup>16</sup>, “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy” tells the tale of a “famous trumpet man from old Chicago way” (Ray & Prince 1941). Despite being “the top man at his craft,” this “trumpet man” entered the Army when “his number came up and he was gone with the draft” (Ray & Prince 1941). The draft is glossed over, as the bugle boy has a newer and more important role than a musician; he is a soldier, and his job “a-blowin' reveille” has reinvented him into a new “Yankee Doodle.” The young man has become more than a Chicago musician; he is the patriotic, all-American supporter of the war effort in his own way. The happy-go-lucky “boogie-woogie bugle boy of Company B”

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<sup>15</sup> “One of the most well-know chord progressions in popular music of the 19th century and later is the 12-bar blues. Countless jazz and popular songs have been composed within the structure of this series or progression of chords. Another variation on the basic 12-bar blues chord progression is the 8-Bar Blues chord progression with a shorter pattern of chords. It is derived from measures 1 to 3 and measures 8 to 12 of the Basie Blues chord progression.”

(<http://www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary/appendix/blues/bluesprogression.html>)

<sup>16</sup> Cf. 1941, Abbott and Costello's *Buck Privates*.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pfCFU3Mqww>). Accessed March 26, 2013.

keeps morale up much like early buglers and drummers from wars reaching back to antiquity. The bombing of Pearl Harbor ignited America's desire to serve in World War II much like the attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Towers fired up patriotic vengeance in 2001. Therefore, the draft imposed during World War II appeared more as a patriotic call to duty against a direct attack on the United States. The Vietnam War draft, in contrast, arguably resulted in more public derision due to the lack of a direct assault on America soil by a foreign aggressor.

Serving in the United States military, if the "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" serves as any indication, could be a pleasant experiencing during World War II, filled with understanding Captains who wanted the experience of war to be pleasant for everyone involved. Even though the bugle boy had to "blow a bugle for his Uncle Sam," his patriotic duty "brought him down because he couldn't jam" (Ray & Prince 1941). Luckily, "the Captain [of Company B] seemed to understand" and immediately goes out and "[drafts] a band" which results in a lively company who "jumps" when the bugle boy "plays reveille." The bugle boy, representing the popular "everyman" of American war song lyrics, also was a source of unity. This "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" has no power on his own; he cannot "make the company jump" alone, as "he can't play a note if the bass and guitar isn't with 'im," and without the bugle boy (an allusion to the war-time fife and drummers of America's previous wars), the rest of the company's morale will disappear. Without him Company B cannot "clap their hands and stomp their feet" in solidarity and joy, if not also in enjoyment during a momentary

respite from the war.

While these lyrics point toward a type of war-time camaraderie consistently celebrated in American cultural memory and representations of the Second World War, they also speak to the willingness and camaraderie experienced State-side. There is no protest over the Captain's "draft[ing]" of a band; the Second World War met little resistance in the United States, and an audience of that era would likely have seen any young man's earnest efforts to help defeat the Axis as a positive one. Historian Melvin Small notes that any peace movements or anti-World War II protests were comprised of a very small segment of American society, and the eventual move of the United States toward rigorous bombing campaigns at the end of the war elicited the majority of protests in the United States:

World War II, a more universally popular war, elicited little serious opposition, except from a small number of American pacifists who opposed all wars on religious or philosophical principles [and] some clergy who otherwise supported the war effort did speak out in 1944 and 1945 when the Army Air Force began intensive bombings of heavily populated German cities. (Small 2002, 2)

The dramatic end of the Second World War, which included the heavy bombing of Germany, the liberation of concentration camps, and the deployment of nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki, pronounced the Allies as victorious and gave the United States' a cultural legacy where World War II became roundly praised as the "good" war. The United States emerged from the rubble of World War II financially intact, globally dominant, and assured of its status as a world power that carried aloft the torch of liberty for all to see.

The destruction and global havoc of the war resulted in countries in upheaval, some being “re-drawn” or annexed into different countries or absorbed as part of pre-existing countries, and several of these “new” countries, as well as East Berlin, came under the control of Communist Russia. As a result, global anxiety over Communism and its perceived evils came to permeate America. But the new shadow of the Cold War amid the nuclear arms race was even more oppressive. Communism became the new enemy of American liberty, and anything or anyone “communist” was deemed unwelcome and unwanted in America. As the country launched a “quick war” against (Communist) North Korea’s invasion of South Korea, the shell-shocked veterans of World War II saw their younger brothers and cousins sent off into a war that, while initially supported by the American public, quickly became deemed unnecessary in the public’s view. A general malaise brewed under the cloak of the Communist threat: “Beat” poets emerged in the late 1950s, and the youth of the era began to rebel (see 1955’s *Rebel Without a Cause*) against the stifling social norms and fear-based political rhetoric. These rebellious youth eventually set the stage for the youth revolt of the 1960s and its accompanying antiwar music. “True stories” of the results of combat, such as Ernest Tubb’s Korean War-inspired song “Missing in Action,” illustrated a human side of war previously unseen in popular music lyrics. Songs such as 1965’s “Eve of Destruction” and “For What It’s Worth” drew attention to a burgeoning youth movement disinclined to accept war as the previous generations had made it out to be. A new vocabulary,

musical sensibility, and obvious anger made the counter-culture movement more than just fodder for the evening news. Something was really “goin’ down.”

The brief Korean War (arguably American police action under the guise of the United Nations), heralded as a righteous endeavor by President Harry S. Truman, was met with little resistance from an American public still basking in the glow of victory in World War II. The Cold War between the United States, Russia, and China was beginning, and any semblance of communism, fascism, and other evils considered amoral during World War II were quickly denounced and attacked by the United States. President Truman faced little difficulty in getting “almost all Americans ‘rallied round the flag’ in 1950,” and, when American forces entered South Korea “under cover of the United Nations banner, to oppose North Korea’s invasion [...] at no time during that three-year war did many citizens criticize the initial commitment to Seoul” (Small 2002, 3). But cultural consciousness of war had begun to change; vast numbers of returning WWII veterans had severe injuries and suffered from shell shock. They had war wounds, such as missing limbs and shrapnel-ridden bodies. Moreover, the devastating images of the fallout from nuclear weapons instilled in Americans a fear of retaliation for their government’s actions. Ernest Tubb’s 1952 country song “Missing in Action” did not depict an eager, conquering “Yankee Doodle” ideal soldier; instead, it shows a soldier forever separated from the life he left behind when he went to war.

This song represents one of the first war songs that makes the soldier the speaker; the lyrics still begin with a typical American soldier placed in a combat



zone with hopes and aspirations of spreading liberty – “the warship had landed and [the soldier] came ashore” – but then something different happens (Tubb 1952). This soldier, on an unspecified foreign beach (which lends the lyric to more universal applications) is “wounded and left [for dead]” and “the enemy” finds him and makes him a “prisoner of war”:

The enemy found me and took me away and made me a prisoner of war so they say,  
But God in his mercy was with me one day the gates were left open and I ran away.  
I returned to my old home my sweet wife to see,  
The home I had built for my darling and me,  
The door I let open and there on a stand I saw a picture of her and a man.  
The clothes she was wearing told me a sad tale,  
My darling was wearing a new bridal veil.  
There on the mantle a letter I read missing in action she thought I was dead.  
(Tubb 1952)

Religious righteousness intervenes, as in many American war songs (God is always on America’s side, glory hallelujah), but this Korean War veteran returns home to find his wife has remarried, having received notice that he was “missing in action” (Tubb 1952). This veteran’s future state of consistent limbo – “missing in action forever” – warrants further exploration. In some ways, any returning war veteran can feel the effects of being “missing in action” regarding what he or she has missed out on at home, but the Korean War veteran in Tubb’s song will miss all the “action” of his future; his loved ones, assuming he was dead, have moved on, leaving him stranded in an indeterminate state. The state of the returning veteran inevitably comments on the state of the Korean War, which became unpopular quite quickly. The fate of this soldier is not the same of soldiers from previous wars, and is compounded in the experiences of the

Vietnam Veteran; the “warships,” metaphorically the government and the U.S. public, left them “for dead.”

Tubb’s Korean soldier’s narrative bears little resemblance to the triumph in “Yankee Doodle,” “Patriotic Diggers” or the “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy” who fought “Over There.” This soldier’s sacrifice is not met with cries of “glory, glory hallelujah” nor did he fight with a close-knit “band of brothers.” The Korean War veteran becomes a “vagabond dreamer,” drifting through a reality and into a future that normally would not be the fate of a soldier. His “vagabond” status underlines the image of a veteran adrift in a land that is simultaneously home and yet also wholly unfamiliar and unwelcoming. This veteran will forever be “missing in action” from U.S. culture, always “dreaming” of the possibilities that were ironically denied to him due to his service in the U.S. military (Tubb, 1952). This American war song’s lyrics don’t celebrate war, the soldier, or any sort of victory; the cultural shame of the absence of an unequivocal “win” in Korea relegated its soldiers to footnotes of America at war, and these soldiers’ experiences will forever be treated less admirably than those of the veterans of more victorious United States wars.

The Korean War’s “stalemate” status relegated it to less compelling corners of American history; this war had none of the panache and fan-fare of either World War I or II, and never truly “ended” as much as came to an agreement of cease fire. The United States, in short, had its first encounter with “failure” in war, and this perplexing finale to war was unrecognizable in American cultural memory or history.

The Korean War's confusing, if not confounding, "end" arguably set the stage for all conflicts undertaken by the United States since 1950; the Cold War, which would last from 1945 through the mid-1980s, dragged down America's buoyant attitude toward war. The American public, under the specter of the "Red Scare" of the 1950s and into the 1960s, began identify with the Korean veteran in Tubbs' 1952 song – the "vagabond[s]... forever [roaming]" under the shadow of impending nuclear crisis. By 1965, the United States' growing uneasiness over the Cold War began to surface in its music about war. Two songs from that year; P.F. Sloane's "Eve of Destruction" and Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," revealed the undercurrents of turmoil in the collective American psyche. The war in Korea and a growing conflict with Indochina built on the framework of confusion regarding the United States' involvement in the Cold War; both songs espoused an apocalyptic message of doom for the previously untouchable, ever-victorious United States military forces.

"Eve of Destruction," as performed by Barry McGuire, uses a snarling narrator howling against those who do not believe the U.S. is "on the eve of destruction" (1965). The narrator prophesizes calamities the public is not aware of and urgently calls their attention to them. He lists global catastrophes, including "the Eastern world explodin'; violence flarin', bullets loadin'" and pointedly attacks American naïveté concerning the impending doom through the desperately raging lyrics:

Don't you understand what I'm tryin' to say,  
Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' today?  
If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' away –  
There'll be no one to save, with the world in a grave –

[Take a look around ya boy, it's bound to scare ya boy]  
(Sloane 1965)

The narrator clearly articulates his fear of witnessing human existence eradicated with the push of a button. Nuclear war lurks right outside the door in “Eve of Destruction,” and the apocalyptic images of “hate in Red China [and] Selma, Alabama”<sup>17</sup> and “even the Jordan River has bodies floatin’” further underscore the massive crisis taking shape a post-World War II United States (Sloane 1965). The United States’ cultural landscape experienced change in small pockets across the country. The Civil Rights movement, the Women’s Rights movement, the increase in the number of antiwar and nuclear disarmament protestors, the rise of the New Left, and the various factions of counter-culture and “hippie” culture had coalesced by the middle of the 1960s, causing a rift in terms of American cultural identity.

The victorious drums that heralded the “Yanks” entrance “Over There,” for example, are reconfigured to symbolize shame in “Eve of Destruction.” Lyrics like “The poundin’ of the drums, the pride and disgrace/ Hate your next-door neighbor, but don’t forget to say grace” showcase the hypocrisy of a nation whose patriotism hinged on Christian morality, yet was simultaneously full of “hate” toward its own citizens, especially those of color (in reference to events in

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<sup>17</sup> Protests and race-related incidents in Selma, Alabama featured prominently in the news in the mid-1960s. At the forefront of the Civil Rights movement, the city hosted several non-violent protests and received national attention during the March 1965 “Freedom Marches.” These marches, demanding desegregation and stretching from Selma to Montgomery, the capital of Alabama, were met with violent opposition and featured prominent Civil Rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The race crimes in Selma are further discussed in chapter two, “Who Was Against the War?” on page 69.

Selma, Alabama) (Sloane 1965). The song's lyrics also point out changing ideologies toward war as exhibited in its own citizens; for example, the narrator chastises his audience with the sneering lyric "You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin'?" (Sloane 1965). This lyric does not echo sentiments of previous American war songs, which celebrated patriotism and voluntary military service, but rather bullies the audience into considering and acting upon their professed pacifist leanings (Sloane 1965). The bombast of "Eve of Destruction" – both musically and lyrically – likely caused the song's "chart-topping success." The song "could project only a melodramatic foreboding without analysis of its political causes [and is] vague in its ideological orientation [by aligning] fear of nuclear disaster with both anticommunist and civil rights issues in suggesting an equivalence between all the 'hate in Red China' and that in Selma, Alabama" (James 1989, 128). While "Eve of Destruction" gains much of its effect through its loud presentation (complete with drums that sound like bombs), it also fosters fear in its listeners of the changes and evils occurring all over the globe in 1965. "Eve of Destruction" is thus not a call to arms, but a call to action; the lyrics of this Cold War anthem illustrate the anger, hate, fear, and alienation that many citizens began to feel toward previously accepted ideologies concerning war. Yet, the song, much like American culture during the 1960s, offers no definitive "answer" for its audience.

While less sonically aggressive than "Eve of Destruction," Buffalo Springfield's 1965 Cold War song "For What It's Worth" also encouraged

Americans to act, but not necessarily to act in overseas combat. "For What It's Worth" instead urged United States citizens to pause and think about what was going on in their country: "I think it's time we stop, hey, what's that sound/Everybody look what's going down" (Buffalo Springfield 1965). The song's lyrics contain images of foreboding and vaguely perceived menaces; every corner presents possible danger. "The heat" (police) fills the streets, welcoming this "field day" of confrontation with protestors or social undesirables. The streets are also filled with "people singing songs and carrying signs," but there is also "a man with a gun over there, telling me I got to beware." The country, through the lens of the lyrics, is not safe, and authority figures (the police, the shadowy "man with a gun over there") are loosely drawn and vaguely threatening ("step out of line/the man come and take you away"):

What a field day for the heat,  
A thousand people in the street,  
Singing songs and carrying signs,  
Mostly say, hooray for our side.

It's time we stop, hey, what's that sound –  
Everybody look what's going down.

Paranoia strikes deep.  
Into your life it will creep.  
It starts when you're always afraid;  
You step out of line, the man come and take you away.  
(Buffalo Springfield 1965).

In this incomprehensible American landscape "battle lines [are] being drawn [and] nobody's right if everybody's wrong" (Buffalo Springfield 1965). America has no adequate or appropriate point of reference in its cultural memory to deal with such burgeoning turmoil. And, while the lyrics of both "Eve of Destruction"

and “For What It’s Worth” speak to the inescapable fear that permeated American culture during the Cold War, the lyrics to “For What It’s Worth” describe a cultural fate where excessive fear effects one’s life: “paranoia strikes deep/ into your life it will creep/ it starts when you're always afraid” (Buffalo Springfield 1965). The “sound” that the song’s lyrics point out to the listener remains unidentified, just as the specific causes for fear are unspecified. This vague threat to America’s cultural sensibilities allows listeners to color the “sound” with their own fears and experiences with the sounds of protest and war no matter what their views on a particular issue.

Prior to the Cold War and the Korean War, the United States’ role in war was one of a self-assured victor, yet the Cold War reduced the global power to a less confident entity, at least in the minds of those who “don’t believe in war” and those “singing songs and carrying signs” (Sloane 1965; Buffalo Springfield 1965). The Cold War produced a counter-culture introduced to us in the lyrics of “For What It’s Worth” and “Eve of Destruction.” While the specific ethos of the various factions and groups that would make up the counter-culture of the late 1960s and early 1970s are not unequivocally identified in either of these songs, their appearance signaled a change from previous American wars. The dissenting voices – those against war, those simply for peace no matter what – finally found an audience and “spokespeople” in the songwriters and singers of the era. At the very least, their dissent was recognized and documented, and this startling addition of the minority, antiwar voice to American culture marked the beginning of the cultural and political upheaval experienced in the United States

during the Vietnam War era.

Through the first two centuries of its existence, the United States of America held a position of self-assurance and complacent militancy. With the exception of the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and attacks on merchant ships in World War I, the U.S. enjoyed its status as an invincible world power that no one would dare to attack without suffering swift retribution. The problem with the growing discontent over America's enthusiasm for war came from the idea that the country was being attacked, culturally, from *within*; and the idea of multiple expressions of national identity or patriotism turned the nation on its head. If the United States was not united in its mission to spread democracy and liberty in Southeast Asia, then the United States feared it would fail. The country could only hope that the escalating cries of those against war would die down as the nation rallied around its traditional cultural value of aggression in the name of freedom:

War – like nothing else – forges emotional bonds of unity, loyalty, and patriotism that powerfully reaffirm Myth of American identity. War spurred nation building and brought cathartic relief in the contexts of taming the frontier, Manifest Destiny, overseas imperialism, world war, the Cold War, and wars on terror [...] By affirming the Myth of America, the wars, even unpopular wars, paved the way for the next wave of pathological violence. (Hixson 2008, 14)

As the United States escalated its involvement in Vietnam, the country's Anti-Vietnam War sentiments grew, eventually reaching a fevered pitch in the late 1960s before quieting down as the United States moved toward a "dignified" exit from Vietnam in 1975. The "pathological violence" prized in American war songs prior to the Cold War would be irreversibly challenged during the Vietnam



War, and lyrical tropes such as masculinity, martyrdom, anti-feminism, religious righteousness, and providential destination would be decimated in favor of more creative and radical ways of portraying the United States at war in song. But these new ideas presented in American culture and music did not enjoy widespread national acceptance and the music rarely topped American charts despite their popularity among people involved in the Anti-Vietnam War movement. Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs, and several other “antiwar” songwriters came from a folk music background, a genre that rarely received much radio exposure. America’s reluctance to accept these new war-inspired songs, as well as the antiwar movement that inspired them, does not mean that the new sentiments expressed in these lyrics were unimportant or worthless. On the contrary, the quiet and relatively modest popularity of Anti-Vietnam War music and lyrics, explored in the next chapter, “Who Was Against the Vietnam War?,” opened up a new space in the United States’ national identity, allowing civil protest and unrest to become a permanent fixture in American cultural and political dialogues; the new “American way,” if you like.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Who Was Against the War?**

The Anti-Vietnam War protest movement was a fractured one, with many different groups claiming membership and responsibility for the movement's various factions and events. Beginning with the Teach-Ins of the early 1960s, which included critique and discussion not only of the United States' involvement in Indochina but also nuclear disarmament and civil rights issues, the Anti-Vietnam War movement consisted largely of students but later included housewives, returning soldiers, and American citizens tired of the seemingly endless war. The *Port Huron Statement*, written in 1962 by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), outlined the main issues the antiwar movement would address as it grew. While the SDS did not claim to be a strictly antiwar organization in 1962 (they were primarily concerned with civil rights then), the document announces the intentions of the movement with its powerful first sentence: "We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably at the world we inherit" (Hayden 1962). The Anti-Vietnam War movement acknowledged that it was protesting from a place of "modest comfort," but it did not believe that this should belie its relevance; on the contrary, the youth felt that their economic and educational status better informed and equipped them to take on the Establishment and promote an agenda of radical change.

The combination of youth and music made the Anti-Vietnam War movement unique in the history of the United States. As this chapter explains, many cultural historians cannot separate the music from the movement, and future protests in the United States would always have a soundtrack as a result of the legacy of the Anti-Vietnam War movement. Scholars such as Herbert Marcuse, an icon of the New Left movement that coincided with the Anti-Vietnam War movement, encouraged protest from a socially philosophical point of view. Politicians, musicians, and antiwar activists contributed to the overall ethos of the Vietnam War era by following Marcuse's directive that "we *must* protest against [the Vietnam War] even if we believe that is hopeless";<sup>18</sup> this spirit of earnest social action remains an integral part of American society. When the United States formally escalated the conflict in Vietnam through the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, Senator Wayne Morse (D-OR) took the Senate floor on August 5 that year to protest. Even though he was a decided minority among those on Capitol Hill (only Earnest Gruening, D-AK, stood with him) in the belief that war in Vietnam was wrong, he spoke out strongly against it:

Does anyone mean to tell me that with a population of 15 million, and military forces consisting of 400,000 to 450,000 South Vietnamese troops, of various types and various services, they are incapacitated, and that we must send American boys over there to die in what amounts basically to a civil war? Mr. President, criticism has not prevented, and will not prevent me from saying that, in my judgment, we cannot justify the shedding of American blood in that kind of war in southeast Asia. (qtd. Polner & Woods 2008, 235)

Morse's brave challenge to the authority of the White House fell on deaf ears, and the United States committed to shipping troops to "defeat communism" in

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Marcuse, H. (1966). *Vietnam – An Analysis of an Example*. MarcuseSociety.org.

South Vietnam over the next five years. Senator Morse, however, would gain allies in Washington by the end of the war, and Anti-Vietnam War activists would continue to support his views through marches, Teach-Ins, Sit-Ins, Be-Ins<sup>19</sup>, and concerts across the United States for the duration of the Vietnam War.

The Anti-Vietnam War movement in the United States reached its apex in the mid-1960s, when conflict in Vietnam escalated to the point where American troops began entering the country in droves. Journalist Dorian Lynskey considers 1965 a watershed year for the movement, which gained momentum as combat intensified:

Following Operation Rolling Thunder, a sustained bombing campaign over North Vietnam, the first U.S. ground troops set foot on Vietnamese soil on March 8, 1965 [...] The antiwar [sic] movement coalesced with impressive speed. Just six weeks later, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) organized the first national demonstration in Washington DC [...] The marchers numbered twenty-five thousand, roughly equal to the number of troops stationed in Vietnam (2011, 91).

The period of burgeoning protest emboldened songwriters of the era to speak out against the war, and Anti-Vietnam War protestors used their songs as anthems in their crusade for peace. While the message of the songs evoked what could be seen as “traditional” revolutionary rhetoric, the lyrics took bolder steps by naming politicians, specific cultural events, etc., which earned Anti-Vietnam War protest music a reputation for aggressive and inflammatory behavior and

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<sup>19</sup> Teach-Ins, Sit-Ins, and Be-Ins characterize largely student actions at colleges and universities around the US during the Vietnam War era. Teach-Ins were generally led by faculty, and promised non-restricted discussion of political issues. Sit-Ins mostly involved students sitting or “occupying” a space to protest political action, and Be-Ins (the most popular taking place in San Francisco in 1966, the “Human Be-In”) generally expanded on the topics of Teach-Ins and Sit-Ins to counter-culture topics, music, art, and are generally associated with drug use.

un-patriotic sentiment. “The songs are sometimes satiric, sometimes sorrowful and sometimes indignant, but the tone is always negative,” reported the *New York Times* in October 1967. “Nobody ‘jabs’ at the administration these days; it’s more like a bomb for a bomb” (Lynskey 2011, 95). These “negative” and “satiric” songs’ “jabs” at the administration continued throughout the Vietnam War, bolstering the Anti-Vietnam War protestors to continue their crusade.

The Anti-Vietnam War movement rarely felt its mission was a wholly triumphant endeavor, given that it received criticism and unfair representation from the press. The majority of citizens did not speak out against the war, but the Tet Offensive of 1968 marked “the first major turning point for the antiwar [sic] movement”; the carnage, brutality, and loss of life in the war had accelerated to a point where many Americans found it impossible to be fully committed to the war effort (Lynskey 2011, 98). As the first televised war, the Vietnam War literally came into American living rooms, and the images people saw in 1968, vetted by respected journalist Walter Cronkite<sup>20</sup> (widely known at the time as “the most trusted man in America”), did little to encourage support for the war in Vietnam:

On January 30, when North Vietnamese troops and Viet Cong guerillas marked the Vietnamese New Year, known as Tet, [they] launch[ed] a concerted attack on dozens of towns and cities in South Vietnam... Back in the States, TV viewers saw U.S. troops ducking for cover, or lying dead on the ground [...] At the end of February, venerable CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite editorialized live from Khe Sanh province and told nine million viewers that “to say we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic, though unsatisfactory conclusion.” President Johnson was shaken. The man saying the war was unwinnable was no draft-card-burning hippie but a national institution. (Lynksey 2011, 98)

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<sup>20</sup> Cronkite’s original broadcast aired on February 27, 1968. He was 52 at the time.

The “stalemate” in Vietnam lasted until 1975, and South Vietnam ultimately “fell” to communism. President Nixon withdrew American troops while training South Vietnamese to continue the fight for democracy. In April of 1975, South Vietnamese President Duong Van Minh surrendered to the North Vietnamese, marking the end of 116 years of Vietnamese involvement in conflict either alongside or against various countries, primarily China, France, Japan, and United States (Herring 2002, 135-8).

The Anti-Vietnam War movement ultimately faltered and slowly faded by the end of the war, but its legacy lives on in the music that the movement produced. Today’s audiences find relevance – even enjoyment – in the songs from the era and veterans of the war and the antiwar movement still recall the songs with some level of pleasure. Not only do these songs represent a period of American history, but they also serve as a soundtrack for a generation. Looking at the Anti-Vietnam War music through the eyes of aesthetic philosophers Friedrich Nietzsche and Herbert Marcuse, the music that protested the Vietnam War, as well as those who participated in protest, gain a cultural role in American national identity that cannot be separated from its historic vitriol. Thus, the music from this era enjoys continuous celebration and remembrance in United States’ cultural traditions.

***Even Jesus would never forgive what you do.***  
**Bob Dylan, 1963: “Masters of War”**

The romanticized image of America in the 1960s and early 1970s leaves a

great deal of the era's strife and turmoil out of television specials and stylized movies like *Forest Gump* or *Woodstock*, where civil rights, women's rights, and the Anti-Vietnam War movement inevitably receive impractical Hollywood-happy-ending treatments. The reality of the times are better manifested through the pained voices of the era, such as Marvin Gaye's smooth croon in "What's Goin' On" (1971) or Nina Simone's electric cry in "Mississippi Goddamn" (1964). These two songs, which address the civil rights and women's rights movements, respectively, as well as the general mood of America during the Vietnam War, urge action and call for change regarding racial hate crimes and discriminatory practices, especially in the deep South.

The lyrics to "What's Goin' On" particularly address the violent responses of the American infrastructures in the call to change: "Picket lines and picket signs/ Don't punish me with brutality/ Talk to me, so you can see" (Gaye 1971). Similarly, Simone's lyrics underscore mass frustration regarding the sluggish pace of reform and continuing racial strife as the South struggled with civil rights issues, particularly the violent reactions to non-violent protests in the southern United States: "Alabama's gotten me so upset/ Tennessee made me lose my rest/ and everybody knows about Mississippi Goddamn" (Simone 1964). She eventually erupts into a battle weary compromise: "You don't have to live next to me/ Just give me my equality!" (Simone 1964). Simone and Gaye's music reveals that artists in Detroit's Motown music scene and artists working in jazz music often made the political personal in their art. The era was rife with political and social statements made in music, and there were many different

genres of music – R&B, country, jazz, blues, Motown, R&B, rock – involved in the social movements of the Vietnam War era. The majority of antiwar musical expression appeared to come from the folk music genre.

The burgeoning folk scene of the late 1950s gave way to an explosive folk presence in the late 1960s that has remained, in some form or another, swimming in the undercurrents of American popular music today. Vietnam Veteran and historian Terry Anderson explains that this wave of antiwar folk music was not something new, as:

...[F]olk musicians were the vanguard of social protest and antiwar music. As early as the Civil War, minstrels sang out against the carnage, and they continued to voice their concerns during the Spanish-American and First World Wars... (1986, 52)

The historical relevance of folk musicians points to the presence of several elder statesmen when the youth of the 1960s began picking up guitars. Woody Guthrie (1912 – 1967; most popular for 1930s and 1940s Depression-era folk songs), Pete Seeger (born 1919; known for folk songs in the 1940s and 1950s), and Odetta (1930 – 2008; remembered as “the voice of the Civil Rights movement”) were established icons of the folk music circuit as new folk musicians such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez started to gain popularity. These older musicians became involved in the protest music movement, and their music “...stated traditional folk themes, ones which were being voiced in the current civil rights crusade: justice, peace, and brotherly love... [however the newer] antiwar songs were more strident than those of older folk musicians” (Anderson 1986, 53). Straightforward protest rhetoric exemplified Bob Dylan’s early music lyrics; but he later “irritated” fans and critics by claiming that he



only “jumped on the scene to be heard” (Marquese 2005, 54). No matter what his own thoughts or motives regarding his legacy, Dylan, a notoriously obtuse interview subject, is still revered as an undeniable influence in and on the Anti-Vietnam War movement’s musical production. According to Dylan biographer Mike Marquese, biographers “misjudge the context” of what Marquese calls Dylan’s “impish perversity” regarding his connections to the Anti-Vietnam War movement:

In the years during which Dylan wrote his protest songs, the overwhelming majority of white American youth subscribed to opinions that ranged only within the narrow band between deeply conservative and cautiously liberal. The politics he embraced in these songs were fashionable only among a small minority. That minority, however, was linked to a movement on the rise. This movement gave Dylan a stance from which to view a confusing world, a musical outlet for his inchoate emotions, and an appreciative audience. In these plainspoken democratic songs, Dylan was writing for and taking his place within a vanguard. (Marquese 2005, 55)

To magnify his “plainspoken democratic songs,” Dylan used a louder, “bigger” sound by “[amplifying] his guitar, adopt[ing] a heavy rock beat with a faster tempo, [and] employ[ing] a backup band” (Anderson 1986, 54). This hybrid creation, known as “folk-rock,” became the music of choice for voicing popular protests.

Though Dylan famously outraged the folk collective with his new electric sound, the singer-songwriter eventually surfaced as the cornerstone for the antiwar music; the antiwar movement quickly adopted his intelligent and poetic lyrics into its larger ethos. From 1965 to 1970 Anderson observes:

...some four million Americans marched for peace. [People] began to speak out, arguing that imperialism in Vietnam was just one symptom of the illness that had stricken America [along with] capitalism, racism, and sexism.

[Musicians] diagnosed the body politic. To them, what was sick in America – perhaps terminally ill – was The Establishment. (1986, 55)

Dylan's angry critiques of The Establishment, found in "Maggie's Farm," "Blowin' in the Wind," and "Only a Pawn in Their Game" (among many others), made him a radical foil for conservative America, but he did not shoulder the burden alone. Many of his contemporaries came under fire for their liberal political views. The idea that music could change the minds of American listeners, or even influence them even slightly, worried many. Politically-charged conservative viewpoints, such as Pat Boone's "Wish You Were Here, Buddy" responded to antiwar songs with the barbed lyrics: "Well, you just stay home/ And leave the fighting to us/ And when the whole/ Durn mess is through/ I'll put away my rifle/ And the old uniform/ And I'll come looking for you" (Hillstrom 218). The tension created by the musical dialogue in these songs placed America's listeners in their own lyrical war in which each side had its anthems. One cannot dismiss the value of these songs' antiwar rhetoric; Anderson elaborates:

If the war had an impact on popular music, a word of caution is still necessary as to one of the most significant questions: did war-related music influence American society? Frank Zappa stated that the young were not loyal to flag, country, or doctrine, but only to music. One commentator noted in 1968 that protest music served as "a source of strength, unification, and expression when the battle is raging." Another claimed that "we are in process of a social revolution" and "rock is the poetry of that revolution." On the other side of the political spectrum, some staunch conservatives agreed. Writing for the John Birch Society, Jerry Real and Gary Allen contended that folk and rock music were leading the young to communism. (1988, 51)

Young participants in the antiwar movement were super-charged with the hope that their ideals could be realized, but their influence was less about a communist revolution and more about "giving peace a chance." They hoped that

their message, and the messages of the songs they carried with them as they protested, would be accepted and put into practice; in this way, the songs spoke for a very vocal minority.

So what did this movement have to say, and how can contemporary audiences find enjoyment in it? Perhaps the serious, valiant manner in which these antiwar protest singers delivered their messages resonates with a sincere desire for peace found within our shared human experience; war – and resistance to it – is not only part of America’s national identity but also *human* identity. Poet and Vietnam Veteran Jim McGarrah eloquently wrote about this primordial behavior in his memoir *The End of an Era*, where he places the music of the antiwar movement alongside an image drawn from antiquity:

Prophets chanted their messages and citizens participated by chanting back, directing the village’s response. It was an exercise of democracy. More importantly, it connected the individuals and made them a collective. Most importantly, it set them free. (2011, 73)

The element of social “call and response” that McGarrah discusses has always been a part of American music as well as human societies. The participatory element of call and response music is a cornerstone of folk music. Musicologists and linguists define “call and response as ‘spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the statements (‘calls’) are punctuated by expressions (‘responses’) from the listener” (Smitherman 1977; 104 qtd. Foster 2002). “Responses” generally echo the speaker’s agenda with affirmations, and some responses are designed to “urge the speaker on, repeat what the speaker has said, [or to] complete the speaker’s statement in

response to a request from the speaker or in spontaneous talking with the speaker” (Foster 2002).

The provocative element of freedom that antiwar music so eloquently espouses cannot be overlooked; the connection of antiwar music and sentiment of the proletariat is not only an important element of the cohesion produced in the antiwar movement, but also a key feature in understanding the historic scope and importance of folk music for society. The message in an antiwar folk song – though not unique – forms a part of an ancient human art. Musical and social theorists have long commented on music’s role in the community or society; even Nietzsche, though probably not foreseeing the Dionysian ecstasy of Woodstock, commented on the magnitude of folk music in his seminal work *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1872. Nietzsche believed that an era rich in folk music was also rich in the vibrancy of life, even if the music is simply arranged or sophomoric in construction; these factors only heightened the raw truth contained in it:

It is true that such musical representations can neither instruct us much concerning Dionysian content of music nor yet lay claim to any distinctive value as images. But once we study this discharge of music through images in a youthful milieu, among a people whose linguistic creativity is unimpaired, we can form some idea of how strophic folk song must have arisen and how a nation’s entire store of verbal resources might be mobilized by means of that novel principle, imitation of the language of music. (Nietzsche 1956, 45)

Nietzsche’s notion that replication of folk messages could mobilize people is not a radical construct today due to our cultural memory of the various social protests of the Vietnam War era. When seen through the lens of the 1960s, such as 1965’s popular protest chant “One-two-three-four/ We don’t want your

fucking war,” Anti-Vietnam War protests provide ample evidence of the mobilization of “imitation of the language of music.” Many Anti-Vietnam War protest chants were first adapted from military cadence calls (a protest expression that arguably reached its most popular zenith in Country Joe McDonald’s “Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag” in 1969). A group of antiwar protesters marching and chanting, albeit not the most organized group, remains a mobilized collective, a group of “people whose linguistic creativity is unimpaired” (Nietzsche 1956, 45). Nietzsche, who liked the crude and unrefined aspects of folk music, would likely admire the rough edges of the early stages of Anti-Vietnam War protest movement. He noted that the folk genre can help listeners to “...see more, and more inwardly than usual, and spreads before us like a delicate tissue the curtain of the scene, our spiritualized vision beholds the world of the stage at once infinitely expanded and illuminated from within” (1956, 129).

That music allows us to better see the world, at least see it “illuminated from within,” underscores the importance of the folk song; it not only lets us see more of the world around us, but it also allows for insight into the events that mark its times. Nietzsche proposes that folk music, as a method, allows us to view the world, past or present, with clarity:

We must regard the folk song as a musical mirror of the cosmos, as primordial melody casting about for an analogue and finding that analogue eventually in poetry... Melody gives birth to poetry repeatedly: the strophic form of folk song implies this. (Nietzsche 1956, 43)

The communal, enlightening, and historic aspects of the folk song make it all the more enjoyable from its inception; folk music, including antiwar protest music,

has the capacity to unite. It has a level of critical influence due to its active role in social commentary. Nietzsche's notion of the folk song as a "mirror of the cosmos" suggests that the songs from the Anti-Vietnam War movement would reflect a serious joy<sup>21</sup>, making these songs undoubtedly intellectual as they well as humanistically primeval.

The Anti-Vietnam War protest song, in its popular folk-rock form, remains undeniably socially important; it not only carries with it a tradition of folk music, but also *logos* that motivates its listeners to action. The protest songs against the Vietnam War provided aural pleasure to those who heard them. They evoked feelings of solidarity and unity, and promoted a message that resonated as the movement continued its fight to end the war. The music "...embraced a subversive function, challenging everything from [moral standards to politics]... During [this] age of social unrest in America [the protest music was] arguably most effective [in creating change]" (Hoppenstand 2009, 587). When we listen to this music today, it certainly evokes the experience of inner turmoil and challenges that the United States faced, and the legacy of change that the Vietnam War era represents in terms of civil rights and antiwar social activism is an inescapable context for contemporary listeners. Nietzsche might propose that the social protest music of the Vietnam War era helps us see the world more clearly and intelligently. Our current aural experience with this music agitates us more than listening to "Louie Louie" or "The Twist," songs also

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<sup>21</sup> "Serious joy" is a term coined by this author, cf. 2009's "Taking Pleasure Seriously: British Forum of Ethnomusicology Annual Conference" presentation, and will receive further discussion on page 79 of this chapter.

popular in the early years of the Vietnam War. How can this enjoyment be understood if it is not the pure Dionysian form of unbridled revelry? How can we reconcile, to borrow further from Nietzsche, the pleasure we get from listening to Apollonian lyrics amid a Dionysian theater?

Nietzsche pointedly praises the Apollonian, or more rational, cerebral aspects of music, affirming that a balance between these features and the Dionysian features are preferable in music; Nietzsche claims that the “...Apollonian spirit rescues us from the Dionysiac universality and makes us attend, delightedly, to individual forms... It parades the images of life before us and incites us to seize their ideational essence” (1956, 128). Within this context Anti-Vietnam War lyrics serve as an appropriate platform for social commentary, as they work to reveal what our world could be. Visualizing an ideal leads to a pleasing experience because pop music often idealizes intimate relationships through the lyrical images it presents. But how can visualizing an ideal situation amid a war provide pleasure, and what sort of rhetoric can simultaneously express anger, discontentment, rage, and passivity? How can a call for peace be violent? And how can this be perceived as delight when placed in the context of the Vietnam War?

America’s involvement in the Vietnam War remains a dark time in the country’s history, even as the protest music from that time stands as a proud creative accomplishment of American musical history. Protest music from around the world (“Ballad of Ho Chi Minh” – Ewan MacCoil, Scotland, “Ne Me Quitte Pas” – Jacques Brel, Belgium/France, “Imagine” – John Lennon, England,

etc.) also contributed to a growing musical canon of Anti-Vietnam War lyrical rhetoric. The soaring sounds of Jimi Hendrix's rendition of "Star-Spangled Banner" (1969, Woodstock) or the vitriol in Bob Dylan's voice on "Masters of War" (1962) do not, however, mean the same things to listeners today as they did during the antiwar movement. To the contemporary listener, these are songs to be proud of and musical innovations to applaud and mimic. The real and implied audiences for these songs will always be somewhat anachronistic; the music remains fixed in the context of its the era for every listener. The dark political times, for the contemporary listener of Vietnam War era music, are gone; for those who lived through the era, the music represents a variety of emotions, yet, curiously, it remains a fantastic source of auditory pleasure.

Conceptualizing pleasure in Vietnam War protest songs seems sacrilegious when one considers those who lost their lives in the war as well as those who fought so hard against the antiwar movement. This sentiment reflects a more Dionysian perspective on the music; it is illogical and unreasonable to take pleasure in a period that produced so much national pain. Moreover, protest music generally refrains from lauding the United States in a way that would be more befitting of Apollonian praise; if anything, the very purpose of protest music is to mock the Apollonian values of the "Establishment." However, music with a call to social change – music using a more cerebral element found in Apollonian art – demands more from its listener than a Dionysian song in terms of lyrical consideration. However, in order for this music to transcend its time or



have any sort of longevity, the music must have an innate pleasure in order to resonate with contemporary listeners.

This historical journey of the Anti-Vietnam war protest song represents a sort of “serious joy”; this music still expresses Dionysian social attitudes and challenges while existing in American national identity in an Apollonian discourse such as cultural historicism. Anti-Vietnam War protest music appeals to a most human Dionysian desire in those who relish in the pre-punk defiance of the lyrics and the innovative musicality and ingenuity of the songs’ arrangements. Furthermore, the Dionysian-like attributes historically ascribed to the 1960s “hippies” and “flower children” rework American cultural memory from one of chaos to one of cheer. It is far easier for a listener to compose a more sedate, romanticized cultural memory of the Vietnam War era through a pop song like the Beach Boys’ peppy “Surfin’ USA” (1963) than through Bob Dylan’s somber “Blowin’ in the Wind” (1963). The Beach Boys – a clean-cut group of California men – wore matching outfits and did little to ruffle the feathers of “the Establishment,” but Bob Dylan and the folk musicians, usually unkempt by comparison, spooked the parents yet captivated their teenaged children. American protest music circa the Vietnam era is definitely not lyrically light like that of the Beach Boys, and that is where the argument for *serious joy* comes into play; even “serious” music can be fun out of context or within context. Context, however, amid “serious joy,” ultimately results in idealized memories or false nostalgia.

To properly examine the idea of “serious joy,” a Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War,” from the folk-rock part of the Anti-Vietnam War protest movement, serves as an example. One must pay attention to the lyrics, in order to situate them as rhetorical devices suited for social commentary. Bob Dylan’s 1963 song “Masters of War” makes overt social comments regarding the United States’ Cold War foreign policies, even though Dylan does not consider the song an antiwar piece. Speaking to *USA Today*’s Edna Gundersen in 2001, Dylan claimed the song “...is supposed to be a pacifistic song against war. It’s not an antiwar song. It’s speaking against what Eisenhower was calling a military-industrial complex as he was making his exit from the presidency. That spirit was in the air, and I picked it up.” While Dylan is more than entitled to view “Masters of War” as simply a “pacifistic song” thirty-eight years after he wrote it, the song nonetheless became a touchstone for antiwar sentiment. Dylan himself often performed the song where antiwar sentiment was part of the ethos of the event. The song’s overall message gives an unflinching appraisal of the hypocrisy as well as the dishonesty in an American government “...whose corrupt policies were wreaking havoc on the world at large...” (Marqusee qtd. Lemieux 2006, 7). The title hints at a staunch opposition toward those who construct and wage war; perhaps that message alone makes the song a superb example of the 1960s efforts to uproot the infrastructure in the name of change. Pushing against status quo cultural ideas of “the Establishment” was a hallmark of the Vietnam War era in terms of not only the antiwar movement but also the women’s and Civil Rights movements. The social movements of the Vietnam War era,

according to the lyrics of “Masters of War” and many other Anti-Vietnam War songs, revealed fissures in American cultural infrastructure that had gone ignored in American society for too long.

Dylan’s call for change in “Masters of War” is backed by sparse, tense acoustic guitar. The rhythm of the song is steady, like a two-step cadence, consisting of only five chords, two of which – A minor and A minor 7 – make up ninety percent of the song. The persistent use of these two chords contributes to the droning anxiety that swirls behind Dylan’s weary, intermittently angry voice. The lyrics reveal a set of tensions that define “serious joy,” which can be explained through four founding principles.

First, the song offers listeners the pleasure of looking at a tumultuous time through the lens of nostalgia, though these listeners do not directly experience the cultural context the song represents. Second, these listeners actively generate their own meanings of the song and its context, drawing upon the historical lens Paul Ricœur defines as “Other” (see *The Reality of the Historical Past* 1998, 15). Furthermore, one who did not live through the song’s era also gets a sense of false nostalgia for a time they have not experienced but have seen represented in their cultural history, thus also rendering them as an “Analogous” listener. These listeners may compare the historical context of a song like “Masters of War” to current social and political climates in the United States. Third, songs that provoke serious joy rarely escape their historical contexts. By including the cultural context of a song with the experience of listening to it – if one is approaching the song from the perspective of Ricœur’s

“Same,” “Analogous,” or “Other” – the lyrics will retain a pointed and clear message. This message, finally and fourthly, must transcend the song’s context; songs that evoke serious joy must be able to accommodate current problems while simultaneously including memories of the past.

Dylan’s “Masters of War” has freed itself from its historical time and place by becoming a staple “cover” for antiwar protest musical performances since its creation. Spanish and French guitarists have used the song to reflect national conflict, and Los Angeles rock band Ozomatli performed the song at the Voices of a People's History of the United States in 2007.<sup>22</sup> Rock band Pearl Jam added the song to its live set and performed their version live on David Letterman in 2006. The universality of the song’s message is undeniably powerful in American popular culture, but it also satisfies, through lyrical analysis, the other three qualities proposed for the term “serious joy.”

The pleasure, or “serious joy,” evident in Dylan’s “Masters of War” comes directly from the powerful, imagistic lyrics. The song achieves universality in that it encompasses the past, present, and future simultaneously, thus underscoring the droll horror of war’s innate repetition. Dylan’s intermittent howls and expressive guitar strumming echo the confusion and horrors of war

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<sup>22</sup> “Voices of a People’s History of the United States” is an annual event put on by VOICES, where Howard Zinn’s *People’s History of the United States* is read, interspersed with musical performances, in Pasadena, California. “VOICES” is a non-profit arts, education and social justice organization active throughout the United States. It was founded in 2007 by a group of activists, artists and educators, led by historian Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, who together edited the book *Voices of a People’s History of the United States*. See (<http://www.peopleshistory.us/>) for further information.

for those watching and affected by it either directly or indirectly. The first few verses depict potent images of opposition to war and all its trappings:

Come you masters of war,  
You that build all the guns.  
You that build the death planes.  
You that build the big bombs.  
You that hide behind walls.  
You that hide behind desks.  
I just want you to know  
I can see through your masks.

You that never done nothing',  
However, build to destroy.  
You play with my world,  
Like it's your little toy,  
You put a gun in my hand,  
In addition, you hide from my eyes,  
In addition, you turn and run farther  
When the fast bullets fly.

Like Judas of old,  
You lie and deceive.  
A world war can be won,  
You want me to believe .  
But I see through your eyes,  
And I see through your brain,  
Like I see through the water  
That runs down my drain.  
(Dylan 1963)

These masters of war build, hide, turn and run, talk, and “throw fear” but the speaker does not name them; the repetition of “hide” in several lines reinforces their anonymity as well as their refusal to take responsibility for their actions. These “masters of war” never reveal themselves, lurking in the shadows. Their authority extends to the construction of “death planes” and “big bombs” from which the “masters of war” “hide behind walls” and desks (Dylan 1963); the juxtaposition of these grandiose and cowardly actions creates tension for the

listener. Forced to recognize the hypocrisy between the “masters’” actions and their creations, the listener finds power in the speaker’s challenge to these cowards “hid[ing] behind walls” while simultaneously feeling revulsion of the truth behind the speaker’s lyrics. Tension mounts as the speaker continues to accuse the “masters of war” directly as “you” in the first verse. The speaker does not “believe [a world war can be won]” because he can see through the “masters” just as he “see[s] through the water that runs down my drain” (Dylan 1963). The speaker accesses the “master’s [eyes and brain]” as easily as he would clear water; even as they tout victory in war, the speaker knows that they lie; he can “see through [their] mask[s]” (Dylan 1963). Finding joy in standing up to an aggressor, in this case the “masters of war” results in a perverse pleasure; the listener feels vindicated because the speaker challenges the masters.

Tension has long been a staple of the pleasure principle, according to Reinhold Friedl. He points out:

[The] functional harmonic structure of ... music is based on two main psychological tensions: the dominant, producing a tension to revert to the tonic, and the subdominant, including the feeling of leaving the tonic... the pleasure of listening to [music] requires the capacity to follow harmonic tensions. (2002, 29)

Dylan’s use of dominant and subdominant tonic tension in “Masters of War’s” lyrics, vocal performance, and music, increases as the song progresses; the dominant masters of war see the world as trivial, and those under them (the subdominant) feel helpless. The song’s first lyric, “come you masters of war” is very similar to an invocation to a muse, or a direct invitation for the masters of war to listen; it could be a call of the “masters of war” to change, but is more

likely a challenge to their authority and power. When the speaker, who could easily be a soldier or an everyman, bellows that the masters “play with my world, like it’s [their] little toy,” he further reinforces the song’s tension (big world, little toy) (Dylan 1963). The speaker further emphasizes the “masters” cowardly behavior, lambasting them as “[they] hide from my eyes/ [they] turn and run farther when the fast bullets fly” (Dylan 1963). The masters then resemble the lying and deceitful Judas, and are unaccountable for their obvious crimes, such as “fasten[ing] triggers for others to fire” and “[sitting] back and watch[ing] when the death count gets higher” (Dylan 1963). The listener gets angry – the masters are still unidentified, but images of various evil or corrupt moments in history immediately enter this listener’s mind. The casualties of Vietnam immediately come to the listener’s mind, and the message of the song becomes clearer as a result; those who orchestrate the wars do not fight them, and this is unjust. “Masters of War,” composed in the early years of the Vietnam War, serves as an eerily prophetic warning of what was to come in Indochina.

Dylan’s lyrics set war up as a spectator sport, with the masters keeping track of the “successes” (which for U.S. government, during the Vietnam War, were defined by kill counts) as the fighting and casualties take place in front of them. The masters arm the soldiers and then, essentially, wash their hands of the affair. They do not see the “young people’s blood,” the blood of the soldiers and the innocent, that “flows out of their bodies and is buried in the mud” (Dylan 1963). This image of vitality and life force is too vibrant for the masters of war – easily metaphoric figures of the “Establishment” or “the man” of the era – who

only live to strike fear into the hearts of the innocent, according to Dylan. The threats and fear-mongering of the “masters of war” lead to the speaker to utter one of his first truly damning and caustic barbs: that these masters “ain’t worth the blood that runs in [their] veins” (Dylan 1963).

The anger evident in the lyrics of “Masters of War” reflects the historical context of the song; the United States had never seen, at least so publically and so televised, its people falling into chaos. With so much social and political bickering surrounding the 1960s, the average American felt his or her whole infrastructure cave in around them as the war produced public friction. This moment of American history sparked previously unknown violence and strife, and the seething underbelly of America was steeped in frustration and anger. Those in charge, as evidenced by Dylan’s lyrics and, of course, as proven by history, were inept and deceitful, and that lasting image of corrupt government persists today. Dylan and his fellow antiwar sympathizers saw a deep-seated problem in government structure: the government created wars, but left the people to fight them. The historical context of “Masters of War” remains simultaneously inescapable and currently relevant. The songwriter rallies his audience and peers; the “lyrics in this song ring out as an adamant declaration that people are no longer going to passively sit by and allow themselves to be the ones who are firing the triggers blindly for the war-mongers who are in charge” (Lemieux 9). The speaker further expresses his disdain for the masters of war by critiquing their lack of Christian morality; Jesus will never forgive the masters for all that they have done, and money will not buy forgiveness nor will it “buy



back” the masters of war’s souls (Dylan 1963). The implication that a soul is worth saving, alongside the speaker’s admission that he is “young and unlearned,” show the open, naïve manner in which the 1960s protests would be fashioned (Dylan 1963). At the end of the song Dylan leaves the masters with a threat:

And I hope that you die,  
And your death’ll come soon,  
I will follow your casket in the pale afternoon.  
And I’ll watch while you’re lowered,  
Down to your deathbed.  
And I’ll stand o’er your grave,  
’Till I’m sure that you’re dead.  
(Dylan 1963)

These lyrics do not indicate that there is any good left salvaging from the masters of war. This vengeful attitude, however, does not act on its aggression just as the listeners do not “act” on theirs. The speaker’s anger is passive, and the final verse shows that the song carries the tension through the beginning of the song to its end. The speaker feels nothing but the tension created by his vitriol and hope; the “masters of war” have been called out on their behavior, but no real action – no following a casket to a grave – has taken place as he imagines a future when his adversaries will die. The idea that justice will eventually prevail over the actions of the “Establishment” or the “masters of war” allows the song to retain its serious joy; when the masters go down, those opposing them find solace that someday they may “stand o’er [their] grave[s],” assured that the masters of war’s power has ended.

Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” illustrates the concept of serious joy; it evokes pleasure (if not satisfaction) through analysis as well as through auditory

delight; it remains rooted in its historical context, but it also transcends its era and still inspires today. But how, exactly, does “Masters of War” address the issue of nostalgia? Memories listeners may associate with this song can arguably be pleasurable or painful, from 40 years ago to four years ago, and the song’s continued resonance makes it obvious that all listeners can identify with the lyrics’ anger to an extent. Those unfamiliar with the context of the song’s era may feel a sense of false nostalgia for a time that truly never was – the Vietnam War era, for many listeners, contains mere fragments (iconic and personal) of what really happened during the period. This song represents elements of protest and challenges to authority that allow Vietnam War-era America to be seen, retroactively, as the unique period of social activism it was, but the song does not give today’s listener the entire historical context of a shared cultural memory. The most appropriate way we understand nostalgia stemming the era’s songs involves establishing whose nostalgia is “true.” This, for critics, means the “musical memories” of those who lived through the time the songs first came onto the American music scene. Vietnam Veteran Ron Brazda, my uncle who entered the war at age 20, remarked in a personal interview:

Today, I listen to things like Dylan's “Masters of War” and “Blowin' in the Wind,” or Seeger's “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” (among many, many others) and am acutely aware of the seemingly timeless relevance. Seems no matter who's in charge, the “masters of war” have their way, although I can enjoy the music much more today than before, because it evokes good memories as well as bad. Whereas, earlier there were no “memories,” I was living it and hating it. Every time we got ashore, I got drunk and high and still couldn't stop grieving over the death and the dying of kids (I was only 20 myself at the time), and the impact on the families. “Grief” is a strange word to use when referring to people I mostly didn't know. (2009)

Brazda's comment goes to the heart of the issue of nostalgia, while also speaking to the transient nature of memory. As Brazda has become more emotionally distanced from the war and the grief, he gets a measure of enjoyment and pleasure from the songs. His final observation, about grieving for people he "mostly didn't know" not only speaks to the experience of the soldier, but also to the experience of so many Americans while watching the gruesome footage of the war on television. Vietnam War-era young men and women were young and impressionable, and the music fueling their youth was meaningful, important, and bold. The musical messages meant something, and these young people experienced a changing America together, some in a foreign land.

Vietnam Veteran Jim McGarrah believes his experience is indivisible from who is, which makes the memories more important and treasured: "The very fact that this music was interwoven with social and cultural revolution, with my history, makes it iconic to me. Unlike classical music, or jazz, when I hear this music I remember who I am and why I am and how I got to be this person I am" (2009, Personal Interview). Without a doubt, these antiwar songs resonate today for their political and social messages, and for the personal memories they unearth. But what can we make of the individual experience of those born after the songs were created?

The generation of Americans who experienced the innovation of the 1960s music scene can claim a direct, personal relevance to their experience with the music. But what can 21<sup>st</sup> listeners make of the music's popularity and those who enjoy it, as a new thing, today? 21<sup>st</sup> century listeners, coloring their

own experiences with Vietnam War-era music, cannot listen to the music without the contextual and historical images of the era, creating a sense of false nostalgia – a frustrated antiwar American in 2012 may look back with yearning at “the 60s,” where people who were against war actively spoke out against it. The cultural memory of a 21<sup>st</sup> century listener, however, consists of a revised and manipulated narrative of the Vietnam War era; iconic moments and images replace the true *mood* of the era, which a 21<sup>st</sup> century listener can never truly know. Christopher Butler claims that this false nostalgia creates emotions that are: “...free-floating clouds or tickles or cramps [but as] ways of paying attention... [that] are extricably bound up with our beliefs about situations” (Butler 2004, 38). According to Butler, our emotional reactions explain our appreciation for past music, but he does not disregard the majestic musicality produced during the 1960s. The music, just as Zappa thought and McGarragh wrote, informs our beliefs and values. Butler makes a case “...for the many kinds of pleasures which we can expect to derive from the canonic works of the culture we have inherited, and from the more ephemeral and more popular culture that surrounds us... Our pleasurable feelings and emotions are in fact very complicated modes of understanding [that] give us pleasure” (Butler 2004, xi). The emotional response, the false nostalgia, is what anchors the contemporary listener to an Anti-Vietnam War song, because one can apply these songs’ messages to current issues. Definitive pleasure arises from knowing that America once had new and challenging beliefs, that the youth took a stand, and, perhaps most importantly, that there was a sincere hope that change could

happen. The reality of America in the 1960s did not simply consist solely of sunshine, hippies, peaceful protests, and great music; still, the era's lasting imprint reverberates in the empowering messages of the music. This holistic impression of a song, from its melody to its lyrics, is simple. When it involves an undeniable message that simultaneously identifies and transcends a given historical context, and the pleasure of listening to a song consists of the emotions, memories, and the feelings they stir up are due to serious joy, a cerebral yet emotional experience.

***Why? Four! How many more?***

**Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, 1970; "Ohio"**

Protest music's aggression challenges society's views; it insists on its validity and persists in its demand for recognition. Herbert Marcuse, a Frankfurt School philosopher and major figure in the Anti-Vietnam War movement, knew that Anti-Vietnam War social protest could have a great impact on American cultural ideology. While Marcuse may not have specifically identified the Anti-Vietnam War movement as a "second dimension," or the era as one that contained "promises of a genuinely co-operative society" (Lind 1985, 201). The rhetoric of Anti-Vietnam War music created a space – a moment – where the promise of social change did indeed exist within Marcuse's framework of protest rhetoric.

In the context of Marcuse's thought, protest music must be seen first as art. He confirms in *One Dimensional Man* that the "estrangement effect

(*Verfremdungseffekt*),” a term coined by Bertolt Brecht,<sup>23</sup> serves as a cornerstone for his theory that art must have transcendental properties (1964, 67). This effect allows us to see what *could be* in society; a possible utopia, or simply a truth obscured by the architects of government and society. This possible society reveals itself through “not empathy and feeling, but distance and reflection”; the “estrangement effect” produces a viewpoint that allows a reader or listener to perceive reality differently – a second dimension – “in which the world can be recognized as what it is” (Marcuse 1964, 67). Through this effect, “art can contribute to the wider political struggle... insofar as it enhances our understanding of a particular historical or political situation” (Lind 1985, 92). Anti-Vietnam War songs fit this criterion, creating tiny windows of freedom through their lyrics and music, with the lyrics serving as examples of transcendent and historically important art. These songs create spaces where the “Masters of War” are confronted and where the “Missing in Action” soldier finds peace; it is an idealized reality, but one where participatory democracy has a stronger voice against social injustices. When looking to define or capture one of America’s most extraordinary social movements, listening to Anti-Vietnam War song lyrics offers listeners – past, present, and future – a distanced perspective of the mood of a turbulent and changing United States.

Throughout history, messages contained in antiwar songs have served as historical cornerstones in defining a time or a generation, and they loom eerily

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<sup>23</sup> “*Verfremdungseffekt* prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, and which consequently leads the audience to be a consciously critical observer.”  
Willett, J. ed. and trans. (1964) *Brecht on theater*. Hill and Wang: New York. 91.

over contemporary wars as a reminder of the destruction and aggression in humanity's past. For example, the shadow of the Anti-Vietnam War movement stretches over the current wars involving America and Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, inasmuch as Vietnam often is compared to them during newscasts and it was even referenced in the 2008 United States Presidential debates. The relevancy of the antiwar movement during our involvement in Vietnam still raises questions for current discussion: What have we learned from the American Vietnam War era, and what *should* we have learned? Looking back at Anti-Vietnam War songs and examining their rhetoric – as relevant manifestations of sociological and socio-cultural *objects d'art* – we can gain some insights into our past mistakes and successes. Ultimately America could use these songs and lyrics to effect the changes in American society that the Anti-Vietnam War protestors demanded. They not only wanted to see an end to the war, but they also wanted to put an end to an antiquated diplomatic cultural morality where violence, aggression, and global “law and order” no longer substituted for democracy. Senator Wayne Morse (D-OR) lamented the sad twist “protecting democracy in Vietnam” had taken on the Senate floor in 1964. The Senator beseeched his colleagues to find another way out of the war, pleading: “Surely when a nation goes as far down the road toward war as we have, it must know why it is there, what objective it is seeking, and whether the objective sought could possibly be achieved by any other means” (qtd. Polner, Murray & Woods 2008, 236). Morse's fellow Senators, however, remained unmoved by his statements.

The Vietnam War divided the nation; we remember the period as one rife with exciting and horrifying metaphorical earthquakes of social change that sent shockwaves around the nation. Herbert Marcuse gained notoriety for his non-violent messages against the Vietnam War in conservative San Diego, California, during the mid-1960s. Even when an effigy of Marcuse was “hung” from a flagpole, bearing a sign that read “Marxist Marcuse,” he did not flinch in his opposition to the war in Vietnam, nor did he refrain from speaking about the antiwar movement to his classes and lecture audiences (Juutilanien 1996). Marcuse’s involvement in the antiwar movement, particularly the student antiwar movements in the United States and abroad, eventually lead to his forced retirement from the San Diego State University in 1965. Marcuse’s own comments on the Vietnam War, along those he made about the antiwar movement, illustrate the concept that Anti-Vietnam War lyrics offered a momentary glimpse of hope for those demanding a change in the reality that surrounded them during the Vietnam War.

“Today we have the capacity to turn the world into hell, and we are well on our way to doing so,” Marcuse informed his audience during a 1967 lecture at the University of West Berlin (“The End of Utopia”). He rebuked the capitalist greed and repressive anguish he saw in modern society. He wrote and spoke extensively on Vietnam, referencing it in several of his books and lectures; his exasperation over the war spilled out into interviews, where he referred to the war as “insanity” and a horrific example of America’s “criminal foreign policy” (Juutilanien 1996). Marcuse’s anger eventually prompted him to write a lecture



in 1966 titled “Vietnam – Analysis of an Example,” where he spoke vehemently against the war:

In history there is something like guilt, and there is no necessity – neither strategic nor technological nor national – that could justify what is going on in Vietnam: the slaughter of the civilian population, of women and children, the systematic destruction of foodstuffs, carpet bombing of one of the poorest and most defenseless countries in the world – that is guilt and we must protest against it even if we believe that it is hopeless, simply in order to survive as human beings and perhaps only because it could possibly shorten the terror and the horror, and today that is already a great deal. (1966)

Marcuse’s advocating of protest against the Vietnam War, his insistence that “we *must* protest against it even if we believe that is hopeless,” bolstered the movement. Challenging the United States, he explicitly stated that the country should carry a burden of guilt for the crimes against humanity inflicted in Vietnam through the “terror and horror” of the war. He saw the academic world as an appropriate venue to create a network of people interested in social change. He admitted he was pleased with “the opposition [to the war] among intellectuals and the younger generation, especially at the universities,” calling these protestors the “most vocal, visible, and effective opposition” and representing a more radical potential in the liberation movement (1966 “Vietnam – Analysis of an Example”). Indeed, he advocated “setting up connections between the American and German students,” declaring that a student opposition movement could be “one of the most important strategic necessities of these years” (1966 “The Problem of Violence...”). Marcuse believed, to an extent, in the antiwar protestors; in 1969, he bluntly told television journalist Harold Keen that “the young people in protest [...are] our

great hope.... to fight against the mental and physical pollution in this country” (1969 *The New Left...*). The young protestors who Marcuse lauded were not only students, but also artists and musicians whose creative output was beginning to align itself with the cause. Marcuse supported this new counter-culture, but the burgeoning movement never quite reached the heights Marcuse imagined it could.

The Vietnam War frustrated Marcuse, and even though he was marked as a leader in the “New Left” movement (which he never directly acknowledged<sup>24</sup>), he did not see the movement as an entity that could successfully achieve a new reality, the aforementioned “second dimension” as explained by Brecht. He blamed the media and the oppressive capitalist machine that dominated American sensibility for the morally dismal social situation in capitalist America and Europe. His angst surfaced in 1964’s *One Dimensional Man*, where he “provided a theoretical base for not relying on the working class, but instead looking to marginal groups for leadership in the struggle that might hope to one day penetrate the system” (Dr. Andrew Feenberg qtd. Juutilanien 1996). *One Dimensional Man* reveals Marcuse’s frustration with America’s involvement in Indochina and its excessively hypocritical culture at home. His thesis hinges on the idea that western humanity lives in one dimension supplied by market

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<sup>24</sup> “It is very interesting that [the New Left] has as spokesmen not traditional politicians but rather suspect figures such as poets, writers, and intellectuals” (Marcuse, “The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition” 1966). There is no direct notation where Marcuse declares himself a leader of the New Left in any text I consulted, though he was certainly considered one due to his visibility in the New Left commentary regarding Vietnam.

commodities, the U.S. industrial war complex and western technology. A second dimension – a more ideal society based on New Leftist and socialist ideas of community and common good – can be seen through art, but cannot be realized in American culture due to the pervasiveness of the “one-sided” dimension. He viewed the ideology behind American society as “one-dimensional,” and described it as devoid of truth; the desires, morals, and freedoms promised in American culture might not be freedoms at all. He angrily dismissed such a one-dimensional society as one that “alters the relation between the rational and the irrational” (Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* 1964, 247).

In *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse blamed the media for their role in aggravating the social reaction to the Vietnam War, noting that their cloudy rhetoric only exacerbated one-dimensional society’s rise to power over those shouting for change. Those protesting the war, according to Marcuse, could barely do so:

How can such protest and refusal find the right word when the organs of the established order admit and advertise that peace is really the brink of war, and the ultimate weapons carry their profitable price tags, and that the bomb shelter may spell coziness? (1964, 90)

The media’s rhetoric painted war as a common occurrence, where new products for new needs – such as a bomb shelter – were not questioned in terms of their actual necessity. Marcuse blamed this on one-dimensional, co-opted modern society, where revolutionary ideas or calls for change were sucked through a societal filter that removed the truth from the ideas and repackaged them as commodities (Marcuse *One Dimensional Man* 1964, 14). One way that American society perpetually packages war is through the rhetoric used to market

children's toys. A 1960s commercial for a Lionel Train Set<sup>25</sup> – which included a Turbo Missile Firing Car, Aerial Target Cars, and a Reconnaissance Copter – was clearly filmed on a set built to resemble a war zone; it has hills, watchtowers, and a depot-type supply area. A child feels successful and happy after firing two successful shots, in the “top secret first official test of the Turbo Missile Firing Car,” and the commercial ends with an announcer booming: “Remember boy, you’re the boss of the greatest action cars ever created when you own Lionel Trains!” The commercial familiarizes children with war from an early age – they know how to set up a war zone, how to shoot at targets, as well as some basic military jargon: “Fire one! Fire two!”; turbo, missile, target. This 1960s commercial illustrates how normalized aggressive, war-like behavior was during the Vietnam War era; even though news shows broadcast battlefield reports from Vietnam every night, “playing war” was still fun. American society remains one-dimensional when it considers its own record of violence; the cultural identity of the country is inextricably tied with combat, war, violence, and aggression. These notions are pitched to kids as play; Louis Althusser<sup>26</sup> might

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<sup>25</sup> “Lionel Trains Turbo Missile Car 1960s” YouTube.com. 17 Dec. 2012. Web.  
< <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=puV1-AiNvVI>>

<sup>26</sup> “The French philosopher, Louis Althusser, first popularized the word interpellation in his seminal essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)” (Althusser, 1972). In the essay, Althusser explores the relationship between the state, modes of (re)producing power and ideology from a Marxist perspective, defining ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1972: 162). In his definition, Althusser sees ideology functioning as a mediator between systems of power and individuals. It allows for hegemonic power to reproduce itself by obscuring traditional forms of repression and incorporating individuals into the power structure.”

Cf. Nguyen, C. (2012). “Interpellation.” *The University of Chicago keywords glossary*. Accessed March 26, 2013. <<http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/interpellation.htm>>.

regard this phenomena as a particularly egregious example of interpellation. The child becomes a “subject” repressed by subtle manipulation from a larger discourse of an aggressive, war-driven American national identity.

Marcuse told students at his July 1967 lecture at the University of West Berlin that the problem of one-dimensional society persisted due to a vicious cultural cycle, where “individuals reproduce repressive society in their needs, which persist even through revolution” (Marcuse 2005, “The End of Utopia”). Marcuse argues that this perpetual machination of society, which pursues liberation from capitalist rhetoric, “is precisely this continuity which up to now has stood in the way of the leap from quantity into the quality of a free society” (Marcuse 2005, “The End of Utopia”). He still had hope, however, in the new routes of “today’s rebels,” who embarked on their quest for a society that recognized alternative or “second dimension” ways of being. His hope in the antiwar movement fell on the protestors who “want to see, hear, feel new things in a new way [because] they link liberation with the dissolution of ordinary and orderly perception” (Marcuse 1967, *Essay on Liberation* 37).

For many students, the Vietnam War served as a catalyst for their involvement in the Anti-Vietnam War movement and their redirection toward the ideology of a more liberal western world. Marcuse saw the war as a necessary wake-up call for the students to see the urgent need for change because, in his view: “the war revealed for the first time the essence of established society; its innate need of expansion and aggression and the brutality of its fight against all liberation movements” (Marcuse 1967, “The

Problem with Violence and Radical Opposition”). Shocking images of violence in Vietnam appeared daily on television and returning veterans, many permanently damaged from the war, sparked a new social awareness among American citizens as they struggled to understand what was happening in Indochina. Marcuse asserted that these new societal tendencies toward attentiveness, because of their “anarchically unorganized, spontaneous tendencies” attempted to reign in “a total break with the dominant needs of repressive society” (Marcuse 1967, "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition"). Many of these rebels actively participated in the antiwar movement and fervently sought “liberation with the dissolution of ordinary and orderly perception” (Marcuse 1967, "The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition"). Their ranks included artists and musicians making and performing Anti-Vietnam War music; their impact and visibility placed a spotlight on the movement and allowed it to grow successfully, however briefly. Although the movement faded away, the music remains.

While the Anti-Vietnam War movement ultimately fell prey to fatigue, infighting, government infiltration, and disorganization, the music from that era, which crystallized the traits that Marcuse admired of the movement, left a lasting impression in American history. Marcuse admitted that certain qualities of protest music confirmed his theories of aesthetics, but he ultimately felt they were too little, too late:

It seems that the poems and the songs of protest and liberation are always too late or too early: memory or dream. Their time is not the present: they preserve their truth in their hope, in their refusal of the actual. The

distance between the universe of poetry and that of politics is so great...  
(Marcuse 1969, *Essay on Liberation*, 34)

Marcuse rightly praises protest songs for preserving “truth in their hope.” This hope transcends the “memory or dream” that the songs often reference, where “we shall overcome” our difficulties and “all [we] need is love”; their hope “refuses the actual” and prefers another mode of thought. The different reality the protest music and lyrics bring to listeners retains an undeniable aesthetic and their artistic socio-cultural importance cannot be denied.

Lyrics as poetry, and thus works of art, prove to be tricky subject to navigate, as many philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and historians generally do not consider lyrics of popular music as art worthy of academic scrutiny. Moreover, art with a political bent, for many, is not art but rather propaganda. Marcuse’s fellow Frankfurt School colleague, philosopher Theodor Adorno, “always insisted that art loses its significance if it tries to create specific political or didactic effects; [art] should compel rather than demand a change in attitude” (Jay 1996, 83). Marcuse felt that art *did* compel rather than demand. Art simply put an argument or perspective forward for the listeners, viewers, or readers to consider on their own terms. This constitutes the inherent freedom in art; it has the ability to remain subjective while moving through changing audiences and eras over time. Marcuse believed that art underwent an aesthetic transformation that severed it from the repression of the one-dimensional society that made it, begetting the “free realization” of art (Jay 1996, 86). Marcuse agreed with Adorno in that art needed to “remain alien” and “obey its own laws and maintain its freedom” (Jay 1996, 86). But art’s adherence to its

own freedom allowed it to carry illusory properties which Marcuse believed “open[ed] the established reality to alternative visions and possibilities; [in] this transfiguration art transcends its class origins and content...with the revolutionary goal of ‘changing the world’”<sup>27</sup> (Jay 1996, 86).

Marcuse notes that the “revolutionary goal” of art is to change the world. He emphasizes as much in his discussion of the two ways art can have transcendental properties in *One Dimensional Man*. Not only must art offer possibilities to society through illusion (illusions create a utopia of what could be), but it must also reveal truths of the past. Philosopher Martin Jay believes that Marcuse’s theory of this latter transcendental property of art – illuminating history – makes it politically aware of liberation movements but not actively responsible for them:

It is by virtue of this second transcendence that art can contribute to the wider political struggle; it can only do this insofar as it enhances our understanding of a particular historical or political situation, or by keeping alive, through a constant process of artistic creation, certain hopes and ideals which cannot otherwise be conveyed. The real struggles must be left to political theory and ultimately political action. (1986, 92)

Art, according to Marcuse, remains separate from reality, and that “the crucial transcendence from the given reality is the artistic one... Art is thereby removed from the good and evil from the wider ideals of the co-operative society” (Lind 1985, 290). Art’s ability to exist in a different dimension gives it the ability to “shape the unconscious memory of the liberation that failed, of the promise that was betrayed” (Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* qtd. Lind 1985, 203). In other

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<sup>27</sup> As a New Left scholar, Marcuse acknowledged that art and social protest often originated from the middle-class rather than the proletariat, which points to his split from traditional Marxist ideology.



words, Anti-Vietnam war lyrics, as art, tell the truth, virtually unfettered by the denizens of capitalistic American cultural ideology (absent are the opinions of those in power in the Vietnam War era, at least). Anti-Vietnam War song lyrics expose the sincerity of the antiwar movement. The lyrics' insistence on disclosing the attitudes, hopes, and fears of the movement and its participants only serve as a further attempts to amplify the importance of the movement and accentuate the small glimpses of a different idea of society that the movement envisioned but was unable to truly achieve.

Marcuse believed art had transcendental properties that separated it from reality; he noted that art's illogical and radical characteristics gave it the ability to invoke beauty, or the illusion of beauty (*schöner Schein*) and reveal the promise of another possible reality. Art, indeed, created its own reality, freeing itself from "the given universe of discourse and behavior" and creating another "realm in which the subversion of experience proper to art becomes possible: the world formed by art is recognized as a reality which is the suppressed or distorted in the given reality" (Marcuse *Aesthetic Dimension* 1978, 6). These new worlds of "suppressed or distorted" in the given reality of the turbulent 1960s and 1970s reverberated in the form of protest music. The music invoked the protesters' hopes for societal change, but it never delivered a false message of happiness and contentment. These songs, composed amid the terrors of war, offered little beyond a momentary escape from the culture that surrounded the movement.

One such instance of release and an example of a moment where the voices of liberation in the 1960s Anti-Vietnam War movement entered the collective consciousness came via Jefferson Airplane's April 1967 album *Surrealistic Pillow*, recorded in November of 1966. "Somebody to Love" was released as a single from Jefferson Airplane five months later, and instantly captured the alienated-yet-positive emerging counterculture and antiwar movement in Northern California. Originally composed for Darby Slick's band Great Society,<sup>28</sup> the Jefferson Airplane version was markedly louder and more aggressive than its original incarnation ("Somebody to Love" 2009). When Grace Slick, Darby's sister-in-law at the time, left the Great Society, she took the song with her when she joined Jefferson Airplane, and the song became an anthem for those hoping for social change. The period between the time when the song was written and recorded to when it achieved fiscal success coincides with some of the most massive troop deployments and increased bombing missions in the Vietnam War ("Somebody to Love" 2009). The forceful vocals and aggressive, psychedelic mood on Jefferson Airplane's "Somebody to Love" paralleled the mood of the Anti-Vietnam war movement, and the obtuse lyrics of the song only reinforce the overall fog that surrounded the scared, frustrated, and anxious antiwar protest movement.

Listeners hear Grace Slick's voice just a split second before the guitar and other instruments come in at the start of "Somebody to Love." Forceful lyrics "When the truth is found/ to be lies" immediately confront the listener - Slick's

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<sup>28</sup> There is evidence that Great Society played this song live but never formally recorded it prior to the Jefferson Airplane recording. Grace Slick was a member of Great Society.

unaccompanied voice is the introduction to the song (Jefferson Airplane 1967). The lyrics suggest that the truth about the Vietnam War had not yet been presented to the American public; this general belief was already circulating in universities and colleges across America. That this sentiment made its way to an aggressive rock song represented a breakthrough for the antiwar movement. This was not a cheerful song; the abstract, second-person lyrics and shimmering, distorted guitar alienated the older generation – the very one that was most supportive of the Vietnam War. The song mentions death twice – “when all the joy within you dies” and “when the garden flowers are dead” (Jefferson Airplane, 1967). Spiritual death (the joy within) and physical death (the flowers) mark the song as one that deals with death on different levels, which was not a characteristic of 1950s or early 1960s pop tunes. Certainly, a nation beginning to see mounting casualties from the Vietnam War would be more sensitive to the sudden appearance of death in popular music.

Death, along with themes of alienation and loneliness, symbolically mark a death in American culture – or perhaps an awakening – of the accepted way of living in America. The student movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Liberation Movement, and the Anti-Vietnam War movement frightened the majority of America, who resisted the changes that long repressed and subjugated Americans called for. “Somebody to Love” addresses dominant Anti-Vietnam War themes of battle lines being drawn at home between intra-American cultural ideologies:

When the truth is found,  
To be lies.

And all the joy  
Within you dies.

Don't you want somebody to love?  
Don't you need somebody to love?  
Wouldn't you love somebody to love?  
You better find somebody to love  
Love

When the garden flowers,  
Baby, are dead, yes.  
And your mind, your mind,  
Is so full of red.

Don't you want somebody to love?  
Don't you need somebody to love?  
Wouldn't you love somebody to love?  
You better find somebody to love

Your eyes, I say your eyes,  
May look like his.  
Yeah, but in your head, baby,  
I'm afraid you don't know where it is.  
(Jefferson Airplane 1967)

The barbed lyrics “Your eyes, I say your eyes may look like his/ but in your head, baby, I’m afraid you don’t know where it is” pointed out that American society during the Vietnam era was not unified, but rather in disagreement as to “where [the truth was]” (Jefferson Airplane, 1967). Arguments regarding civil rights, women’s rights, and the Vietnam War continued to be debated in the American public sphere in the late 1960s, but “Somebody to Love” argues that the truth does not come from “bread” (interpreted as wealth, power, and excess money), but rather from love.

The commonality between human beings becomes reduced to only shared physical characteristics; “Somebody to Love” underscores that what’s “in your head” is the important thing. In *Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse writes that

one of the primary characteristics desired in art points out what is true, even if it is an unpleasant truth, but it emphasizes that change comes from inside one's own "head" or consciousness:

Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness and drives of the men and women who change the world. The movement of the sixties tended toward a sweeping transformation of subjectivity, and nature, of sensibility, imagination, and reason. It opened a new vista of things, an ingression of the superstructure into the base. (1978, 33)

"Somebody to Love" exemplifies Marcuse's assertion that art changes one's consciousness in order to be a fulcrum for social change. The frenetic emotions in the song further illustrate what Marcuse called a "transformation of subjectivity"; the listener can simultaneously identify with the speaker as well as the person being addressed. The speaker directs her comments/diatribes against "you," which can be construed as an individual or a collective. The lyrics "all the joy within *you* dies" and "*your* mind is so full of bread" highlights the distress of the speaker toward this *you* (emphasis added, Jefferson Airplane 1967). The speaker's accusatory stance underscores an aggressiveness, which contrasts with the speaker's underlying pacifist message – "don't you want somebody to love" (Jefferson Airplane 1967). The song's message places listeners in a situation in which they do not want to identify with the "you" against whom the speaker directs her anger. By the end, the addressee has "tears running down [their] dress" and shut out from their friends, instead being treated "like a guest" (Jefferson Airplane 1967). In this closing image, we see an alienation of values ultimately separating friends and breaking the intimacy that the speaker may have enjoyed with the "you" in the song. This message of "friends" treating one

“like a guest” could reference the international opinion of the Vietnam War (the majority of America’s allies, such as the United Kingdom and France, did not support the war), but the song addresses a larger issue in American behavior; its values lay with consumerism and power, not empathy and love. The musical voice asks “Don’t you want somebody to love?” and insists that everybody “need[s] somebody to love” (Jefferson Airplane 1967). Grace Slick’s voice dips as the chorus continues, asking “wouldn’t you love somebody to love” before warning that we all “better find somebody to love” (Jefferson Airplane 1967).

The chorus at once alienates the listener while at the same time drawing her closer to the speaker. The direct, confrontational lyrics of the chorus posit questions, perhaps not directed to an individual listener; but the ambiguous “you” makes it easy for the listener to personally adopt the role of addressee or the speaker’s perspective. In this way, the song illustrates Marcuse’s ideas regarding art’s ability to contain for its audience a “transformation of subjectivity.” An angry listener, frustrated with any power-hungry behavior can take on the role of the singer as a means to express their vitriol over the tumult surrounding many issues in the late 1960s.

The sixties ethos of free love – love is all you need, give peace a chance – does not come, according to “Somebody to Love,” to a person because she wants it. One must actively find, want, and need this new ethos; one must go through a change of consciousness – which may include abandoning empty values such as obsession with wealth or “bread” – in order to view the “new vista of things” possible in American culture (Jefferson Airplane 1967; Marcuse 1978, 33). The

song offered a catharsis through its angry tone, and its transcendental liberation comes from the audience. The lyrics adeptly called “fate by its name, to demystify its force, to give the word to the victims – the power of recognition which gives the individual a modicum of freedom and fulfillment in the realm of unfreedom” (Marcuse *Aesthetic Dimension* 1978, 10). But the moment of triumph for the movement only lasts two minutes and fifty-five seconds; “in reality it is evil which triumphs, and there are only islands of good where one can find refuge for a brief time” (Marcuse *Aesthetic Dimension* 1978, 47). Songs like “Somebody to Love,” as well as Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young’s “Ohio” (1970), provide moments of escape to utopian islands of positive possibilities and vindication. For a brief moment, listeners occupy the landscape of the song – where the Establishment is directly challenged – instead of a reality of the antiwar movement, where challenging the Establishment was proving to be a long, hard road to travel.

A more potent “island of good” surfaces in Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young’s 1970 antiwar song “Ohio,” though it also confirms Marcuse’s theory that the beautiful, important image of liberation is never permanent. The 1970 shootings at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio proved a violent disruption in the Anti-Vietnam War movement; it mobilized the antiwar protestors who fell silent after President Nixon’s and the conservative Republican Party’s victory in the 1968 election. Ohio Governor James Rhodes, fearing that the protest against the United States’ decision to bomb Cambodia, scheduled for May 4, 1970, would turn violent, called in the National Guard (Fitraikis 2003). He declared a state of

emergency in the state, specifically targeting Kent State, where days of rebellious and angry behavior had persisted since President Nixon's April 30<sup>th</sup> announcement of his "Cambodian Incursion" (Fitraikis 2003). The National Guard, for reasons still not clearly known, opened fire on students at about 12:22 PM; four were killed and twelve wounded. None of the victims have ever been linked to violent or criminal behavior, and two of the victims had no prior involvement in any sort of protest activities – Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder were simply walking to class (Fitraikis 2003). The clash between nervous soldiers and angry protesters served as a violent reminder that the "second dimension" or a more ideal society, as portrayed in antiwar protest songs, was fleeting; the establishment – the government, the school – could not and would not tolerate much more dissention.

Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young (CSNY) recorded "Ohio" on May 21, 1970 as a protest to the Kent State killings. The photos of "Kent State Massacre" in *Life* magazine deeply affected songwriter Neil Young.<sup>29</sup> He later wrote in the liner notes of the band's album *Decade*:

It's still hard to believe I had to write this song. It's ironic that I capitalized on the death of these American students. Probably the most important lesson ever learned at an American place of learning.

David Crosby cried after this take. ("Ohio' Lyric Analysis" 2009)

Crosby clearly weeps as the song fades out; he repeatedly howls a refrain of "why?/ four/ how many more?" and his voice breaks because of its intensity (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1970). Crosby's battered vocal echoes the voices of

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<sup>29</sup> *LIFE* magazine's photos of the "Kent State Massacre" are available online at: <http://www.pophistorydig.com/?tag=kent-state-shootings>.



many battle-weary protesters of the era; as veterans returned and various protest marches – especially in the Civil Rights Movement – turned violent, people became angry, confused, and embittered at the protracted Vietnam War. The United States was imploding as it wearied of infighting as well as seemingly unending international squabbles.

The militant, four-four marching beat that introduces and sustains “Ohio” is not accidental; “Ohio” is CSNY’s call to arms. At a press conference the day before the shootings, Ohio Governor James Rhodes, exasperated with the antiwar demonstrators, shouted: “They’re the worst type of people that we harbor in America. I think that we’re up against the strongest, well-trained, militant, revolutionary group that has ever assembled in America” (Fitraikis 2003). Rhodes comments encouraged an “us against them” mentality in America, and his fear of the “militant revolutionary group” is evident in his comments. The Kent State shootings, along with Rhodes’ brusque remarks, spawned a domino effect of university protests and closings, and encouraged national debate as to what role the government should take in protests, what was lawful in situations similar to Kent State’s, as well an in-depth discussion as to where America was headed. “Ohio” met Governor Rhodes’s vitriol with a scathing comment on his handling of a peaceful protest, increasing the “us against them” mentality that Rhodes had already fostered among his constituents:

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,  
We're finally on our own.  
This summer I hear the drumming,  
Four dead in Ohio.

Gotta get down to it,  
Soldiers are cutting us down,  
Should have been done long ago.  
What if you knew her,  
And found her dead on the ground,  
How can you run when you know?  
(Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1970)

The first words immediately place the listener in a sonic tone of militant threat; the lyrics “tin soldiers and Nixon’s coming/ we’re finally on our own” are at once a warning and a relief – the movement is “finally” able to act on its own (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1970). Even though a threat – Nixon and his bombing campaign in Cambodia – is coming, the idea, or those who hold the idea of a peace in Indochina, are “finally” left alone after their moment with the “tin soldiers” (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1970). An alternate reading of these lyrics invites a similar understanding of the antiwar mindset of the time; both the tin soldiers and Nixon did come, and the antiwar movement is left alone to re-group and repair. However, the lyrics continue “this summer I hear the drumming” (metaphorically read as the bombing campaign that inspired the protest at Kent State); the Kent State shootings occurred in early May – the song hints that an even worse battle, heralded by the beating of war drums, is on its way (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1970). The confrontation of these issues “should have been done long ago”; perhaps finding “her dead on the ground” would not force the listener to “run when [they] knew” and rather make them realize that the war was not going well and that action, on their part, should be taken (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young 1970).

“Ohio” was recorded on May 21, 1970 (17 days after the Kent State

murders) and released three weeks later, in mid-June with the companion single or “B-side” titled “Find the Cost of Freedom.” The band rushed to release the single quickly so as to add to its emotional potency: the lines “four dead in Ohio” thus referred to fresh memories of an unprecedented and horrific event in American history (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young). Considering the expedience of the song’s release, the lyrics “gotta get down to it/ soldiers are cutting us down/ should’ve been done long ago” would have resonated with a still stunned American public. Or at least those who heard the song. Bill Halverston, the recording engineer for the song, remembers the song as a divisive and censored recording:

I do recall that AM wouldn't play it and it was very controversial that AM wouldn't play it and FM, the underground, all the FM stations started playing it... and it got up in the 30s [of the Billboard Chart] or so just with FM play and at that point FM was pretty underground and AM was the deal. But they tried to ban it. (qtd. “Ohio’ Lyrical Analysis” 2003)

Obviously, the song struck a nerve with some and found an eager audience with others. Neil Young biographer Jimmy McDonough wrote that the ten lines of “Ohio” captured “the fear, frustration, and anger felt by the youth across the country and set it to a lumbering D-modal death march that hammered home the dread” (“Ohio’ Lyrical Analysis”). The haunting lyric “what if you knew her and/found her dead on the ground/ how can you run when you know?” loomed over the heads of those involved in the antiwar movement as well as those who had dismissed it. Most of the older generation no doubt felt that these young people, in some way, got what they deserved, but the majority of youth in the nation were frightened, if not appalled.

Young intended the lyrics to focus the public's attention on the Pulitzer-winning photo, published in *LIFE* magazine, of the aftermath of the massacre. A young woman (Mary Ann Vecchio), arms outstretched and a look of anguish on her face, looks directly at the camera; a body (Jeffery Miller, dead) lies in front of her with blood seeping from the head (“Ohio’ Lyrical Analysis” 2003). This image jarred the public when it appeared in the papers, but Young’s direct reference to it – “What if you knew [them] and found [them] dead on the ground?/ How can you run when you know?” – only added fuel to the fire for those angered by the events at Kent State. Viewing the photographs of the Kent State shootings while listening to “Ohio” results in extraordinary audience reactions; the combination of the song’s disjointed narrative and the photojournalism remain a potent reminder of the horrors of when war comes “home.” The song’s lyrics echo a united ethos of the protest movement: citizens “running” away from the situation – of the war, of the government’s oppressive tactics toward antiwar protestors – “when [they knew it was wrong]” was unthinkable. The Anti-Vietnam War movement valued accountability, but the government refused to take responsibility for the carnage it was causing in the war *and* its own backyard.

The nation’s youth found it difficult to digest the undeniable knowledge that America’s own government authorized the cold-blooded murder of four innocent people on a college campus. CSNY member Graham Nash defended the band’s release of the song, describing it as an aural promise of devotion toward social activism toward a Marcuse-an second dimension. “We are going back to

keep awareness alive in the minds of all students...to be vigilant and ready to stand and be counted, and to make sure that the powers of the politicians do not take precedent over the right of lawful protest" ("Ohio' Lyrical Analysis" 2003). The band's defiant attitude manifested itself in the song's lyrics. Young boldly mentioned then President Nixon by name in the song, and he did not fear possible repercussions of challenging the President so publically. His and the band's anger was so strong that it could not be repressed by any threat of government intervention, and those who felt a kinship with the song only bolstered the movement ("Ohio' Lyrical Analysis" 2003). The few short weeks between the Kent State shootings and the release of CSNY's "Ohio" serve as a moment in history where art offered a glimmer of hope, a means of rallying together against a common evil, yet it was decidedly short-lived. Journalist Dorian Lynskey writes that the song was the final outcry from the battered protest movement: "Ohio' is arguably the most powerful topical song ever recorded: moving, memorable, and perfectly timed. But it turned out to signify the end of the era of protest songwriting which had begun with the folk revival rather than a thrilling rebirth" (2011, 160). In sum, "Ohio" was the last bombastic Anti-Vietnam War protest song that signaled the waning of an era, rather than its triumphant resurgence.

What happened at Kent State on May 4, 1970, and the CSNY song that captured the nation's reaction to the shootings reveal how essential the lyrics of antiwar songs are to a cultural understanding and national remembrance of the United States' struggle during the Anti-Vietnam War movement. Using

Marcuse's theory on art's ability to be historically important as a basis, we see how "Ohio" and Dylan's "Masters of War" inform listeners of the cold fact that "the image of liberation is fractured from reality. If art were to promise that at the end good would triumph over evil, such a promise would be refuted by the historical truth" (Marcuse *Aesthetic Dimension* 1978, 47). The illusion of the dream of a utopian society hinted at in "Somebody to Love" cannot be captured, even for a moment, in the raw and gutted lyrics of "Ohio." The illusion that power can be confronted does not withstand Dylan's angry lyrics in "Masters of War." The revolution, as it was, became forcefully silenced by the larger power it fought; the Kent State shootings effectively buried much of the energy of the antiwar movement, though gradual ground troop withdrawal from Vietnam followed the event.

Herbert Marcuse held the topic of social protest close to his heart. A refugee from Nazi Germany, Marcuse dedicated much of his career to finding ways to elevate western society beyond the money-driven and false needs it perpetuated; he believed in protest as a viable route toward a utopian ideal. His theories concerning the Anti-Vietnam War movement insisted on transcending the *Lebenswelt*<sup>30</sup> of the current social times and imagining a different social construct, where happiness and individual freedom were paramount over greed and commodities (Marcuse *Aesthetic Dimension* 1978, 23). The Anti-Vietnam War songs and lyrics reinforced his vision, sustaining his hope that art could

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<sup>30</sup> German, defined as "world of lived experience" or "life world" by Merriam-Webster. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lebenswelt>>.

create a *promesse de Bonheur*<sup>31</sup> where fleeting moments of a second-dimension of reality could be realized, offering humanity a glimpse of what *could be* (Jay 1996, 210-1). Marcuse never thought that the student opposition, the liberation movement, or the antiwar sentiment of the 1960s and early 1970s could ever be fully recognized in American society because it would never allow such endeavors toward liberation to survive. But he never lost faith that social protest could lead to some sort of change, and what remains of the Anti-Vietnam War protest movement – lyrics, songs, images – can never be erased or purged from American history or consciousness. Art captures the lasting promise of social protest. While the utopia of the second dimension never materialized, it was *seen*, and it will always exist, as a reference, for those who continue to believe in the illusion of liberation.

The social implications and interactions that music creates provides cultural historians with a unique glimpse into American history. When composing a historiography of the Vietnam War era in the United States, it is crucial to include music as part of the living fabric of history as our cultural history is revised, reviewed, and rewritten. Philosopher, sociologist and Marcuse contemporary Theodor Adorno wished to humanize sociology, noting that music is:

[A] living texture, a texture that is only the result of intersubjective social action. Music, therefore, is not merely portrayed as resulting from mechanical relationships. It has specific social factors. Rather, music itself is treated as a force that is world creating as well as world created, and because of

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<sup>31</sup> French, loosely translated “promise of beauty” but cultural implications of the phrase denote a meaning of an ideal heaven or a promised space of grace.

this can and must be assessed in terms of social...relations. (Jay 1996,145)

One of the most important social relationships we have in American culture is our shared national memory, shared history, and sharing these memories and the histories with others. To accept songs like “Masters of War,” “Somebody to Love,” and “Ohio” and their furious and funeral moods, into contemporary society, the songs must have some sort of innate, undeniable enjoyment that has become part of our “living texture.” Enjoyment of Anti-Vietnam War songs might not produce wild dancing or even quiet, studied contemplation; but the songs do invoke a serious joy, a pleasure found from looking deep within oneself emotionally as well as intellectually. The lyrics, of course, speak to our enjoyment, our nostalgia, and our relationship with our past and to our future. But these songs are more than what they mean to us individually; these songs make statements about who we were as a culture, who we are, and what we can become. Even if they express sentiments that supported the Vietnam War, which will be explored in the next chapter, these songs serve as much as mile markers for our journey ahead as they have served as historical landmarks for the journey undertaken thus far. Our love and enjoyment of them is perpetually present, lingering among us, allowing us to re-live or re-imagine a time and place in American culture where a different social and national ideology existed.



### CHAPTER III Who Was For the War?

Dividing the United States into two distinct camps of “for” and “against” the Vietnam War over-simplifies the myriad tensions, opinions, and ever-changing landscape of America during the 1960s and 1970s. The distinguishing factors that defined hard-line, pro-war “hawks” and their pacifist counterparts, the antiwar “doves,” changed as the war continued, and even some who claimed devout allegiance to one side during the Vietnam War have changed their political ideologies since the war ended. Pacifist, folksinger, and ardent Anti-Vietnam War protestor Joan Baez commented in 2005 that, during the turbulent 1960s, “one was either for or against the war” (Scorsese 2005). Ample historical documentation of the decade’s polarization underscores America’s obvious cultural turmoil over the political and social divides of the era. Baez’s comment misleads us, however, because most Americans did not see the political issue of the Vietnam War in purely black and white terms. Many American families, for example, certainly did not *want* to send their sons to fight in Asia, but they did believe in a certain form of patriotism that showed disdain for communism, and the idea of questioning the authority of their government or refusing to serve one’s country when duty called was unfathomable. Most Americans supported the Vietnam War, while others retained an indifference to the war until they saw their friends and families fail to return from the battle theater.

Though most Americans felt repulsed by the grim realities of war on the nightly news, they could turn the television off or avoid reading stories about the war in the papers. It was decidedly harder to ignore the war's returning veterans, many of whom suffered physical and emotional wounds. Even the returning soldiers expressed confusion over the war; some soldiers did not and have never wavered in their support for the war. Others returned from the combat zone disillusioned, mentally and physically wounded, and joined the antiwar movement in public displays of dissent. The participation of the group Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) in the massive protest march on April 15<sup>th</sup> of 1967 revealed that even former troops felt the war was a bad idea. The "Spring Mobilization to End the War" marked a noted departure of the traditional role of the American veteran; this was the first time veterans openly challenged and publically disagreed with the United States' decision to continue their policies in Vietnam. Images of young men burning their draft cards in rallies throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s empowered some citizens and rankled others. Moreover, many Americans had an ambivalent attitude toward the war; if they disliked the war, it was only because it dragged on and caused political and social uproar that disrupted their formerly tranquil existence. There appeared to be no clear "middle ground" in terms of being a patriotic citizen; one *had* to have an opinion on the war, and the clash of opposing views often took place in public forums and media outlets. Edward R. Murrow's 1953 challenge to Senator Joseph McCarthy's aggressive anti-communism on the CBS show *See It Now* serves a precursor to the way social arguments and television began to

intertwine in the Vietnam War era. William F. Buckley's 1973 interview with Black Panther Huey Newton on PBS's *Firing Line* recalls the American public's attempt to understand militant black power movement in a way that previously had not existed in American culture. These sorts of exchanges – on television and as part of public consumption and conversation – shook the country's grip on its national identity and cultural values.

The reason many Americans considered themselves “pro-war” stems directly from the various cultural changes that accompanied or occurred during the Vietnam War era. The media's conservative coverage of the socialist-sympathetic New Left, the Civil Rights Movement, hippies, protesters, rock 'n roll music, sexual freedom, and the general disregard for authority disturbed America's previously serene lifestyle and contradicted the cultural ideologies they held. The private world of the average American now began to see dissent displayed in public venues: bumper stickers became popular, social issues such as racism, sexism, and women's issues crept into popular television shows like *Laugh In*, *The Jeffersons*, *All in the Family*, *Sanford and Son*, *Good Times*, and *Maude*.

The divisiveness in American culture during the Vietnam War era revealed itself in 1967, when the campy western show *Bonanza!* vied with the subversive *Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* as the most watched television show in 1967 (Muldar 2003). *The* young, popular culture tome of the United States – *Rolling Stone* magazine – first appeared in November of 1967, the same year Civil Rights leader and activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. publically spoke out against

the war. In sum, the Vietnam War era in America challenged previously held ideas of the United States' global reach, national and cultural identity, and political agenda. Many Americans fought against the changes in their society; they clung to their patriotic ideologies and outwardly labeled those who disagreed with them as "un-American" or "communist." The majority of Americans did *not* speak out against the Vietnam War, nor did the majority of Americans listen to antiwar music; but this does not automatically mean that the majority of Americans supported the war.

By simply resisting changes to their cultural landscape, many Americans remained complicit in America's determination to hold on to an antiquated national identity. Acquiescence to dubious foreign policy decisions and opposition to social change appears to be, retroactively, tacit support of Vietnam War, at least from the perspective of a 21<sup>st</sup> writer. As political philosopher Hannah Arendt points out in her 1963 work *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, a person standing idly by while atrocities are committed can be accused of a certain level of culpability for those crimes. From a 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, albeit a perspective where the *Pentagon Papers* are old news and President Nixon has always been a crook, it is hard for this author to believe that more Americans did not protest the war. Perhaps this perspective forgets that those who were unequivocally *for* the war were quite vocal, and felt they spoke for those who were tired of the social and political strife in the United States. Some of them, just like their antiwar counterparts, made pro-war music because they knew it would sell; Nixon's infamous "silent majority" existed long before

he coined the phrase, and they bought music too. There was and always will be a pro-war music market in American culture, largely due to the perpetuation of the hegemonic, aggressive national identity (discussed earlier in “America Moves Toward Vietnam, In Song”). To paraphrase William Applebaum Williams, “[War] is as American as apple pie.”<sup>32</sup> The pro-war faction of American culture can be summed up in a recent skit analyzing the heated 2012 Presidential race on the comedic-political show *The Colbert Report*.<sup>33</sup> Host and conservative parody-pundit Stephen Colbert drank a Crystal Pepsi, a product discontinued in 1992, and proclaimed that it “tastes like 20 years ago, just like the GOP platform.” Issues that divide the conservatives and liberals show similarities with the divisive Vietnam War era, particularly in the cultural wars – civil rights are still an issue, as is institutionalized racism, women’s rights, and war. What one must remember about Anti-Vietnam War era music is that its ethos had a foil in Pro-Vietnam War music and Pro-Vietnam War audiences. These pro-Vietnam War “hawks” used their Cold War-era patriotic beliefs and their music to convey a message of unwavering support of the United States they believed in.

***We must stop communism in that land, or freedom will start slipping thorough our hands.***  
**Johnny Wright, 1970; “Hello Vietnam”**

Following one of Hixon’s main arguments in *The Myth of American*

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<sup>32</sup> Original quote: “Empire is as American as apple pie.” (1968) qtd. Lockhard, C.A. (1994). Head-on: the Vietnam War in Vietnamese, American, and world history. *Journal of world history*, 5, 2. 244.

<sup>33</sup> The episode originally aired on September 9, 2012, on Comedy Central.

*Diplomacy*, those who supported the Vietnam War most likely believed wholeheartedly in the cause because they still clung to Cold War memories and propaganda. The Pro-Vietnam War constituency believed they had reason to mistrust the Communist dictatorships in Russia and China, the two countries which competed with the United States for global power in the 1960s and 1970s. These looming specters of Communism raced the U.S. for international innovation in the production of nuclear warheads. The realization of nuclear weapons capabilities in World War II resulted in worldwide paranoia over nuclear war. Furthermore, these countries' dismissal of U.S.-led sanctions concerning nuclear weapons frustrated and alienated many Americans. The United States felt comfortable with their country having nuclear weapons and could not understand that other countries did not want to divulge information regarding their own nuclear weaponry programs. The accusations against the evil motives of communism were not, however, completely unfounded. Mao Tse-Tung in China perpetrated truly despicable acts against an entire nation, under the guise of communism, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, the 1961's Cuban Missile Crisis rattled the United States' government; Robert McNamara famously kept a plaque marking each day of the event on his desk to remind him how close the U.S. once came to nuclear war (Morris 2003). During the Vietnam War the United States government, at least at the beginning of the war, primarily consisted of men holding onto beliefs that included the idea that Communism was the number one threat to the United States.

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<sup>34</sup> Ref: Chang, J. and Halliday, J. (2006). *Mao: the unknown story*. Anchor. 864 pgs.

President Lyndon Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, were (initially) casebook examples of the pejorative term for anticommunist hardliners: hawks. Like hawks, these two men swooped about a nation tearing itself apart in agony, and Johnson, a President with promise and earnest ideas for domestic change and a new “Great Society,” ultimately disgraced the Democratic party and slipped out of the White House a defeated man.<sup>35</sup> McNamara, eventually pushed aside by Johnson due to his growing dislike of the war, became synonymous with the image of an evil puppeteer. His brilliant mind became diabolical during the initial stages of the war, leading to actions and making decisions that he would have to apologize for and defend himself against for the rest of his life. But these men were not incarnations of pure malignance. Their policies and actions regarding Vietnam were reckless, but they did not act out of spite. Rather, these men acted out of a sense of patriotism, and their sense of duty and loyalty, however misguided and despicable, had at its core an unwavering patriotic sincerity stemming from an ingrained sense of the United States’ national and cultural identity.

The decades and presidential administrations following the Vietnam War worked to restore Johnson and McNamara’s Cold War-infused patriotism to the

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<sup>35</sup> “Johnson bottomed out in the polls with a 35 percent approval rating in early August 1968. His base of liberal supporters, upset with his escalation of U.S. forces in Vietnam, turned against him, as did conservatives who were upset with his rampant spending on the Great Society. His sagging ratings, combined with his concerns about his health, led to Johnson’s stunning declaration at the end of a March 31, 1968 speech: ‘I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president.’”

Weinstein, A. (2011). “5 Presidents With the Biggest Approval Rating Declines.” Web. 18 Dec. 2012. <<http://listosaur.com/politics/5-presidents-with-the-biggest-approval-rating-declines.html>>

American cultural lexicon. During the 1980s and 1990s, Vietnam received a thorough makeover by the American government, notably in the Reagan and G.H.W. Bush presidencies, both of which rendered the war itself as a good and well-intentioned effort. Culturally, according to President Reagan in 1980, the war had left a damning legacy that the President called the “Vietnam Syndrome”; this “syndrome” resulted from America’s national confusion over the war and its collective cultural guilt regarding the war’s casualties. Reagan juxtaposed these casualties and confusion against a malicious Communist foe that always had a plan to humiliate the United States’ efforts of establishing a democracy in Vietnam:

For too long, we have lived with the “Vietnam Syndrome.” [The North Vietnamese] had a plan. It was to win in the field of propaganda here in America what they could not win on the field of battle in Vietnam. As the years dragged on, we were told that peace would come if we would simply stop interfering and go home. It is time we recognized that ours was, in truth, a noble cause [...] But let’s do a better job of exporting Americanism. Let’s meet our responsibility to keep the peace at the same time we maintain without compromise our principles and ideals. (Reagan 1980)

The national identity that the President described at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Convention in Chicago espoused a regeneration of what America was like before the “noble cause” of the Vietnam War. He accused America of “sleepwalking” in his speech to the veterans, imploring that with their help, the United States could “snap out of” the general malaise that the Vietnam War’s shadow cast on the American public and, ultimately, beat the U.S.S.R. in the Cold War arm’s race (Reagan 1980). Though President Reagan framed his speech to include an American agenda for “keep[ing the world’s] peace,” the speech



follows the same hawkish sort of patriotic rhetoric that drove McNamara and President Johnson, thus ushering a resurgence of American pride in its war-time patriotism.

Presidents Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush would continue to espouse the reasoning of 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural historicists; they spoke of the Vietnam War as a “noble cause” and said that the nation must move past the war in order for U.S. to progress. What a contemporary historicist can glean is that this type of patriotism, present in the rhetoric of both Presidents Reagan and Johnson, relates directly to the perspective of America’s national identity as an aggressive force pre-destined to spread democracy. This is the same sort of patriotism led the United States into the Vietnam War and, arguably, all of America’s subsequent wars. Historian Walter Hixson considers this type of national patriotic identification as the driving force behind America’s involvement in the Vietnam War: “the patriotic revival that ensued [when at war] revived cultural hegemony while marginalizing domestic reformers and peace internationalists in concert with demonization of the ‘liberal sixties’” (Hixson 2008, 36). McNamara and Johnson believed in a version of America – for them, the country remained a beacon of liberty – worth defending against the evils of Communism and they did it. They saw their duty as loving and honoring America to the best of their abilities and acted accordingly.

Still, it is difficult to place Johnson or McNamara in any sort of historical perspective that argues that they acted out of love of country. Their actions during the Vietnam War were often cold and heartless, but their patriotism is

worth exploring due to their inability, if not their unwillingness, to compromise their beliefs. Johnson's presidential career suffered because of the antiwar movement; the constant presence of protesters at the White House made him to worry for his family's safety, and the pressure of the antiwar movement pushed him to make weak decisions regarding Vietnam. Indeed, historian Melvin Small believes that:

As Johnson came to make his decision to deescalate and quit the presidency in late March of 1968, he probably did so in anticipation of a respite from incessant criticism and recurrent harassment [from the antiwar movement]. (Small 2000)

While the taunts that Johnson endured during his presidency were at times unnecessary and cruel, these taunts came from a patriotism not unlike that which Johnson advocated. The antiwar protest movement represented an emerging voice of a different sort of patriotism, one that was not greater than or lesser than the one which blossomed under the Cold War, but one which was new and curious, dissatisfied, angry, and impassioned all at once. Lyrics of popular music echoed the disillusionment felt by the antiwar movement, underscoring the national frustration at the "Establishment" and unknowingly leaving an aural legacy for future generations, thereby giving them a better understanding of the turbulent time. Pro-war songs, however, reflected the strong patriotic sentiments of what President Richard Nixon would eventually call "the Silent Majority," and these pro-war songs' lyrics, just as vehement about their causes and beliefs as those from the antiwar camp, defended their expression of patriotic protest, but *for* the war. As the war limped on, the

antiwar movement splintered into several factions, which ultimately led to its downfall; but its roots were firmly planted in the Anti-Vietnam War ground, which was also American soil.

Pro-war songs followed the model of patriotism that President Johnson and Robert McNamara embodied. Pro-war lyrics emphasized an unquestioning acceptance of the actions of the United States; the actions of the country could always be justified, and, if not, the pro-war faction would never dare question the pure democratic motives of the United States government. Common threads of pro-war music – and “hawkish” patriotism – include:

[T]he idea that the United States is fighting for the freedom of those oppressed in South Vietnam against a communist system that was being forced upon them [...] Nashville dutifully parroted the government rationale with songs like Dave Dudley’s “What We’re Fighting For” and Johnny Wright’s “Hello Vietnam,” which warns that communism must be kept from violating America’s borders. (Andressen 2003, 110-1)

The evils of communism, along with a healthy dose of lyrical ire directed at antiwar protest songs, dominated the pro-war songs produced in the United States during the Vietnam War era. Ballads that glorified soldiers – “The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley” and “The Ballad of the Green Berets,” and “Wish You Were Here, Buddy,” to name a few – were popular in the pro-war song catalogue. The fact that the majority of pro-war song lyrics belonged in the country music genre is an important comment on American class values; the Bible belt and conservative South remained steadfast in their support of the war effort and the soldiers. Pro-war song lyrics elevated America and denigrated any dissent toward their particular patriotic beliefs. Audiences who shared more hawkish patriotic convictions proudly sang along in agreement.

President Lyndon Johnson, rarely regarded as a sympathetic character with respect to his role as an architect of the Vietnam War, agreed with the pro-war songwriters in that he believed in a form of patriotism that placed America on a pedestal. Johnson bought into the myth that viewed America as a beacon of light and hope for the rest of the world. He was not significantly any more hawkish or dovish than his advisors, and, during the war, “the President was increasingly concerned about the situation in Vietnam. [He] was more confident of what *Americans* could do” (Halberstam 1993, 574). Johnson’s fatal patriotic flaw was that he believed in America to a fault, which made him unwilling to accept the blows dealt to his patriotic ideals when it became apparent that the war was not going to be the quick success that he had initially believed. His Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, dutifully attempted to maintain optimism about the war’s progress when Johnson demanded it. However, by the time CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite (“the most trusted man in America”)<sup>36</sup> publically pronounced the war a “stalemate” on his February 27, 1968 broadcast<sup>37</sup>, Johnson was already aware of the low probability of success regarding the seemingly endless Vietnam War.

McNamara, the former head of Ford Motor Company and a Harvard scholar, shared Johnson’s unflinching loyalty in the power of America. Historian and journalist David Halberstam describes McNamara as having “too much

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<sup>36</sup> Cronkite’s title as “the most respected man in America” is generally taken as common knowledge, but in case contemporary audiences aren’t familiar with Cronkite, a reference is in order:

<http://www.pbs.org/weta/reportingamericaatwar/reporters/cronkite/>.

<sup>37</sup> *Reporting Vietnam: part one: American journalism 1959-1969* (1998), pp. 581-582.

loyalty, the corporate-mentality loyalty to the office instead of himself,” and goes on to paint McNamara as the embodiment of “the virtues Americans have always respected, hard work, self-sacrifice, decency...” (Halbertstam 1993, 219). Johnson admired these virtues in McNamara, and the men shared the idea that, if one worked hard enough, *in America*, anything was possible. As the war wound into an impossible knot, McNamara, undoubtedly in a better position than Johnson to admit defeat in Vietnam, suffered a blow to his and Johnson’s shared patriotic belief in an infallible America:

To say that something could not or would not work or that it was beyond the reach of the most powerful nation in the world was to admit not just human frailty, but to fail in a very special and almost terrible way. McNamara hated failure; he had conquered it all his life... he was very much a part of that era [...] In discussing Vietnam, he was capable of telling aides there was something worse than physical enslavement, that there was enslavement of the mind the ways the Communists practiced it. (Halbertstam 1993, 514)

McNamara’s anti-communist rhetoric with his aides compliments Johnson’s rhetoric on communism, which hinged on the popular threat of a communist takeover of the world. The popular “domino theory” in American political circles postulated that if one country succumbed to communism, others would surely follow. Insidious and viral, communism fueled national paranoia, which was only bolstered by Johnson’s comment that if the US allowed “Vietnam to fall, tomorrow we’ll be fighting in Hawaii, and next week in San Francisco” (Kelly 2010). In his critique of McNamara’s fear of failure, Halbertstam notes that failure represented an admitted weakness “in a very special and terrible way”; McNamara could not accept failure, and his actions regarding Vietnam often reflected his efforts to evade the possibility of failure (1993, 514). Furthermore,

both McNamara and Johnson shared a common bond in that neither man wanted to be perceived as weak. Johnson, according to Halbertstam, “had always been haunted by the idea that he would be judged as being insufficiently manly for the job, that he lacked courage for the job” (Halbertstam 1993, 531). Johnson entered the presidency “with a deep and unquestioning of commitment to the posture of staunch anticommunism, as well as to presidential supremacy in foreign affairs” (Logevall 1999, 76). Johnson feared being a president who “lost” a war, and so he scrambled to find people to assist him in making big decisions about it. His cabinet, inherited from President John F. Kennedy, consisted of an intimidating cadre of the “best and the brightest wise men,” made up of Ivy League elites who threatened Johnson’s already fragile ego. Johnson had liberal friends from whom he sought advice, and he viewed these friends as good Democrats, good people “committed to the good things in life, to decency and human values. They were for civil rights and for peace... they were good men, urbane, modern, if they were for a war, it would be a good war” (Halbertstam 1993, xi). Johnson, like McNamara, was capable of reasonable, rational thoughts, but when it came to Vietnam, both men preferred not to be wrong, and to be supported in their views on the war.

McNamara had an advantage that Johnson did not, however; he could lose power and prestige if his views fell out of favor, but the ultimate disgrace of a failed war would fall on the shoulders of the man with the most responsibility –

the President. The former Ford genius<sup>38</sup> struggled with two conflicting views of patriotism; as the war dragged on, McNamara's undying loyalty to his country waivered, at least in terms of the traditional patriotic sense. Instead of being on the bandwagon and not caring about where the wagon was going, McNamara began to express doubts about the war effort, and it "might not have been coincidental that [McNamara], who revealed his long-developing opposition to the Vietnam policy ten days after the [October 21 Pentagon antiwar demonstration], turned in his resignation" (Small 2000). McNamara's patriotism became more personally honest and built on opinions and beliefs that went beyond a simplistic blind faith:

McNamara began to be increasingly appalled by the war itself, what we were doing with our power, the pain inflicted on the civilians. He paid particular attention to stories about the destruction caused by the bombing... He was an intriguing man in this period; almost as if there were a split personality caught between two loyalties, and more, caught between two eras (Halbertstam 1993, 632).

McNamara never fully voiced his growing antiwar sentiment, and he has since been criticized for that reserve, though Halbertstam does make mention of how McNamara's role as "something of a dissenter," during meetings on Vietnam strategy caused him a great deal of stress (1993, 631). The Defense Secretary was "a dissenter operating under considerable limits" (1993, 631). If McNamara came out too strong in his burgeoning dovish tendencies, he would be ridiculed and his power in Washington would be drastically reduced. Johnson continued to rail against communism, declaring in one meeting: "Screw this neutrality, we

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<sup>38</sup> One of Robert S. McNamara's most notable achievements was his respected time as President of Ford Motor Company (1960).

ain't going to do business with the communists... I'm pro-American and I'm taking over" (Logevall 1999, 107). The President, and the majority of the American public, found it difficult to see McNamara's changing sense of patriotism. McNamara's public image as the evil mastermind behind the war made him an unlikely candidate to admit that America made mistakes in Vietnam and that it was not an impervious, invulnerable global superpower.

Perhaps Johnson's greatest test in his patriotic faith involved his belief in his own American dream: that a humble Texan could make it to the Oval Office and make a difference. When it began to falter, his power, which he directly linked to America's global power, was in jeopardy:

He was beginning to wrestle with himself, aware of what escalation might do to his domestic programs, wary of the military's promises, knowing that it might be easier to start than to finish, that it was his record and his Presidency which were at stake, and aware also of the charge that might be made against him if things went sour – that he was soft, and that he had lost a country (Halbertstam 1993, 507).

Johnson and McNamara seemingly knew that they were fighting a losing battle at several key moments during the war. Most telling is Halbertstam's observation that "McNamara's access [to Johnson in 1965] was in direct proportion to his optimism; as he became more pessimistic, the President became reluctant to see him alone" (1993, 632). While McNamara dutifully went to see Johnson regularly, Johnson slowly started to remove McNamara from his role as a trusted advisor. No doubt McNamara felt relieved to have his involvement lessened. Both men were going through some soul searching, and both men saw their long-held beliefs in traditional patriotism challenged. The "loss" of China and a "liberated" Europe adversely affected the American psyche, as did the abysmal



outcome of America's involvement with Korea. These blows were great to both McNamara and Johnson's ideas of America's power, but to "lose" on their own watch? Neither man could accept that within the perspective of their Cold War "Red"-colored lens of patriotism. Each simply had to change the way they thought of America. Their actions, along with their increasingly downtrodden view of the foreseeable progress or victory in Vietnam, spoke for them.

As the Vietnam War progressed, American unease replaced confidence in the country's involvement; support dwindled. Historian Melvin Small observes that the weeks following the Tet Offensive (January 30, 1968) marked "the first time more than 50 percent of those polled responded affirmatively to the [question as to whether or not Vietnam was a mistake]" (Small 2002, 92). The war began to polarize the nation further, becoming "the central fact in the life of an entire generation. The country appeared to be falling apart and war was the main cause" (Small 2002, 92). The notion that America was "falling apart" may be a bit rash, however; many Americans now rallied behind the antiwar movement, making themselves visible through public demonstrations and protests. These Americans had a commitment to a common goal, which, in the words of political philosopher Charles Taylor, causes "a special sense of bonding among the people working together. This is perhaps the point at which most contemporary democracies *threaten* to fall apart" (emphasis added, 2002, 120). Taylor argues that what may appear to be a destructive action may in fact be a rebirth. This bonding principle of people working together speaks volumes; the common goal of this sort of patriotism was, at that point in time, seminal to

American democracy. It appeared unpatriotic and destructive, however, because so many archaic Cold War patriotic sentiments worked against it. Because of this fear, the American government had difficulty in accepting a new form of patriotism that didn't automatically label communism an apocalyptic evil. The Johnson administration's aggressive hostility toward the antiwar movement only underscored how much panic this brassy and defiant new form of American patriotism caused them.

Referring to the October 1967 March on the Pentagon, Melvin Small notes in his book *Antiwarriors*: "Support Our GI's, Bring Them Home Now!" was noticeably "the official slogan seen on placards and banners.... The slogan emphasized that antiwar protestors did not oppose the soldiers in Vietnam, only the people who had sent them there" (Small 2002, 76). This modification in the antiwar protester's rhetoric may have been a direct response to the Johnson administration's counter attacks against the antiwar movement, such as media manipulation and direct media censorship. Earlier that year, Johnson and his advisors developed propaganda "offensives" in the hope that the President's Vietnam policies would be heard over the din of protest rhetoric. Johnson still bought into his Cold War-era patriotism, believing the dissenting mobs cropping up across the country were hippies and bums with communist beliefs, even though "90 percent or more of all participants at major mass demonstrations were peaceful dissenters who supported their political system" (Small 2002, 27). In a move designed to override the protester's rhetoric, the Johnson administration "helped organize a 'Support our Boys in Vietnam' parade that

drew 70,000 participants on May 13 [1967] in New York” (Small 2002, 66). While definitely a parade worth having, the event marked Johnson’s public attempt to quell the antiwar movement’s momentum. Several advertisements heralded the “Support Our Boys” parade, though “one ad promoting the parade juxtaposed scruffy demonstrators with dead American servicemen,” became an expected, if not potent, visual argument against the antiwar demonstrators (Small 2002, 88).

The Johnson Administration’s rhetoric always depicted demonstrators in stereotypical, derisive ways. He manipulated the media so that protesters’ less desirable traits, such as their unkempt appearance, was emphasized in contrast to their messages of antiwar and goodwill. What the protestors had to say could never match the sacrifice of the true image of patriotism: the dead American servicemen who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and democracy. Those involved in the 1967 March on the Pentagon brandished posters with the slogan “Support Our GI’s, Bring Them Home Now!” in their continued defiance of the Johnson administration’s efforts to quash their burgeoning patriotism. Their efforts worked, obviously, when “some of Johnson’s advisors [began] to worry about how long they could carry on the war before a majority of the population turned against it” (Small 2002, 66).

Many of Johnson’s advisors believed that the antiwar movement and its new brand of patriotism had grown beyond their means to contain it, and thus the March on the Pentagon is often seen as a breaking point for Johnson. Already, these antiwar protestors and their new patriotism, their “New Left” politics,

affected Johnson's views on American foreign policy. On college campuses, Johnson could take the dissent, but now "the sons and daughters of the upper-middle and upper classes, the children of the establishment, became radicals or hippies or both, [and] their parents paid attention" (Small 2002, 88). The sheer size of the antiwar movement was daunting, but the March on the Pentagon pushed the Johnson Administration closer to the verge of political collapse, ultimately influencing his decision not to run for reelection:

Ramsey Clark, Lyndon Johnson's Attorney General, considered the October 21-22 rally and Pentagon siege 'the moment that the fever broke in the whole antiwar movement.' The rally and siege set in motion a series of events that led to the president's speech the following March in which he rejected further escalation and announced that he would not be a candidate for reelection. (Small 2002, 75)

This "fever" of the antiwar movement had been festering on Johnson's watch for a while. American courts steadily undermined the Selective Service draft; the courts "became increasingly lenient [during the Vietnam era] by broadening the definition [of "conscientious objector (CO) status"] to include not only religious beliefs but also moral beliefs (Small 2002, 63). Also, the criminalization of antiwar protesters did not have the desired effect; antiwar activist David Harris scoffed that his twenty-month prison sentence for draft resistance did little to dampen his spirit: "I find no more honorable position in modern America than that of a criminal" (qtd. Small 2002, 63). At the time of his arrest, Harris's flippant attitude toward authority was viewed as dangerous, yet the "outlaw" image cultivated by the Pro-Vietnam War folks was eerily similar; one of the biggest differences between the pro- and antiwar factions was the cultural guilt placed on those who spoke against the majority opinion. The lasting shame

placed on Vietnam “draft dodgers” is perhaps the most perplexing spin placed on the antiwar patriots, but how, many wondered, is it patriotic to refuse to serve your own country? Herein lies the argument of these new patriots – they cannot serve a country whose moral (and religious) conscious was incongruent with their own. This did not mean that they did not support, as Small notes, America as a collective; but the discrepancy stemmed from a disagreement over what a country can ask its free citizens to do. In this new form of patriotism, citizens could not be asked to serve in a war that perpetuated a belief system that undermined many of the values in which they fervently believed.

Pro-Vietnam War music espoused values that many Americans shared. The lyrics in these songs expressed ideas that Hixson and Zinn criticize; these lyrics perpetuate a hegemonic, manly, and aggressive discourse that reflects pro-war songwriters ties to deep-rooted American principles. The sense of patriotism these lyricists wrote about resembles that of President Johnson; America operated a war-driven society that considered itself a beacon of liberty and an ambassador for global democracy. Pro-Vietnam War sentiment toward the antiwar movement finds its ethos in a line from one of the greatest pro-war songs from the Vietnam War era, Merle Haggard’s “Fightin’ Side of Me” (1970): “If you don’t love it, leave it.” The Pro-Vietnam War songwriters saw patriotism, much like Johnson and McNamara, in absolute, black and white terms; America – love it or leave it!

*If you don't love it, leave it.*

**Merle Haggard, 1969; “Fightin’ Side of Me”**

Not all musicians shared the “hippie” aesthetic of the Vietnam War era in the United States. Activist and antiwar artists emphasized an insatiable cultural desire to push the United States toward a peaceful exit from the Vietnam War through heightened social awareness and social experimentation. But many American songwriters, artists, filmmakers, and television personalities pushed for an agenda that stood by whatever decision America made in Vietnam, no matter how controversial or morally unsound in the view of many. Several singers and songwriters supported a more hawkish view of American patriotism through song lyrics that expressed overt contempt for draft dodgers, protesters, hippies, and anyone who attacked the previously established norms of the United States’ national identity when at war. Dutifully following the blueprint of previous pro-war songs, the Vietnam War era songs also focused on the bravery of the soldiers fighting for to liberate a country from evil; the songs maintained the notion that the United States was again going “Over there!” “The Yanks are comin’!” to Vietnam in its usual role as a “beacon of liberty,” just as the country had done many times before. Furthermore, these new “Patriotic Diggers” and “Yankee Doodles” were usually represented by musicians whose public persona identified them with the American cultural trope of the cavalier patriot, an iconic idea that leaned heavily on historical representations of outlaws who defied critics with headstrong and confident dedication to “take the law in [their] hands.”

The majority of Pro-Vietnam War songs came from the country music scene; Merle Haggard's "Fightin' Side of Me" (1970) and "Okie From Muskogee" (1969), Johnny Wright's "Goodbye My Darling, Hello Vietnam" (1964). Even Johnny Cash composed the patriotic (but not necessarily pro-war) "Ballad of Ira Hayes,"<sup>39</sup> which utilized country music's use of plain-spoken narratives about traditional American cultural values. Sergeant Barry Sadler's "Battle of the Green Berets" (1968) is one of the few songs representing a soldier rather than a blue-collar cowboy. Sadler exploits the expected cultural tropes of the brave soldier in public performances, but instead of a cowboy hat, Sadler sang in full uniform on television. Pro-Vietnam War music was country music, most often associated with rural and blue collar Americans, and in this way was a contrast with folk and rock music, which is often identified with members of the counter-culture movements, flower children, and hippies. Country musicians attacked the ideologies espoused by the counter-culture, which, to them, meant any type of cultural activity that they disagreed with. Draft-dodging, long hair, communist sympathies, and anything less than steadfast loyalty to the United States was roundly vilified. Rarely did Pro-Vietnam War songs offer any more of a "solution" to the problems the war caused than Anti-Vietnam War songs did, though pro-war songs often preferred to keep the United States the way it

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<sup>39</sup> Ira Hayes was a Pima Indian enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in World War II. He, along with five other soldiers, was featured in a photo of the group raising a flag over Iwo Jima. The iconic image garnered Hayes fame, but after his honorable discharge from the Marine Corps Hayes descended into alcoholism. On January 24, 1955, after a night of drinking, Hayes was found dead from exposure and alcohol poisoning. He was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. Cf.: [http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/native\\_american\\_veterans/ira\\_hayes.html](http://www.californiaindianeducation.org/native_american_veterans/ira_hayes.html).

(never) was instead of changing. The America and sense of patriotism behind Pro-Vietnam War songs echoes current political and social debates; lately, America has been accused of losing its morals, values, and traditions that it manifested in the 1950s and late 1940s. The idyllic America of *Leave it to Beaver* remains a dream deferred from the 1960s to today, yet songs written in favor of the Vietnam War – and in favor of wars today – continue a dialogue of aggressive and fervent allegiance to a vision of America that was permanently altered by the antiwar movement.

Pro-Vietnam War songs matched the anger and passion of the antiwar songs as the Vietnam War progressed, and country musicians enjoyed a larger audience than rock and folk musicians at the time. The generally clean genre – there were several “outlaw” artists, like Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard – was the lucky benefactor of several popular nationally syndicated radio and television shows in the United States. Variety shows that featured musical performances, like *The Grand Ole Opry*, *Hee Haw*, the *Porter Wagoner Show*, and the *Jimmy Dean Show*, caught America’s attention during the 1960s, and many of the songs crossed the genres of both popular and country music. Country music about the Vietnam War was less politically critical than its rock and folk counterparts, but it did make statements that reinforced patriotic and political ideologies embraced by conservatives and hawks:

By the mid-1960s, when the Vietnam War became a critical issue, country music had begun to reach a wider audience with its almost unanimous pro-war message, thus making it a an important part of the musical dialogue that debated the legitimacy of the war. This was in large part a reaction to the rising tide of dissent against the war. Until “agitators and hippies started stirring things up,” country performers mostly refrained from putting



political views in their music... If a country song touched on anything political, it usually contained a sanguine view. (Andressen 2003, 105-6)

The soft politics of country music allowed artists to criticize those who were “stirring things up” in the United States.

One of the more vocal critics of the “agitators” was country star Merle Haggard, whose 1969 songs “Fightin’ Side of Me” and “Okie from Muskogee,” featured patriotic sentiments that reinforced the political rhetoric coming out of both the Johnson and Nixon White Houses. One veteran, whose service dates are unknown, suggests that Haggard’s “distinctly patriotic music played well in Vietnam, where troops regarded it as ‘their kind of music’ because they agreed with the message, especially the denunciation of war protestors in ‘The Fightin’ Side of Me’” (Vietnam Veteran Gene Leroy qtd. Andressen 2003, 109). In “Fightin’ Side of Me,” the song’s narrator dismisses those “gripin’ ‘bout the way things ought to be” and declares that these naysayers are “running down [his] way of life” (Haggard 1969). This declaration likely resonated with many returning veterans, who generally came from blue-collar backgrounds where angry, cavalier forms of patriotism strongly responded to antiwar sentiments. “Fightin’ Side of Me” gives a lyrical ultimatum to these undesirable dissenters – “If you don’t love it, leave it.” This phrase underscores the attitude that many Americans had for the antiwar protesters. As Haggard sings;

Runnin' down the way of life,  
Our fightin' men have fought and died to keep.  
If you don't love it, leave it:  
Let this song I'm singin' be a warnin'.  
If you're runnin' down my country, man,  
You're walkin' on the fightin' side of me.  
(Haggard 1969)

These lyrics stress that dissent will not be tolerated and could result in a physically violent altercation. The narrator explicitly “warns” the antiwar faction that pro-war folks will fight those who disagree with them (Haggard 1969). One can surmise that the song revolves around an underlying “[rage] against war protestors” and the narrator “worries that if criticism of the war continues unabated, American democracy may be doomed” (Andressen 2003, 106-7). The reiteration of the pro-Vietnam War themes such as the domino theory, anger at protestors, and the “warning” that questioning the reasoning behind the Vietnam War would bring on “the fightin’ side” of pro-Vietnam War supporters no doubt boosted the morale of troops listening in Vietnam (i.e. “in country”). The overall message of the song promotes the retaliation against any war sentiment that did not align itself with the established patriotic ideology of the United States. Historian Lee Andressen points out that the main “flaw in the reasoning behind this song is that it never does explain how suppressing freedom of speech will preserve freedom,” but reasoning doesn’t appear to be an essential part of most pro-war songs, which often relied more heavily on emotional appeals (2003, 107).

Haggard promoted this sentimental pro-war support a year before “Fightin’ Side of Me” in his middle-America paean “Okie from Muskogee.” The song takes a less aggressive stance against dissent concerning the Vietnam War and instead perpetuates the political ideology and patriotism that Presidents Johnson and Nixon, as well as pro-war hawks, deemed valuable. The song’s opening lyrics detail a small, idyllic American town where people “like livin’ right

and bein' free" (Haggard 1969). The good folks of Muskogee proudly "wave Old Glory down at the courthouse," and citizens of the town "don't smoke marijuana, take no trips on LSD, burn no draft cards, grow their hair long and shaggy [and] still respect the college dean" (Haggard 1969). The citizens of Muskogee, it appears, would disapprove of, for example, the long-haired students who publically displayed the aforementioned behaviors while briefly taking over Columbia University in 1968. On the contrary, "Muskogee, Oklahoma, USA" is a place where "even squares can have a ball," and the narrator relishes in the knowledge that this town had not been polluted with liberals, hippies, or any other bums from the counter-culture. The lyrics make clear that the counter-culture has no place in Muskogee, even though they use slang from the era ("have a ball") that contains double, more "liberal hippie" connotations (Haggard 1969). Merle Haggard would eventually play "Okie from Muskogee" on *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* in 1969 and refused Senator George McGovern's 1970 campaign use the song, claiming it was satirical in nature and actually not a commentary on contemporary culture. Haggard likely rejected the idea that a politician would co-opt his art; though a "pro-American" artist, Haggard is an *artist* whose musical career spanned several decades. Having his song used in a Senatorial campaign would change his song in a fundamental way. The song might become more associated with McGovern's liberal agenda than Haggard's pro-American sentiments in cultural memory. Historian Lee Andressen, who unpacks various meanings of the song against interviews Haggard gave in his book *Battle Notes: Music of the Vietnam War*, however, disagrees:

Those who have decided to further their education at Muskogee appear to be a smug and condescending lot, secure in their knowledge that their political parochialism makes them perfect citizens. However, it seems that they occupy a fantasy world. Haggard says that this song was done tongue in cheek, but he sounds dead serious in other songs he recorded about similar issues. (2003, 109)

It is easy to dismiss the “Okies” as relics occupying a fantasy America, a country untouched and unruffled by the cultural changes and political turmoil of the 1960s and early 1970s. Many Americans genuinely longed for a reality that closely matched the typical middle-America Muskogee that Haggard depicted; a place frozen in time and devoid of the constant societal clashes. It represented paradise for the average American citizen frightened by the violent changes they saw in their country. The innocent occupants of Muskogee were not that far removed from the majority of Americans, who identified with Haggard’s vision of America and rejected as well as resisted the one offered by the antiwar movement.

Numerous Pro-Vietnam War songs came out of the country music genre, and most of them echoed the themes of righteous anger against protestors, hippies, antiwar dissenters, and those who did not sufficiently fear the specter of communism enough. Nashville:

...[d]utifully parroted the government rationale with songs [...] Dave Dudley’s “What We’re Fighting For” [which features] a dreadfully homesick soldier [who] feels that keeping communism from our shores makes his time in Vietnam well spent. This GI is so troubled by the fact that his mother’s letters describe protests against the war that he urges her to ‘tell them what we’re fighting for!’” (Andressen 2003, 111-2)

Real or imagined, soldiers’ anger that their work and sacrifices in Vietnam were not being taken seriously boils over in Pat Boone’s “Wish You Were Here, Buddy”

(1966), which “condemns war protestors as well as the then-Cassius Clay (now Muhammad Ali) for avoiding the draft” and features a narrator “incense[d] that not only is the man he calls sarcastically ‘buddy’ safe at home, he is also engaging in campus antiwar rallies” (Andressen 2003, 112):

Well, I'm on a little  
Vacation in South Vietnam.  
And expense paid trip for one.  
I got my own little rifle,  
And a great uniform,  
And a job that must be done.

For it's sleeping in the jungle,  
And ducking real bullets,  
And man, it's a lot of fun –  
Wish you were here.  
(Boone 1966)

The anger in Boone's lyrics resonated with many Americans, including soldiers serving in Vietnam.<sup>40</sup> While Country Joe and the Fish's 1969 antiwar song “Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die-Rag” would ask “what are we fightin' for?” in an exasperated and acerbic way, many soldiers were truly confused as to why they were in Vietnam and their friends weren't or why they were even soldiers in the Vietnam War in the first place. The best answer, according to Johnson, Nixon, and Pro-Vietnam War songwriters, was to stop North Vietnam from spreading communism to the citizens of South Vietnam; many soldiers wholly believed this. They had to believe in *something* to keep going; historian Christian G. Appy notes in his book *Working Class War: American Combat Soldiers in Vietnam*:

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<sup>40</sup> While Andressen does not specify service dates and times of the Veterans he spoke to, my research (cf. chapter four, “Who Fought in Vietnam”) shows that those who served in the war in its later years – 1970 onward – expressed more prominent feelings of dislike and distrust toward the antiwar movement than those who'd served earlier.

Most enlisted men found the war itself to be without point or purpose. Those who generally accepted America's right to intervene in Vietnam were most disturbed by the absence of meaningful measurements of military success, a clear definition of victory. (qtd. Andressen 2003, 122)

It was hard to define "success" in the combat zones of Vietnam, and many first-hand accounts of the war<sup>41</sup> report flagging morale as the war dragged on with no clear signs of victory. With all the rhetoric coming out of Washington, as well as the pro-war songs espousing "we must stop communism in [Vietnam] or our freedom will [slip] through our hands," soldiers felt they had little choice but to believe that communism was the evil they fought against (Wright 1970).

The fear of the looming shadow of a possible communist attack or takeover of the U.S. was actively perpetuated and nurtured throughout the 1950s through McCarthyism and lingered in the 1960s up to the 1980s. The constant threat of nuclear war appears in P.F. Sloane's song "Eve of Destruction" (1965) as an antiwar sentiment, but Johnny Sea's "Day for Decision" (1964) turns the antiwar tone into a pro-war call to action against a future nuclear war through its "lengthy recitation that begins with the ominous declaration, 'America is in real trouble!'... present[ing] yet another apocalyptic view about the Vietnam War and its impact on the United States" (Andressen 2003, 115). Most Pro-Vietnam War songs exploited Americans' ever-present fear of a war with communist Russia and/or China as a way to induce patriotic pro-war sentiments. These songs often juxtaposed the evils of communism with a flagrant love for America, democracy, and freedom. This rhetorical tactic

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<sup>41</sup> See "Who Fought in Vietnam?" for further exploration on the experience of the average soldier in the Vietnam War.

romanticized “home” for the soldiers hearing the songs while in the midst of foreign combat. In short, musical manipulation of this sort benefited the soldiers.

Ernest Tubb, who wrote many pro-America and pro-war songs for World War II and the Korean War, also wrote some Pro-Vietnam War material, expressing “fundamental patriotic values in his [song] ‘It’s for God, and Country, and You, Mom (That’s Why I’m Fighting in Vietnam)’” (Andressen 2003, 121). Tubb sings about a soldier whose eyes glisten with tears as he writes a letter to his mother about how much he misses the ‘good old U.S.A.’ (Andressen 2003, 121). Familiar American war song tropes of Christian values, patriotic duty, and familial ties to America at war saturate Tubb’s song, allowing its listener to continue to identify with what was fast becoming an antiquated sense of patriotism.

Superfluous and heavy-handed, Johnny Wright’s 1964 performance of Tom T. Hall’s “Goodbye My Darlin’ (Hello Vietnam)” exploits all the tropes of American war songs – there is a “call” to America to “save freedom now at any cost” (Hall 1964). The “beacon of liberty” must again go “over there,” though now the explicit mention of the location has been added. The strange sound of the innately foreign-sounding “Vietnam” fits into the song’s melody, but the country’s name sounds out of place among Americana images of a soldier leaving his sweetheart as the warship waits for him at the dock. Like “Patriotic Diggers,” the fight “involves us one and all,” but this time the speaker is not boasting that

“Yankees have the marrow!” but rather lamenting this “noble cause” that he must undertake:

Kiss me goodbye and write me when I'm gone.  
Goodbye my darlin', hello Vietnam.  
America has heard the bugle call,  
And you know it involves us one and all.  
A ship is waitin' at the dock,  
America has trouble to be stopped.  
We must stop Communism in that land,  
Or freedom will start slippin' through our hands.  
I hope and pray someday the world will learn  
That fires we don't put out will bigger burn.  
We must save freedom now at any cost,  
Or someday our freedom will be lost.  
(Hall 1964)

The pained mention of “that land” that has given America “trouble to be stopped” indicates a battle-weariness reminiscent of Ernest Tubb’s narrator in “Missing in Action”; it also demonstrates America’s distance from the war in a way reminiscent of “Over There.” This soldier does not want to go to war like “Yankee Doodle” or the South’s proud “band of brothers” singing “hurrah for the Bonnie Blue flag.” While “Goodbye My Darling (Hello Vietnam)” does not carry all the pomp and bravado of previous songs of America at war, it does maintain the solid American tradition of aggressive, manly, hegemonic discourse. By emphasizing not only the necessity of spreading American democracy against the threat of communism, but also the necessity of sending American soldiers overseas to accomplish that noble task, the song exploits common war tropes and accepted images of the American soldier to glean sympathy from its listener.

The somber spoken-word section of the song – the last four lines of the final verse – sound hokey and self-congratulatory to a 21<sup>st</sup> century listener:



I hope and pray someday the world will learn,  
That fires we don't put out will bigger burn.  
We must save freedom now at any cost,  
Or someday our own freedom will be lost.  
(Hall 1964)

The threat that “our freedom will be lost” if the United States doesn’t put out “[fires that] will bigger burn” seems nonsensical (Hall 1964); Vietnam’s “trouble to be stopped” was an internal struggle for independence, not Russian or Chinese communist influence.<sup>42</sup> The song leans heavily on emotional arguments and rhetorical tropes of American identity; some of the lyrics could refer to any American war. The speaker’s request that his “sweetheart [write him] while [he’s] gone” hints that this war, like many of America’s wars, requires the typical supportive female role of women (Hall 1964). The speaker refers to his service as “while I’m gone,” insinuating that he believes, or at least hopes, to return (Hall 1964). The song’s earnest delivery and wistful coda reveal that the similar songs were not necessarily promoting war, but rather reiterating the hawkish patriotism promoted by the Johnson Administration. Such songs saw war as a duty beholden to America. The song’s anti-communist message, fearful and somber lyrics (the soldier is saying “goodbye,” a somewhat clichéd image for a 21<sup>st</sup> century listener but still a poignant one), and mournful country guitar trills are all hallmarks of Pro-Vietnam War songs. The song’s key argument surfaces in its emotional allusions to common images of Americana and the “red-scare” that characterized the 1950s and 1960s. It does not call its audience to do

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. the extensive history of French intervention in Vietnam as outlined in Frederick Logevall’s *Embers of War* (2012).

anything more than remain faithful to a patriotism and national identity in danger of “slippin’ through [their] hands.”

Through the sentimental use of patriotic fervor and overt emotional manipulation, Pro-Vietnam War songs exploited America’s fears of communist threats to its freedom. In this way, the songs promoted the aggressive war agenda put forth by the United States government. While the songs do have some artistic merit, their heavy reliance on tropes of American war songs of the past and their bellicose, intolerant position regarding social change and protesters undermines their aesthetic merit; these songs only perpetuate what was written before. Still, one must conclude that writers of Pro-Vietnam War songs meant what they said. But the Pro-Vietnam War citizens failed to realize that their patriotic beliefs had *already* been compromised by the United States’ war in Vietnam. The war may have been promoted as having the noble goal of stopping a communist threat, but flouting the Geneva Accords of 1954 and not allowing the Vietnamese to vote in 1956 made the United States exhibit communist behaviors. How can a country say it is spreading democracy when it rejects a country’s right to democratic election? President Lyndon Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, ultimately saw their political aspirations fold due to their decisions regarding the Vietnam War, and musicians who penned Pro-Vietnam War anthems are rarely remembered in contemporary cultural and historical accounts of the war. The Pro-Vietnam War hawks did not “lose” their battle for Vietnam any more than the Anti-Vietnam War doves “lost” their battle against the war, but both parties played an undeniable role in

shaping the future of America at war.

Merle Haggard no doubt has a protégé in Toby Keith, who wrote a knee-jerk reaction song to the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent war in Iraq. The song contains the (dreadful) lyric “we’ll put a boot in your ass/it’s the American way.” And, while Anti-Vietnam War songwriters might see their ideals reflected in Green Day and Pearl Jam’s antiwar albums released at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it seems clear that one must always choose a side in war. The United States government undoubtedly prefers its citizens to side with its wartime policies and decisions, and many Americans will align themselves with those actions without question. The pro-war folks may have to fight a little harder to disseminate their beliefs among those who do not share them. However, if Robert McNamara (or Merle Haggard, who later opposed the Iraq War) serve as an example, it is possible to adopt different political beliefs or change one’s mind about American decisions regarding foreign wars. Patriotism and American national and cultural values continue to fluctuate. If grand ideas can change and morph over time, it is easy to believe that a singular citizen could begin to question the traditional norms of war – after the war and while in the midst of it – and still remain a patriotic American. The antiwar movement loved America too, but perhaps not like the hawkish, “love it or leave it” version prevalent during the Vietnam War. Their patriotism differed from that of Johnson or McNamara, but both forms of patriotism expressed a genuine concern for the future of the United States.

The unique position of the Vietnam Veteran in any narrative of the

Vietnam War era remains an important resource. An American Veteran is the ultimate patriot – so what happens when patriotic soldiers speak out against the war they fought in, and how is it that the Vietnam War has the highest and most vocal “veterans for peace” movement in the history of the United States Armed Forces? While McNamara vacillated on his hawkish patriotism and President Johnson held steadfast to his, the swing between hawkish patriotism and dovish patriotism was an entirely different political and emotional journey for Vietnam War soldiers. Vietnam Veterans’ war memories are not only colored by the rhetoric they heard while in country, but also by the music they heard “over there.” What they heard and thought about the war may be the most overlooked piece of the larger puzzle of how music lyrics and the Vietnam War forged such a lasting and strong relationship in American cultural and historical memory.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Who Fought in Vietnam?**

The role of the soldier in music from the Vietnam War era (1955 – 1975) remains a puzzling one for the era’s historians. Unlike the case in previous wars, the Vietnam War’s soldiers were younger and more likely to have been drafted into service rather than volunteer. The number of young men claiming “conscientious objector” status rose to national records, and the average Vietnam Veteran did not return home to ticker tape parades or similar fanfare. The lyrics of pro-soldier songs like “The Ballad of the Green Berets” (Sadler, 1966) or “The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley” (Wilson and Smith, 1971) offered a pro-war backlash against those protesting the war. Songs like “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” (Mann and Weil, 1965) and “My Son John” (Paxton, 1966) provided a different picture of Vietnam War veterans returning home and their time while serving “in country”; these songs depict these veterans as fragile, shaken individuals whose violent past experiences in combat are painfully difficult to reconcile in the present.

The national unease over the United States’ involvement in Indochina made for very unhappy and confusing homecomings for soldiers who served in Vietnam. The lyrics of songs written and performed during the Vietnam War era demonstrate America’s cultural attitude toward the war, and the country’s perspective of the role of the soldier as a national mythological figure shifted

radically in this period. The word “soldier” no longer represented the classic American image of brave men fighting valiantly for freedom; Vietnam Veterans found themselves depicted as pawns in a useless, unwinnable game, and the physical and mental scars left on the Vietnam veterans ultimately left similar wounds on America’s national identity and cultural consciousness.

The collective memory of American history continues to create an oversimplified, hyper-masculine image of the American soldier. Historians writing about the Vietnam War in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must first wade through the caricatures of the Vietnam War soldier with which popular culture has inundated American society. A multitude of photos, movies, songs, art, and poetry about the war plants an iconic, often stereotypical image in American collective consciousness, such as Sylvester Stallone’s vengeful, über-patriotic former Green Beret and Vietnam Veteran in *Rambo* (1985) or Robert DeNiro’s maverick vigilante Vietnam Veteran in *Taxi Driver* (1976). Such images and icons must be more than mere time stamps of American culture, or they do not denote myth, according to Lévi-Strauss. Myth is ascertained by a collective participation, repetition, and universal appeal alongside timeless concepts:

The warrior’s image, his wounds, and the world he comes home to are a story that has been retold in Western culture at least from the time of Homer. The lessons of the *Odyssey* are the same [today] – wars may end, but they continue to reverberate in the lives of those who fought them and within the soldiers’ societies. (Modell & Haggerty 1991, 205-6)

This epic story of the warrior, conqueror, and soldier – from Homer’s *Odyssey* on – has become myth. This myth establishes national identity, values, and diplomacy in American culture; America’s military *largess* results in a cultural

attitude that rarely wastes an opportunity to flex its military muscles. Conceiving a list of “American war songs,” requires one to wade through countless wars and invasions in American history; the staggering number of conflicts America participated in is exceeded only by the amount of American art dedicated the country’s various wars. America’s global, 21<sup>st</sup> century foreign politics underscores its image as a frightening global presence, but the myth in American culture lies in the belief that American soldiers share that same attitude toward diplomacy.

As Lévi-Strauss pointed out, myths and the structural units that make them up contain only part of a cultural history. A society’s artifacts and “[texts] are partial remains showing only portions of the more complete systematic thinking which must have generated them” (Boon 1972, 64). Song lyrics written during the war create new “partial remains” regarding our collective memory of the Vietnam War. Song lyrics reflect the times when they were created, and thus, according to Lévi-Strauss, become art: “art must have semantic verity, for its essential ambition is to signify, and no longer only to represent” (Lévi-Strauss qtd. Boon 1972, 84).<sup>43</sup> Art, thus, must do as a myth does; it must transcend itself and become part of a society’s collective property, pointing to some value or belief important to that culture. Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss offers a clear opinion of poetry, noting that:

A poem could offer vestiges of inter-order classifications distorted by discrepancies that bear the unmistakable stamp of time elapsed. A

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<sup>43</sup> The majority of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s quotes in Boon’s text originally appeared in *Structural Anthropology*, printed by Basic Books in 1963.

cracked bell, alone surviving the work of time, will never give forth the ring of bygone harmonies.” (Lévi-Strauss qtd. Boon 1972, 63)

Poetry, and hereto forth song lyrics, freeze time; they allow society to see more deeply within itself, acknowledging “classifications” that the society has long accepted yet perhaps has forgotten exactly *why* these classifications warranted merit. Lévi-Strauss notably mentions the paradox that art and time create through his metaphor of a “cracked bell.” The precise sound – the exact same ring of the bell at a point in history – cannot be duplicated. The poetic symbolism of the bell allows the reader to simultaneously see the present (a cracked bell) and the past (bygone harmonies) as well as the future (the bell “never will” make the same ring, but it appears the bell may ring again). This explanation of poetry and time echo Ricœur’s arguments regarding the writing of history, and underscore the transcendental capacity of art necessary for its use as a historical artifact.

Through this cracked bell metaphor, Lévi-Strauss views poetry as a heavily nuanced and mutli-temporal code of human culture; the poetic metaphor hints at another language hidden within an familiar language. Lévi-Strauss elaborates on the murkiness of cultural history by describing the way his mind works when accessing his own personal memories within his own society’s mythical and cultural framework:

One order has been substituted for another... Unrelated events, rooted in the most disparate of regions and periods, suddenly come into contact with one another and take shape as a crusader castle which owes its architecture not to my private history but to some altogether wiser designer. (Lévi-Strauss qtd. Boon 1972, 142)



Lévi-Strauss reveals that his own personal and “private history” gets re-written or re-designed by someone outside of or other than himself. He frames the making of his own historical narrative as an outsider to his own method of being. “Meaning,” according to Lévi-Strauss, perpetually re-makes itself into new or different cultural meanings that he does not fully comprehend. The cultural atmosphere surrounding him absorbed the layers of time, space, and place. Art, however, has an order and a form that restricts it enough to keep it familiar; song lyrics and popular music of the Vietnam War era also contain a form that gives them a certain familiarity for their audience. The symbolic and totem-like units of poetry and myths and song can be deconstructed more easily than one’s own inner sanctum.

Anthropologist James Boon conceives Lévi-Strauss’ approach to poetry as something akin to the way one may approach another language: “The poem is confronted in the same way as one might approach a foreign text (ideally) knowing nothing about it other than the language out of which it is composed” (1972, 41). Language requires decoding and deciphering; by breaking down the structure of a poetic verse within a myth, the mind distances itself from the surface level of language. Society uses poetry and song lyrics to create myths; these words – lyrics and poems – serve the same purpose of capturing a time and its cultural and social values. The limited perspective of time inherent in every social perspective renders society nearly incapable of viewing song lyrics from any point of temporal view other than its own, thus creating a one-dimensional understanding of the lyrics. Attempting to maintain a certain

critical and emotional distance from a text is a crucial method of deconstruction. Participation in the myth disallows any critical view of its ritual. Lévi-Strauss notes that when studying myth, “social sciences take on the appearance of a shadow theater,” meaning that social sciences may imitate, but never participate in, a culture’s unique mythology (Lévi-Strauss 69, 1981).

Using art as a critical lens to analyze cultural mythologies reminds us that song lyrics are fixed yet moving as well as old yet current. Lévi-Strauss asserts that man surrounds himself with myth and symbolic objects in order to “sooth[e] his nostalgic longing for the secondary natural state that was lost after the primary one... [These myths and objects] have now become venerable through the sheer fact that they are gone forever” (Lévi-Strauss 72, 1981). In essence, the myth and symbols inside cultural myths result in a cultural nostalgia for a past that *never really was*; the mythology surrounding cultural symbols gains importance because they *no longer exist*. The American soldier, through the experience of the Vietnam War, no longer carried the mantle and mythology of a brave, fearless specimen of American bravado. His image needed re-working and re-tooling in order to retain vestiges of the machismo and bravado it had in America’s past mythological constructions of United States soldiers. Lévi-Strauss indicates in *Structural Anthropology* that the constant, spiraling growth of mythology and myth remains an undeniable part of mythology as a whole:

Myth is meta-. Myths indicate how meaning is to be. They can be seen by the analyzer as symbol-filled ‘texts’ which articulate a people’s ‘social discourse.’ The most critical point to remember is that throughout these transformations of contradicting terms, nothing is ever really *solved*. The

contradiction is merely displaced, but by becoming so, it expands a culture's store of signification. (qtd. Boon 1972, 102-3)

In other words, myth only seeks to solve the problems that it unintentionally creates within a society; its idealized meaning points only to what could be, rather than society's actual state. This idealization and transformation of the meanings of myths illuminates our view of a culture; by analyzing American culture's creation of the mythological American soldier, we can discover many hidden – or unmentioned – fissures within its design.

Art expands a culture's store of signification, and thereby elucidates the meaning behind some of the values, beliefs, and objects in a culture. "Myths signify *l'esprit*, which elaborates them by means of the world, of which itself is part" (Lévi-Strauss qtd. Boon 1972, 162). Philosopher Herbert Marcuse noted in 1967 that "art today is becoming a potential factor in the construction of a new reality, a prospect which would mean the cancellation *and* transcendence of art in the fulfillment of its own end... art is a cognitive faculty with a truth of its own" (*The Aesthetic Dimension* 1978, 68). Marcuse references the *l'esprit* of the 1960s and 1970s in America, when new forms of art created in the counter-culture revolution dovetailed with the Anti-Vietnam War movement. These new forms of art included Anti-Vietnam War music and lyrics. Lévi-Strauss believed that music and literature "shared a heritage of myth between them" and he further claimed "with the death of myth, music becomes mythical in the same way as works of art" (Lévi-Strauss 1981, 71-2). Myth and music, for Lévi-Strauss, share the necessary multiple layers required when seeking a deeper understanding of a culture, and these multiple layers of meaning render

individual elements of myth and music as simply parts of a whole picture that needed further exploration:

Lévi-Strauss seems to claim that we respond to the patterned structures of myth in much the same way as we respond to the repetitions of counterpoint...the details of particular mythical stories are like the melody of a particular musical phrase, and melody is a relatively trivial element in the communication that is achieved when we listen to music. (Leach qtd. Boon 169)

Like the basic elements of myths, “melody” constitutes only a part of a song, but is a very important part. The repetition of melody – echoed in Vietnam War popular music through a song’s chorus – underscores the multitude of cultural histories and cultural symbols embedded in music. The wealth of cultural importance found in lyrics contributes to the transcendental property of this type of art: “the pleasure of music does not stop with the performance and may even achieve its fullest state afterwards; in subsequent silence, the listener finds himself...overwhelmed with meaning” (Lévi-Strauss 73, 1981). While entirely subjective and inextricably bound to the temporal limitations of the time it takes to listen, meaning finds its way into the song long after the listener experiences it. The symbolism, personal messages, and temporal comments of a song’s lyrics highlight impossible tensions that make the listener an agent for a song’s social translation. When song lyrics attain a shared “social translation,” they achieve a unifying role in a culture’s fabric. The “meaning” that many people agree upon regarding a song, slowly elevates the song’s mythological implications. American culture’s insistence of perpetuating a cultural mythology of an avatar of freedom– the brave, patriotic, and masculine soldier – clashed with the reality of returning Vietnam Veterans. While ultimately the “agreed upon,” more

hawkish image of the American soldier prevailed in the country's shared and living cultural mythology, the Vietnam War era provides us with clues regarding the soldier's more authentic, and less aggressive, image of American soldiers in the era's music lyrics.

Music, to Lévi-Strauss, amalgamates the units of myth considered difficult to reconcile, such as the seemingly simple concept "that some god may be endowed with contradictory attributes; for instance, he may be good and bad at the same time" (Lévi-Strauss 1955, 295). This particular contradiction (good, bad), discussed later in this chapter, presented a very real struggle for retuning Vietnam Veterans. They were, simultaneously, filling several different social roles imposed upon them by popular culture, both good (hero, soldier, patriot) and bad (killer, victim, damaged). Such contradictions argue that music as myth must satisfy a tall order; for "when music takes over the structure and the function of myth, every musical work must assume a speculative form, must look for and find a solution to the difficulties which constitute its true theme" (Lévi-Strauss 1981, 76). Lévi-Strauss argues that myth finds its own truth, much like Marcuse's proposition that art must carry its own truth independent of its both its creator and the specific society that created it. Lévi-Strauss sees myth as not a solution to conflict, but rather an ideal truth or a signification of a society; he sees music (and art in general) as an illusory carrier of myth:

The musical work, which is a myth coded in sounds instead of words, offers an interpretative grid, a matrix of relationships which filters and organizes lived experience, acts as a substitute for it, and provide the comforting illusion that contradictions can be overcome and difficulties resolved. (Lévi-Strauss 76, 1981)

Using Lévi-Strauss' vision of music as "an interpretive grid" as well as my earlier research presented in "America Moves Toward Vietnam, in Song" reveals relationships and contradictions in the cultural myth of the American soldier. Following music lyrics as "an interpretive grid," an obvious cultural shift occurs during the Vietnam War; America, during this era, made its first notable effort to distance itself from the traditional mythology of the American soldier. But how does Anti-Vietnam War music provide a comforting illusion for American cultural history, and how does the American soldier, along with the mythology surrounding that role, fare within the texts of song lyrics from the Vietnam War? What about the voice of the Vietnam War soldier, now Veteran? What can we learn from Vietnam Veterans' "musical memories?" How do these memories contribute to a larger narrative of America at war and the War in Vietnam?

***Count me only as a soldier who never left his gun, with the right to serve my country as the only prize I've won – as we go marching on.***  
**Terry Nelson & C Company, 1971; "The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley"**

American forces in the Vietnam War, on average, were young, inexperienced, and more likely to have been drafted into war than in any other war in American history. They hardly resembled the hardened *men* of World War II or the Korean War. While the soldiers of the Vietnam War shared much of the same patriotic duty and military heritage of many Americans, their time in country was not celebrated at home. The Anti-Vietnam War movement breached the barriers of the United States Armed Forces, who censored antiwar songs "in country" and did not tolerate much dissent, but not all soldiers

welcomed it. David James's 1989 article "The Vietnam War and American Music" notes that the antiwar movement gained some popularity among enlisted men through its presence in GI coffee shops and folk music performances. David Zeiger's 2005 documentary *Sir! No Sir!*<sup>44</sup> depicts antiwar activity *in country*, noting incidents that include petty insubordinations, mutinous behavior (some drafted African Americans, for example, saw parallels between the racially inequalities of the war to those back in the U.S.), as well as the "fragging"<sup>45</sup> of higher-ranking officers. *Sir! No Sir!* chronicles the efforts of the Donald Sutherland and Jane Fonda-led (later known as the traitorous "Hanoi Jane" after photographed atop a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun) "Free The Army" USO-style tour thorough Vietnam, which included tender performances like Rosa Martin's acoustic song "Soldier We Love You" as well as the raucous chant "F-T-A-Fuck the Army!" Countless books and films, including *Sir! No Sir!*, explore the Vietnam Veterans for Peace movements, draft dodging and resistance, as well as the story behind such iconic images as those of April 1971, when Vietnam Veterans gathered to throw their medals from the war onto the steps of Congress. These images of soldiers against the war contributed to the re-making of their history as jungle warriors and/or temperamental, wounded veterans; often out-numbered by Vietnam Veterans ambivalent about or for the war, antiwar Vietnam Veterans played a large and visible role in the antiwar

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<sup>44</sup> Dir. David Zeiger. Produced by Evangeline Griego and Aaron Zarrow. Distributed by Balcony Releasing, US; 19 June 2003. DVD.

<sup>45</sup> United States Military slang: "To kill or wound (a fellow soldier or superior officer) deliberately with an explosive device. Short for fragmentation grenade, as used in Vietnam." Cf. Dictionary.com.

movement – a previously unheard of role of an American soldier.

America's relationship with Vietnam began in 1945, though it took until "the middle of 1965 until roughly the spring of 1966 that Americans [became] attentive to the administration's justification of United States' involvement in Vietnam" (Lunch & Sperlich 1979, 30). American involvement stemmed largely from old Cold War mythology, where the specter of Communism lurked menacingly from every un-democratic corner of the Earth. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 convinced many Americans that the Red Scare was a real danger. When Vietnam began advocating for the ability to rule itself (despite perpetual conflict with French colonialists), America stepped in because the most popular and likely *elected* ruler identified himself as a communist. Ho Chi Minh, deemed an unfit leader of Vietnam by America, retaliated against American oppression. Not only did the U.S. provide France with weapons and men to fight *against* Vietnamese independence for 10 years, but America's block of Vietnamese elections in 1956 also violated the 1954 Geneva Accords and democratic principles. Frederick Logevall's 2012 book *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*<sup>46</sup> argues that Ho, a well-traveled, global thinker who had communicated with both President Franklin Roosevelt and Russian leader Joseph Stalin, proved willing to democratize his country – as long as Vietnam governed without foreign oversight. Logevall and many other historians argue that President Harry Truman, who proved more hawkish than his predecessor, Roosevelt, decided the fate of this "communist dictator":

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<sup>46</sup> Random House, NY: 2012.



destroy and replace him. The 17th parallel was drawn, and American forces “joined” the 20% of Vietnamese citizens who identified as “South Vietnamese” to fight the communism of Ho Chi Minh in the North.

This diplomatic move underscored America’s struggle to hold on to its cultural mythology – specifically, the myth that America’s duties and responsibilities to the global community included spreading freedom and democracy as God destined the country to do. The actual “war,” however, devolved into somewhat of an afterthought:

Americans apparently want a ‘representative’ force to be called up for wars [...] This American value is to a degree distinctive, resting as it does upon the particular senses of the liberal state and of mission that are part of a widely shared American belief system. (Modell & Haggerty 209-10)

Those in power during the Vietnam War, Presidents Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon and their respective cabinets, deeply believed in America’s role as a “representative force” of freedom “to be called up for wars,” and they also deeply believed that their opinions reflected “a widely shared American belief system.” Drawing upon their faith in America’s ability to perpetuate its national role as a “defender of liberty,” these leaders kept the war alive for the sake of their belief in the mythology of America. “The harsh reality of battle marginalized its participants” (Modell and Haggerty 1991, 208); Vietnam veterans did not come home glowing from a victorious battle, nor did they return exuding the pride in victory or spreading democracy throughout the world. Modell and Haggerty observe that Vietnam soldiers did not receive positive reinforcement for their sacrifices: “War’s various wounds are enumerated but never analyzed in their aggregate. Veterans are rarely seen in

any substantial social context, and the substance of men's military careers is largely ignored, apart from combat stress" (1991, 216). In fact, rather than enjoying parades, fanfare, and support upon their return home, "Vietnam combat veterans [suffered] more negative life outcomes than either other veterans or civilians of the same ages" (Gimbel & Booth 1996, 1138). The mythology of an indefatigable America at war – along with the mythology of the American soldier – had collapsed.

By 1968, "many in [America's] home front population had attached an aura of distaste, even disgrace, to the [Vietnam] war and its unfortunate soldiers" (Modell and Haggerty 1991, 213). America had grown weary of the war; seeing returning friends and family as wounded and damaged veterans did little to boost morale. The plight of the Vietnam Veteran permeated American cultural consciousness. Moreover, citizens became more confused as to how to understand the conflicting images and ideologies of America that now circulated: America, always the victor on the battlefield, asked itself how a country so great could not defeat a tiny jungle country in Asia. America's soldiers remained brave, strong men who were unafraid – so why did so many Vietnam veterans isolate themselves or act strangely upon their return? It was difficult for both veterans and their families to adjust to the fissures the war created in American culture:

The hidden wounds playing out in the lives of these men have been a central motif in the dialogue over Vietnam, including that within social and behavioral science... Americans' sharpened interest in the impact of war originated...in a widespread need to come to terms with the Vietnam conflict – to construct though social science no less than through

literature and political discussion an agreed upon meaning for the war.  
(Modell & Haggerty 1991, 206)

Looking at the wreckage made of these veterans' lives, America tried to find "meaning for the war" in an attempt to come to terms with an America that did not celebrate this particular military action.

Temporary solace, meaning, and reconciliation of the dialectic of America's changing mythology characterize the songs composed during the chaotic Vietnam War era. Their lyrics beget symbols and signifiers that allow a Lévi-Strauss-esque interpretation of America's cultural mythology. We can ascertain, by closely reading lyrics for mythological signifiers, symbols, and themes as defined by Lévi-Strauss, that an undercurrent of American mythology enveloped the soldier during the Vietnam War. The soldier's narrative remains a complicated one. It perpetuates the American mythology captured in the lyrics of Sgt. Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets" as well as the confusion and despair of the soldier and his loved ones after the war, an experience frozen in the lyrics of Tom Paxton's "My Son John" and Mel Tills' "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town." The sanctimonious "Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley" shamelessly reiterates tired tropes of Pro-Vietnam War Songs (discussed in "Who Was For the War?"). The "scapegoat" (or "hero," depending on one's perspective) of the

My Lai massacre<sup>47</sup> undergoes an America's mythological re-working: Lt. William Calley's story begins with the formulaic opening of a fairy tale:

Once upon a time there was a little boy who wanted to grow up  
And be a soldier and serve his country in whatever way he could.  
He would parade around the house with a saucepan on his head  
For a helmet, a wooden sword in one hand and the American flag in the other.  
As he grew up, he put away the things of a child, but he never let go of the flag.  
(Smith and Weil 1971)

The song, set to the melody of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," juxtaposes the listener's previous experience with the tune with a new American story. The My Lai massacre of 1968, kept secret from the public until 1970, was essentially "blamed" on Lt. Calley, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> platoon; it is worth noting that Calley was one of many United States soldiers involved in the atrocity. In the song, Lt. Calley receives a political makeover. This Lt. Calley dutifully "played" soldier until he could become one, just as American mythology prefers. Lt. Calley's games of war became a graphic reality in the Vietnam War, where he witnessed, "buddies ambushed on the left and on the right "and discovered that in war, "all the rules are broken and the only law is might" (Smith and Weil 1971). Those in power did not recognize his sacrifice; instead "they made [him]

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<sup>47</sup> "The My Lai massacre, which took place on the morning of March 16, 1968, was a watershed in the history of modern American combat, and a turning point in the public perception of the Vietnam War. In the course of three hours more than 500 Vietnamese civilians were killed in cold blood at the hands of US troops. The soldiers had been on a "search and destroy" mission to root out communist fighters in what was fertile Viet Cong territory. Yet there had been no firefight with the enemy - not a single shot was fired at the soldiers of Charlie Company, a unit of the Americal Division's 11th Infantry Brigade. The 48th Viet Cong Battalion - the intended target of the mission - was nowhere to be seen.

When the story of My Lai was exposed, more than a year later, it tarnished the name of the US army. Most Americans did not want to believe that their revered GI Joe could be a wanton murderer. My Lai was the sort of atrocity American patriots preferred to associate with the Nazis. [After a government investigation] Charlie company's commanding officer, Lt Calley, was the only one to be convicted [of the war crime]."

Cf.: "Murder in the name of war - My Lai." BBC News: World Edition. *BBC.com*  
< <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/64344.stm>>.

out a villain” for his service in Vietnam (Smith and Weil 1971). Lt. Calley, “never [letting go of the American] flag” despite his new “brand” of villainy, berates the antiwar protesters, denouncing them for aiding the enemy and not supporting the war effort in Vietnam. Through his narrative, *they*, the protestors, remain the ones to blame:

While we're fighting in the jungles they were marching in the street  
While we're dying in the rice fields they were helping our defeat  
While we're facing V.C. bullets they were sounding a retreat  
As we go marching on  
(Smith and Weil 1971).

The song’s original chorus from 1861: “Glory, glory hallelujah; Glory! Glory! Hallelujah, our God is marching on!” becomes “as we go marching on,” in the 1970s. In fact, God does not receive a mention at all in “The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley”; the song’s true god, upon close examination of the song, is American cultural identity. Instead of a higher power, the soldiers in “Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley” answer to “the great commander”; in 1971, God becomes a military officer. Instead of rejoicing in God, “The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley” rejoices in its hawkish, one-sided American patriotism. Painted as brave yet weary defenders of freedom and democracy, the soldiers in the song have no respect for those who “were sounding a retreat” from the war.

American mythology reworks the antiwar narrative through Lt. Calley’s perspective; the idea of American “defeat” or the country “retreat[ing]” from the war gets blamed on popular antiwar protest cries of “stop the war in Vietnam” and “give peace a chance” (neither of which really denote “defeat”). The “Battle Hymn of the Republic” remains a victorious song in American cultural history –

the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir performed the song at the 2013 Presidential Inauguration – and its original message still represents irrepressible freedom granted by God (“[God] has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat”). Furthermore, the song’s Biblical allusions and links to the Civil War secures its place in America’s canon of patriotic songs (see “America Moves Toward Vietnam, In Song”). The earlier song’s lyrics – both “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and the original tune, “John Brown’s Body” – use tropes of American history that lean heavily on Christianity, sacrifice, and the call to America to defend liberty, but Terry Nelson & C Company’s performance links the “prize” of freedom with the ultimate symbol of aggression – a gun:

When all the wars are over and the battle's finally won  
Count me only as a soldier who never left his gun  
With the right to serve my country as the only prize I've won  
As we go marching on  
Glory, glory hallelujah glory, glory, hallelujah.  
(Smith and Weil 1971)

“The Battle Hymn of Lt. Calley” finally sings “hallelujah” when “the battle’s finally won.” The song perpetuates a one-sided perspective of a Vietnam soldier, one unquestionably proud to serve his country. Other perspectives deserve consideration. For example, many Vietnam Veterans, even if they share “Lt. Calley’s” anger against the Anti-Vietnam War movement, often do not recall or remember the song itself, though they recall the My Lai massacre and their feelings about it with no trouble. Never “leaving one’s gun” remains a distinctly American attitude and example of exerting freedom, but some soldiers *did* leave their guns. Each song concerning the American soldier’s experience in the Vietnam War shares certain threads, or what Lévi-Strauss calls “mythemes” (the

units of fusion that define a myth). These songs' avail themselves out of a common fusion of the future, past, and present; they reveal a changing mythology within the cultural tapestry of America, and they prove that America's insistence in believing this mythology harmed and hurt individuals. In this way, it compromised the country's national identity.

***Back at home a young wife waits – her Green Beret has met his fate; he has died for those oppressed, leaving her his last request: “Put silver wings on my son's chest. Make him one of America's best.”***  
**Sgt. Barry Sadler, 1966; “Ballad of the Green Berets”**

Sergeant Barry Sadler shot to one-hit-wonder stardom in 1966 when his song “Ballad of the Green Berets” reached number one hit on American charts. Unlike many songs of the era, Sadler's song shines a positive light on the war. It highlights traits of honor, valor, and bravery, as well as many other qualities prized in the cultural mythology of the American soldier. A member of the Green Berets has bragging rights; it takes a great deal of grit to become a member of this elite Army Special Forces Unit. Sadler's “Ballad of the Green Berets” uses the Christian savior elements found within American national identity and myth, and addresses the cultural importance of masculine sacrifice: “Fighting soldiers from the sky/ Fearless men who jump and die/Men who mean just what they say” (Moore 1966). The first three lines of the song reveal breathtaking pretense (even though they're just doing what paratroopers do); like angels, these Green Berets appear as if “from the sky.”

But these men are not harbingers of God's peaceful message of brotherly love – on the contrary, they “jump and die” and “fight”; their actions have

purpose, and their words, plain and simple, “mean just what they say” (Moore 1966). Sadler opens his song with a glorious yet terrific image, where the heavens open to bring forth strong, solid, and silent men who represent “the brave men of the Green Beret” (Moore 1966). The exact elite nature of the Green Berets surfaces through the repeated chorus of the song, where Green Berets are further identified with symbol of “silver wings” (Moore 1966). Only “three out of 100 [of America’s best men]” will be chosen to bear the “silver wings upon their chest” or wear the distinctive “green beret” that are so coveted in American cultural mythology (Moore 1966). Obviously, the image of the American soldier offered by Sadler’s “Ballad of the Green Berets” regards U.S. troops as heaven-sent entities wearing silver wings. What American man wouldn’t want to be “America’s best”? The mythology in this song points out that America values a certain over-inflated Christian motif for its martyrs; as part of Manifest Destiny, the soldier embodies the warrior, gifted to the world from the sky, bearing silver angelic wings that deliver liberty for the oppressed. The job of the American soldier, according to this mythology, demands that God’s will be delivered.

Later in the song, the image of the American soldier morphs into a vision of a Grizzly Adams-type of character, “trained to live off nature’s land” and “trained in combat, hand-to-hand” (Moore 1966). The idea of the soldier sent by God becomes inflated in these lyrics, for the ideal, mythological American soldier becomes resourceful after his elite Green Beret training experience. A product of American education and guidance (which definitely includes the possibility of combat), the Green Beret only uses what surrounds him – he needs nothing



more than “nature’s land” to survive. This war-like figure “fight[s] by night and day”; relentless and driven, his privilege and masculinity allows his “courage [to] peak” (Moore 1966). According to “Ballad of the Green Berets,” American soldiers, in their pure, God-given form, live to fight. What they fight or fight for, exactly, does not warrant identification. The enemy remains undefined because, historically in American cultural mythology, an enemy disagrees or attacks American value and belief structures. The duty of the American soldier is explicitly articulated in these lyrics; an American soldier “die[s] for those oppressed” (Moore 1966). It is worth noting that the inevitable yet glorious death of the American soldier receives two distinct mentions, and the soldier’s dying wish is that his son also receive the “silver wings” of the Green Berets. This rhetoric of sacrifice highlights the complexity found within the theater of war. The Green Beret decrees that his son will be “a man they’ll test one day,” revealing that the greatest duty of a young American man is dying for his country, to undergo the test to become “one of America’s best” who may fall out of the sky wearing “silver wings upon his chest” (Moore 1966).

This glimpse into the soldier’s identity reveals the Christian ideology that permeates American mythology, and it outlines the cultural values of America that seemed, frankly, out of place in the Vietnam War. American soldiers who died in the Vietnam War did not die for oppressed Americans, nor did they die in hopes to save the South Vietnamese, 80% of whom favored Ho Chi Minh in power. This myth does not signify a cultural truth, nor does it attempt to offer a solution to the conflicting sides of the Vietnam War. As Americans watched the

carnage in Vietnam, their opinions concerning their national identity and mythology changed. Many citizens' old beliefs regarding war, bolstered by a hegemonic, masculine national identity and supported by an equally hegemonic cultural mythology, created a tension with new opinions resulting from the televised reality of the Vietnam War. Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets" offers the comforting message of old: the soldiers always do the right thing, because God would not have America's best acting any other way.

***And I prayed, and tried not to read between the lines. My son, John. John, my son.***

**Tom Paxton, 1966; "My Son John"**

Confusion and despair characterized the changes taking place between 1962 and 1967 in American cultural mythology regarding soldiers. The soldier narratives in Mel Tillis's "Ruby, Don't Take Your Love to Town" (1967, recorded by Kenny Rogers and the First Edition), The Doors' "Unknown Soldier" (1968), Buffy Sainte-Marie's 1965 "Universal Soldier," Bob Dylan's "John Brown" (1962), and Tom Paxton's "My Son John" (1966), all written and performed in a five-year span that includes "Ballad of the Green Berets," tell different stories than that of the "brave men of the Green Beret." These soldiers returned "home" feeling alienated and confused. They survive the war; had they died they would have forever become martyrs for the oppressed. While Tillis's narrator speaks directly to the audience, his voice gradually more woeful as his story progresses, Paxton's narrator speaks from the point of view of a bereaved father of a battered Vietnam Veteran. Paxton's narrator's despair over his son's well being

in particular dispels the idea that American soldiers are impervious to the inner wounds of battle.

Tom Paxton's "My Son John" does not stray too far, in terms of exemplifying American values and beliefs, from Sgt. Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets." "John," for example, is defined as "a good boy," one who stands by his father in hard times, works hard, never complains, pays his way through college, and generally overcomes any obstacle he faces by plowing through it with diligent work (Paxton 1966). This mythological soldier figure might not have dropped from the sky like Sadler's Green Berets, but, symbolically, this "Everyman" still fought "night and day" (Moore 1966). "John" recalls the plucky patriots in "Patriotic Diggers," a son who teamed up with his father ("we were in work and out of work and on the go") to achieve the American dream (Paxton 1966). John does not mind, he sees hardship as a necessary part of fulfilling the American dream, and he "laughed at the ones who thought he had it hard" (Paxton 1966). "John's" life tells a simple story of an American boy who becomes a man through his experience at war:

My son, John, went to college and he made his way.  
Had to earn every penny, but he paid his way.  
He worked summers and holidays and through the year,  
And it was no easy struggle that he won.  
But he laughed at the ones who thought he had it hard.  
My son, John. John, my son.

My son, John, got his uniform and went away.  
With a band playing marches, he was sent away.  
And he wrote me a letter, when he had the time.  
He was losing his buddies one by one.  
And I prayed, and tried not to read between the lines.  
My son, John. John, my son.

My son, John, came home yesterday; he's here to stay.  
Not a word, to his father, have I heard him say.  
He seems glad to be home, but I can't be sure.  
When I ask him what he'd seen and done,  
He went up to his bedroom, and he closed the door.  
My son, John, John my son.  
He went up to his bedroom, and he closed the door.  
My son, John, John my son.  
(Paxton 1966)

“John’s” story, told from the point of view of a concerned but helpless father, acquires its poignancy in the repetition of the phrases “My son, John, John my son” at the end of each verse (Paxton 1966). “John” recalls traits of an American “Everyman,” and the idea of working hard and training for American life contains remnants of American cultural mythology regarding the American soldier present in both Paxton and Sadler’s lyrics. Paxton’s protagonist works “summers and holidays throughout the year” to “make his way” at college. When “John” joins the war effort in Vietnam, however, his father encounters a new version of “my son John”: a uniformed “John” marches off to war as a band plays, though it is unclear in Paxton’s lyrics if John’s excitement to enlist matches Sadler’s account of entering the combat zone. “John” attempts to tell his father, through “a letter [... that] he was losing his buddies one by one” (Paxton 1966).

The song creates a tense distance between the narrator (father) and “John” that results in a morose detachment in the song. The lyrical narrative begins retrospectively – detailing memories of John as a youth – and gradually ends in John’s silence behind his closed bedroom door. The repeated refrain, “My son, John. John my son,” underscores the growing emotional separation between the father and son as the son becomes more introverted and distant

(Paxton 1966). The father's curious reaction to his son's battle notes reveals an extremely important moment in the mythology of the American soldier; the father "prayed, and tried not to read between the lines" instead of reaching out to his son (Paxton 1966). The generation gap between young adults and their parents in the 1960s remains one of the most pronounced in U.S. history, and Paxton's father and son further underscore these differences between the two generations in the context of the era.

The idea that prayer and denial would be the correct answer to the pain of one of America's best sons reveals a flaw in the mythology of the American soldier. While the narrator repeats the refrain of "My son, John. John my son," the distance between the speaker and his son grows wider with each repetition; by the end of the song the son and father no longer speak, and the son is no longer his father's "good boy," but a shadow of his former self shut away in his bedroom (Paxton 1966). "Johnny" did not march home and receive a hearty welcome, as World War II welcomed its veterans. Returning Vietnam veterans "[seem] glad to be home, but [their loved ones] can't be sure" (Paxton 1966). The disconnect between the return of Vietnam Veterans as compared to previous ones stand in stark contrast. While "John" does not voice his views in the song, his actions speak louder than words. He withdraws from his father and does not talk with him. The anger, confusion, and alienation implied in "John's" shutting himself away serves as a metaphor for a whole generation of American soldiers shutting themselves away from the betrayal of the myth of the American soldier that they perhaps never believed. The song does not tell what sort of

injuries or terrors “John” might have seen, except that he has witnessed his friends’ deaths. The anonymity of these dead soldiers along with the name John (Doe) gives this story a universal dimension. In addition, the name may allude to earlier war songs, such as “John Brown’s Body” and “When Johnnie Comes Marching Home.” More importantly, the Paxton song addresses a shared experience; veterans’ inability to speak about their experience in the war. Paxton’s “John” also represents America’s “sons” lost to senseless wars, and the impact of their loss on family members and friends.

“John” followed the blueprint that the myth of America’s armed forces had given him, but he did not die. He survived not as a parade-heralded hero or a brave Green Beret, calling out his last dying words of valor to a waiting wife back home. Instead, “John” returned from the Vietnam War irrevocably damaged, and the knowledge that the myth of the American soldier – a good, strong, helpful, hard, and tireless worker – does not deliver the glory that it promised. The failure of this promise manifests itself in John ultimately losing his belief in himself, his father, and his past, present and future. “John’s” fate occupies a liminal space, always hovering between life and death, and the innocence and belief he could sustain for his country’s national mythology cannot stand up to the scrutiny of the lens of the Vietnam War.

***We gotta get out of this place, if it's the last thing we ever do. We gotta get out of this place – girl, there's a better life for me and you...***  
**The Animals, 1965: “We Gotta Get Outta This Place”**

In an opinion column for the online magazine *TruthOut.org*, a nonprofit organization “dedicated to providing independent news and commentary on a

daily basis,” Camillo Mac Bica, a professor of philosophy at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, a former Marine Corps officer, and Vietnam veteran, wrote an unusual essay. In “Don’t Thank Me for My Service,” Bica challenges the notion of Americans making it a point to honor and thank war veterans during the annual Memorial Day holiday. He makes his unusual request because “[his] service, as you refer to it, was basically, either to train to become a killer or to actually kill people and blow shit up” (Bica 2012). Bica’s service in Vietnam influenced his activism in antiwar movements; this veteran implores his readers: “...if you truly want to demonstrate your good character, patriotism, and support for the troops and veterans [...] do something meaningful and real [and] truly in the interest of this nation and of those victimized by war” (Bica 2012). He suggests citizens “make some demands” that echo Hixson’s and Marcuse’s statements regarding America’s one-dimensional, hegemonic and aggressive culture:

Demand, for example, an immediate end to the corporate takeover of our "democracy" and to the undue influence of the Military-industrial-Congressional complex. Demand sanity in Pentagon spending and a reallocation of finite resources to people-focused programs such as health care, education, and jobs rather than to killing and destruction. Demand an immediate end to wars for corporate profit, greed, power, and hegemony. Demand that we adhere to the Constitution and to international law. Demand accountability for those who make war easily and care more for wealth, profit, and power than for national interest or for the welfare of their fellow human beings. And finally, demand the troops be brought home now, and that they be adequately treated and cared for when they return. (Bica 2012)

Bica uses his perspective as a veteran to draw attention to what he sees as fundamental problems in America; Bica lists the same issues that the antiwar movement “demanded” be changed during the Vietnam War era. Most

importantly, he demands that troops “be brought home now”; it is clear that he thinks soldiers stationed in Iraq, Afghanistan, South Korea etc. are embroiled in conflicts mired in “corporate profit, greed, power, and hegemony” (Bica 2012). Today’s “Masters of War” continue to “make war easily and care more for wealth, profit, and power” and Bica demands they take responsibility for their actions (2012). Bica believes that other veterans share his feelings and he writes that Veterans who disagree with him “cling to the mythology of heroism, glory, honor and nobility of war”(2012). Bica’s perspective, as a Vietnam War veteran, is that the mythology of the American soldier – and the general “myth” of American diplomacy (cf. Hixson) – remains hopelessly antiquated yet something some Americans:

...[C]ling to for comfort. [American mythology] is a tool of political leaders to make war palatable, to garner support for their militarism and abandonment of diplomacy. It is what motivates future idealistic, perhaps naive, young people to "heed the call," to seek honor and glory, by enlisting in the military to fight for a cause they have been deceived into believing is right, just and necessary, but which is, in reality, a string of wars for corporate greed, power and hegemony. [...] Those veterans, however, who may not agree, who cling to the mythology of heroism, glory, honor and nobility of war, do so in large measure from fear that acknowledging war's reality would somehow diminish their sacrifice and the sacrifices of those whose lives were lost. Perhaps understandably, they view such sacrifices and loss as difficult enough to live with when they had value and purpose, and as intolerable if they were misguided and unnecessary. (Bica 2012)

Bica’s argues that the mythology of the American soldier renders its citizens unable to see unjustified sacrifice or to critically speak out against war. While his experience in Vietnam and status as a peace activist obviously color his opinion of the war, does Dr. Camillo Bica’s opinion represent the majority of Vietnam War veterans? Moreover, how does the experience of the soldier, in



contrast to and alongside that of the Anti-Vietnam War movement, compare? What do Vietnam War veterans have to say about their time in country, and does music still provide a solid base for exploring American cultural historiography?

The United States' cultural mythology surrounding the American soldier needs to hear the voice of its soldiers in order to form a more comprehensive view of their experience *beyond* the limits of national identity.

Contemporary cultural discourse surrounding the Vietnam War era often reduces it to clichéd images of soldiers wading through rice paddies or hippies rebelling against the mainstream traditions of the previous generation; rarely do audiences get to hear about what those who fought in Vietnam heard while in country. While contemporary audiences may identify recordings like Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth" (1967) or Bob Dylan's "Blowin' In the Wind" (1963) as obvious references to of the fighting in Vietnam, these songs do not speak too clearly about the conflict for those who actually served in the Vietnam War.

To examine the accuracy of the American historiography created by these lyrical artifacts requires comparing them with the opinions of those who had the biggest impact on this era of American history: the soldiers. Through interviews and anonymous online surveys, I studied Vietnam Veterans' "musical memories" in an attempt to determine the effects the music of the antiwar movement had on soldiers' military morale as well as their individual opinions of the war. By fusing the oral histories of Vietnam veterans with American history and the cultural commentary found in popular song lyrics written during the war,

American cultural historians can uncover voices and memories of the era that have yet to be fully recognized.

Crucial pieces of the larger narrative of the Vietnam War, the musical memories of Vietnam veterans builds an understanding of how American music history during the Vietnam War formed. Examining what the American GI's in Vietnam listened to, as well as the effects the music of the antiwar movement had on their military morale and their individual opinions of the war, provides a more complete understanding of the Vietnam War. Interviews I completed with Vietnam War Veterans provide a new realm of direct inquiry into American culture, ideology, and history, and attempt to explore the presence of cultural myths created about the Vietnam War experience. Did soldiers hear the same messages from the same songs during their time in combat? How did they, if they were able to or wanted to, participate in the peace movement, and, with that, did they participate in the 1960s and early 1970s counter-culture movement at all? Could they listen to the same songs, specifically the antiwar songs, coming out of America, Europe, Australia, etc. while they were "in country?" By fusing the oral histories of Vietnam veterans with American history and the cultural commentary found in popular song lyrics written during the war, this multi-disciplinary approach to understanding American musical history during the Vietnam War seeks to acknowledge voices of the era that have yet to be heard.

## **Methodology**

My project, titled “Compiling an Oral History of Vietnam Veteran’s Musical Memories”<sup>48</sup> involved interviews with approximately 38 Vietnam Veterans. Some veterans I already knew, and others received emailed surveys via Vietnam Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) chapters throughout the United States. Survey respondents remain anonymous following the procedures outlined in the Internal Review Board’s policies. Under the guidance of the Human Subjects Protection Office and the University of Louisville’s Internal Review Board, I asked veterans five questions about their time in Vietnam (see Appendix). I first asked veterans for the dates of their service in Vietnam and what branch they served. These questions helped determine what music might have been available and relevant to the Veteran. It also helped to position the Veteran in terms of historical and cultural contexts. I also asked veterans what music “sources” were available to them in Vietnam so that I could find out how they listened to music while in country (radio, cassette tape, etc.). My research does not provide conclusive evidence regarding how soldiers serving in the Vietnam War listened to current songs, or if censorship was imposed upon music available to them. Without dredging up specific memories, I asked veterans what songs, song lyrics, or albums reminded them of their time in service in Vietnam. This question pertains to Vietnam Veteran’s cultural memory of their time “in country” and attempts to align Veteran cultural memory with that of

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<sup>48</sup> The complete set of questions for “Compiling an Oral History of Vietnam Veteran’s Musical Memories,” along with the IRB approval notice and consent form, are located in the Appendix.

Americans in the United States regarding popular music. A necessary component of my research required a rudimentary understanding of the songs soldiers associated with their time “in country.” Finally, I asked Vietnam Veterans if they had an awareness of the Anti-Vietnam War protest movement, and, if so, did they acknowledge this awareness. This question’s appeal lies in its ability to let the respondent speak briefly on the topic of the antiwar movement in America during the Vietnam War, and it opened up the possibility of the Veteran’s individual responses to the protest movement.

Out of the 38 survey respondents, 86% served one tour of Vietnam, and the median years of the tours occurred during 1967 – 1970 (79%). Only five respondents completed two or more tours of duty. Regarding the representations of divisions of the United States armed forces, 47% of the respondents served in the Army, 21% the Navy, 13% the Air Force, and 10% the Marines. The Vietnam Veterans who participated in this survey had mixed opinions on the subject of the antiwar movement. While 7% of the respondents noted that the Anti-Vietnam War movement affected them upon their return home and 31% of respondents voiced vehement opinions against the protesters, 52% of the respondents remained neutral toward the antiwar protesters and songs, even if they confirmed that they were aware of the movement’s activities. According to my survey’s results, the most popular way soldiers heard music while in country varied by the branch they served. Those enlisted in the Navy and Air Force accessed “onboard UHF radio in our aircraft” to “ship radio,” “live music at the Majestic Hotel in downtown Saigon,” and “live USO shows” (IRB

12.0431 2013). 44% of respondents heard music through the American Forces Network's (AFN) stations; several veterans volunteered the precise locations they heard the AFN: "Da Nang," "Saigon," "my room in Cam Rahn Bay" (IRB 12.0431 2013). One respondent even remembered the call letters of a radio station he heard while in country: "KLIK – the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Radio station in Lai Khe" (IRB 12.0431). The precise locations of these veterans' "musical memories" underscores the argument that Veterans' memories of Vietnam War era music are linked to specific geographic locations, making their cultural memories unique compared to the average American's experience of the era. While the ideas of "sacred spaces" and cultural memory receive more exploration in "Find the Cost of Freedom," the responses from my survey revealed clear recollections where Vietnam Veterans linked music with memories of and in Vietnam.

The AFN radio played at bases and during R&R<sup>49</sup> sessions; bringing a stereo into the jungle battlefields was not a wise idea regarding the welfare of American soldiers; one would not want their tape of Motown hits to give away their position in a combat zone. Some soldiers defied this idea; 41% of respondents heard music from cassette tapes, eight tracks, and "reel-to-reel" tapes, the maintenance of which also prompted fun memories. One respondent wrote that soldiers "bought [all the stereo equipment he] could at the BX<sup>50</sup>," while another recalled hoarding "expended field radio batteries" to power his

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<sup>49</sup> Military terminology standing for "rest and relaxation."

<sup>50</sup> Military terminology standing for "Base Exchange"; soldiers could purchase general "luxury" items at the BX, and many also serve as its base's postal service hub.

small cassette deck (IRB 12.0431 2013). One respondent enjoyed “tapes sent from home,” while another brought some of his “33s” on board the destroyer where he served (IRB 12.0431 2013). Three respondents heard live music while in country; these performances usually took place at “EM and NCO Clubs” and featured “cover bands” or “USO shows” (IRB 12.0431 2013). Many soldiers (83%) reported hearing Anti-Vietnam War songs – Country Joe and the Fish’s “Feels-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die Rag” was popular with soldiers serving in the later years of the war – and about 25% of respondents did not recall hearing any antiwar songs. One veteran, who completed two tours of duty (June 1969 – February 1971 and April 1971 – December 1974) remarked, “we didn’t hear any of [the antiwar songs]”; another noted that the “AFN wouldn’t play that sort of stuff,” and that he “did not care” for it (IRB 12.0431 2013).

Most veterans who participated in my project appeared conflicted about “that sort of stuff” – the ethos of the Anti-Vietnam War music. 52% of those surveyed expressed neutral or apathetic feelings toward the antiwar movement, though 31% of respondents still harbor anger toward the movement (IRB 12.0431 2013). “It was disappointing and demoralizing” one veteran wrote when asked how knowledge of the antiwar movement affected him; two other respondents, who, curiously, both recalled the Rolling Stones’ song “Paint it Black” as a song that they linked to their time in Vietnam, expressed pure anger: “Yes. Should have shot all the protestors [sic]” one wrote, while the other remarked: “protestors are lucky they were out of reach” (IRB 12.0431 2013). Aside from earning the labels of “disgusting and anti-social” and dismissed as

“drugged hippies” by soldiers serving in Vietnam, those in the U.S. speaking against the war, one veteran mused, were “ignorant of the facts” (IRB 12.4301 2013). Responses like these indicate that many veterans felt a clear disconnection between their experiences in Vietnam from that of the antiwar protestors (IRB 12.0431 2013). One respondent took the time to write a very clear expression of his memories of Anti-Vietnam War music and protesters:

We didn't hear [Anti-Vietnam War music] much in early '69 and we didn't pay any attention to them at all when in the bush. When you're a grunt in the jungle living like an animal all you think of is today. You worry about your next step, hoping not to trip a mine. You worry if a sniper has you in his sights. You're dead tired and only wondering when you're going to stop humping these mountains and stop and get some lousy C-Rats<sup>51</sup> to eat. I didn't worry one bit about those college kids, for they had it made and I was living like an animal. (IRB 12.0431 2013)

This veteran's description of “living like an animal” while “those college kids...had it made” provides a brutal image of the antiwar movement from the soldier's point of view. This veteran describes his days as living in the moment, fearing “[tripping] a mine” or if “a sniper has you in his sights” (IRB 12.0431 2013). Another veteran echoed the previous respondent's memory, recalling: “We were aware of the anti war [sic] movement and the songs, but we were too focused on the enemy, the war, the villagers, etc. to worry much about what was going on back home” (IRB 12.0431 2013). The soldiers, too caught up in their reality in an active war zone, lamented that they “came home angry” at the protesters, one soldier angrily responded on his survey: “YES!! [I have] hard feelings & have not yet forgiven them for their ‘AID AND COMFORT’ to the

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<sup>51</sup> Military terminology/slang for “C Rations,” which were individual canned, pre-cooked, and prepared wet rations given to soldiers at bases.

enemy [sic]" (IRB 12.0541 2013). With regard to the physical and psychological conditions of the environment in Vietnam, it is not difficult to imagine that some Veterans would express their displeasure over the behavior of the participants in the antiwar movement, even though the antiwar movement sincerely believed its protests helped those fighting in Vietnam.

The majority of respondents expressed neutral views regarding the Anti-Vietnam War movement and its music. One veteran noted that the protesters "had their point of view and I had my job to do," while another aptly admitted: "[the antiwar movement] didn't really change the way things went" (IRB 12.0431 2013). Only one respondent revealed how the Anti-Vietnam War movement and its music negatively affected him while in Vietnam: "I was aware of the [antiwar] songs. We heard them all the time (July 1970 – July 1971) and it made me feel like I was doing something wrong by being there" (IRB 12.0431 2013). This veteran's simple admission that the songs and movement "made" him feel shame or guilt regarding his service highlights one of the most complicated effects of antiwar protest on the soldiers: the intended message results in an unintended reaction. It is unlikely that the majority of musicians writing antiwar music felt personal anger at the soldiers, but several responses to this survey lead me to believe the soldiers felt differently. One respondent, however, found humor in his situation; serving in Vietnam "made it harder to meet hippie chicks" (IRB 12.0431). Another veteran saw the antiwar movement as a hopeful beacon: "Other than mentions in mail from home, [I wasn't aware of songs referencing antiwar protest]. The Antiwar [sic] movement gave me hope



that I would get home!” (IRB 12.0431 2013).

The majority of the survey respondents, even if bearing hard feelings for the protest movement, linked several Anti-Vietnam War songs, like “Masters of War” and “Eve of Destruction” to their time in country, even if they had no direct contact with the movement. Some recalled very specific musical memories of the war, where song and action forever remain linked in the veteran’s recollection of their time in Vietnam. One respondent wrote that he “played ‘On the Road Again’ by Canned Heat as we walked out of the wire. To this day I still hear M-16 bolts going forward when hear that song” (IRB 12.0431 2013).

Simultaneously amazing and terrible, the sounds of “On the Road Again,” in this veteran’s mind, will always be accompanied by M-16 bolts. This musical memory such as this one cannot resonate with the protestors, who perhaps may recall a song playing while tear-gas whizzed past their picket line. One Naval veteran will always think of Vietnam when he hears “[Sittin’] on the Dock of the Bay’ by Otis Redding. They played it all the way over on the troop ship” (IRB 12.4301 2013). But through all the songs remembered by veterans in this survey, one song kept popping up: Eric Burdon and the Animals’ 1965 hit “We Gotta Get Outta This Place.” 23% of my survey’s respondents reported that they associated this song with their time in Vietnam.

The title to “We Gotta Get Outta This Place” alone serves to bolster many veterans’ memories. Fran McVey, a retired Commander in the U.S. Navy, contacted me outside of my survey and volunteered a piece of an article he wrote for a 2012 issue of *Veterans of Foreign Wars* magazine. His article makes

specific mention of the popularity of “We Gotta Get Outta This Place” among Vietnam Veterans. McVey’s musical memories of Vietnam recall his time as a “Tactical Coordinator/Mission Commander of a Navy P-3 Orion aircraft,” where he and his crew “often flew 10 to 12 hours a day” (personal communication, November 20, 2012). McVey explained that aircraft carriers had an advantage over other military operations in Vietnam concerning music:

The P-3 has a total of five radios. Therefore, when we were not too busy, we would tune our UHF2 radio to any music we could pick up while flying. Being a long-range aircraft we were also in and out of the Philippines, Okinawa, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, etc. So we had broader exposure to music than some others. Many of the Army and Marines on the ground had less opportunity for music during their typical 13 months in country except when they got a few days R&R or back at a base where there were radios. (Personal email, November 20, 2012)

McVey also informed me that his article, “Viet Nam and Music of the Time,” was influenced by a series of articles in the VFW’s national magazine “on military bands throughout history. In the February 2012 edition of the VFW magazine there is a discussion of how Vietnam-era music symbolized the times [...] and it brought back some personal memories” (personal communication, November 20, 2012).

One of McVey’s personal memories links “We Gotta Get Outta This Place” to a specific moment of his time in Vietnam. In his article, McVey details his memories of war and music, but recalls his last hours with specific pleasure:

On our last day and evening in Vietnam my crew had Ready Alert duty until 2200. All of our stuff was packed and at the hangar but we could not load anything on the aircraft until we were relieved of Ready Alert. If we had gotten launched any time later in the day or evening, we would have been left behind for at least another day. By about 2100 it was looking like we might just make it and be able to head home with the others. So, we started playing “We Gotta Get Out of this Place” through the Ready Alert

radios. Instead of getting in trouble, whoever was on the command net patched it through to anybody and everybody. Soon we were getting calls from all over the place; even the Air Force congratulated the crew on having made it through our tour and wishing us well going home. Those of you who have experienced similar things will appreciate how meaningful that was and a great way for us to end our first tour. (McVey 2012)

McVey's memory of "We Gotta Get Outta This Place" retains a literal connotation – he remembers hearing as he left Vietnam. But the other components that of his memory – the Air Force calling to congratulate the crew, the anxious watch of the clock, and the command net's allowing of the use of the radio – make McVey's memory of the song a vivid moment in the larger narrative of the Vietnam War. McVey's memory of the Animal's song humanizes the war, revealing not only the inescapable operating procedure followed by the armed forces (unable to leave until relieved of the "Ready Alert" status), but also the behavior of young men ready to leave a war zone and go home. The readiness of the crew to "get outta this place" underscores the unique and untapped resources of the memories of music and the Vietnam War that only a veteran can provide.

Eric Burdon and the Animals' "We Gotta Get Outta This Place" reached number two in the group's native UK's singles chart in August of 1965, reached its highest placement on the U.S. pop singles chart, number 13, in September, and peaked at the number two spot on the Canadian singles chart in October.<sup>52</sup>

The Animals, known for the loud, electric, blues-heavy songs such as 1964's

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<sup>52</sup> The Animals were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994; the chart information for "We Gotta Get Outta This Place" comes from their online archive: <<http://web.archive.org/web/20070202161305/http://www.rockhall.com/hof/inductee.asp?id=58>>.

“House of the Rising Sun” and “Don’t Let Me Be Misunderstood,” also wrote the blatant 1968 Anti-Vietnam War song “Sky Pilot,” an empathetic melody about a military chaplain in the war. Following the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in August of 1964, the first troops (3,400 Marines) to arrive in Vietnam landed March 8, 1965, near Da Nang in South Vietnam. Over 1,800 U.S. soldiers died in Vietnam in 1965; the year marked a surge in the American effort against the North Vietnamese in February (Operation Flaming Dart), and troops from Russia, Korea, China, Australia, and New Zealand were deployed to Vietnam throughout the year. 1965’s “We Gotta Get Outta This Place” happened to be a hit the same year that action escalated in the war and public awareness of the war increased due to heavier media coverage of the conflict. Between Johnson’s Inauguration in January of 1965 to the release of “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” in September of 1965, the United States witnessed many unique events. Among them: the assassination of Malcolm X, several large civil rights marches (notably in Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, the latter including prominent civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), and the first SDS march in protest of the Vietnam War. Many events of 1965 presented previously unseen challenges to America.

More importantly, the increase in the number of United States troops in South Vietnam grew from 75,000 to 125,000, and President Johnson announced plans to double the number of men drafted each month from 17,000 to 35,000 in July of that year. The song’s emotive and universal lyrics – Eric Burdon admitted in a 2004 interview that “the song became an anthem for different people –

everybody at some time wants to get out of the situation they're in" – could easily be applied to any dire straits that listeners could experience. The popularity of the song for soldiers in Vietnam, however, has a simple explanation: the song reached its peak chart position only months after a surge of troops entered Vietnam during the same year the Anti-Vietnam War movement made big, public moves.

Doug Bradley, a Vietnam Veteran and Director of Communications in the University of Wisconsin System, along with Craig Werner, Chair of the African American Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, conducted a survey of Vietnam Veterans' musical memories in 2006. They found "the songs that mattered most to veterans diverge a great deal from the clichéd artifact of that era, the 'protest song.' ' That was kind of a Hollywood illusion'" (Werner qtd. Matmiller 2006). They also found that "We Gotta Get Out of This Place" had "absolute unanimity [...] this song being the touchstone [...] This was the Vietnam anthem. Every bad band that ever played in an armed forces club had to play this song" (Bradley qtd. Mattmiller 2006).

The song's lyrics resonate due to their simplicity. "We Gotta Get Outta This Place" begins with its narrator speaking from "this dirty old part of the city where the sun refused to shine" about how "people tell [him] there ain't no use in tryin'" (Mann and Weil 1965). The "people's" advice for the narrator to give up "tryin'" is repeated when narrator howls out an image of "my daddy in bed a-dyin,'" in the refrain of the song. These lyrics lament that the narrator's father's long, hard hours – along with his own, "every night and day" – lead them both to

an early death; this death could be physical, emotional, or spiritual, but it definitely can be avoided by “[getting] outta this place” (Mann & Weil 1965). The song’s lyrics occasionally mention a girl, likely the narrator’s girlfriend or lover, who despite being “so young and pretty” will “be dead before [her] time is due”; this girl’s role is a far cry from traditional image of an American woman sitting at home, as in previous generations’ war-era songs, awaiting their soldier’s return (Mann & Weil 1965). The song’s upbeat, major chord chorus contrasts with the dark moans, screams, and wails the singer uses to describe “this place.” Through the song’s musical tensions and lyrics, the listener comes to understand that “this place” sucks the life out of people, and if the narrator (and his girlfriend, and the listener) can *just*, if “it’s the last thing [they] ever do,” “get outta this place” they would be in a place where “there’s a better life” (Mann & Weil 1965). Certainly any soldier in Vietnam – drafted, enlisted, on his first or second tour of duty – would potentially identify with the urgency of the song’s chorus and the anxious lyrics:

In this dirty old part of the city  
Where the sun refused to shine  
People tell me there ain't no use in tryin'  
Now my girl you're so young and pretty  
And one thing I know is true  
You'll be dead before your time is due, I know

Watch my daddy in bed a-dyin'  
Watched his hair been turnin' grey  
He's been workin' and slavin' his life away  
Oh yes I know it

(Yeah!) He's been workin' so hard  
(Yeah!) I've been workin' too, baby  
(Yeah!) Every night and day  
(Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!)

We gotta get out of this place  
If it's the last thing we ever do  
We gotta get out of this place  
'cause girl, there's a better life for me and you  
(Mann and Weil 1965).

One of the most curious aspects about “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” has to do with its near universal popularity among Vietnam Veterans and citizens in the United States. The number of soldiers listening to the song in Vietnam did not affect its position in the U.S. pop charts, and if those participating in the antiwar movement listened to the song, that audience likely influenced the song’s climb up the charts. Perhaps the song’s legacy resides in its lyrical comment on the whole Vietnam War era; the entire country wanted to “get out of [that] place” – a period of history so rife with turmoil and confrontations that there had to be “a better life” somewhere.

Perhaps by “[Getting] Outta This [Metaphorical] Place” in American history, the United States could have ceded some of its hegemonic rhetoric and admitted that the war in Vietnam was just as Dr. Bica described it: “a tool of political leaders to make war palatable, to garner support for their militarism and abandonment of diplomacy” (2012). The great myth of American diplomacy – and the great mythology of the American soldier – reveals its flaws through Veterans’ responses to its perpetuation. Vietnam Veterans do not agree with one another regarding the Anti-Vietnam War movement, but they do agree that music was important to them and planted an unforgettable soundtrack in their memories. I did not expect the veterans I surveyed to be antiwar in any sense. The antiwar soldiers generally fostered those feelings upon return to the U.S.

and remained a decided yet vocal minority; my preliminary research led me to the conclusion long before I initiated the study. I am truly grateful for their willingness to remember their time, musically, in Vietnam, and believe that their input, even when they express *anti*-antiwar protest sentiments, underscores the argument that American cultural identity contains flaws and antiquated ideas about our conduct during the war. Furthermore, the links evident in the veterans' minds between places and music emphasize the complex relationship between memory, time, and spaces in time. The Anti-Vietnam War protesters remain a vocal and visual part of American history; the Vietnam War era's cultural memory begins with them. When composing a historiography of the Vietnam War, including the voices of the soldiers exposes a concealed area of history, a space where *place* and *music* intertwine beyond the average Vietnam War experience of America. Through the soldiers, we also see Vietnam, a place many Americans know nothing about, even though many of our fellow compatriots died there, leaving behind memories, a bit of American cultural mythology – and music.



## CONCLUSION: FIND THE COST OF FREEDOM

In an article contemplating the idea of Santa Barbara, California's "sacred spaces," writer Geneviève Antonow asks:

What is a sacred space? At its most basic, it is a place that invites the contemplation of divine mystery, and encourages an attitude of spiritual openness. A sacred space is not necessarily where answers are grasped or understood. Rather it is where questions are asked, conversations occur, rituals are perpetuated, dances are performed, songs are sung, and silence is heard – all in the attempt to find answers. But this, in itself, raises questions. [...] In the end, sacred spaces reveal themselves. Some would say they "breathe," and that the old stories which their walls have witnessed are somehow "whispered to those who listen." Usually sacred spaces are found in inviting places, which somehow retain the aura of those who have passed that way. Finally, they can be a wonderful antidote to all that is superficial and frenzied in modern society. (2009)

Sacred sites and secular spaces can often be the same thing; through Antonow's definition of a "sacred space," the countryside of the Dakrong Province in Vietnam – pocked with bomb craters and home to some of the worst battles of the Vietnam War – fits easily into the idea of simultaneous sacred site and secular space. As I stared out at the Rockpile, a former US military base, on the side of Route 9 (dubbed the "highway of horror" during the war), I was struck by the number of questions this peaceful hill inspires in me. Looking at Vietnam's war sites from the "American War" resembles viewing an old Civil War site in my native Southern United States, I think: *This beautiful field was once a site of extraordinary violence that changed the course of history.* Is this place an antidote to "all that is superficial and frenzied in modern society?" (Antonow

2009). For me, place underscores the fact that superficial and modern society continues despite the lessons these sacred spaces projects. It is hard to connect the past with the present, even when it is right in front of you, or even speaking to you. Throughout my entire trip in Vietnam, I was looking for traces of the war, but the green hill that was once an inaccessible key artillery bunker during the battle of Khe Sanh<sup>53</sup> does not look like anything but a green hill. My guide, Mr. Vu, a Vietnamese military historian with a charming Australian-English accent, excitedly compares our view to old photos of the Rockpile taken in 1968. He enlarges a photo (he has them on his iPad) and 1968 meets 2012 – I look from the green hilltop to the photo of a war-weary group of young men, visibly dusty, manning weapons at the top of what is now, literally right in front of me, a verdant part of the hillside.

In this instance, I experienced the dovetail effect of a sacred site and secular space. I wondered, while looking down off the side of a bridge at a stream bearing evidence of three previous bridges, all of which had been destroyed during the “American War” between 1955 and 1975, why on earth the United States felt so determined to conquer this small country and its indomitable people. I listened to Mr. Vu explain how his grandfather (a North Vietnamese supporter during the war) and his father (a soldier in the South Vietnamese Army who “only had to go to correction camp for about two weeks”) didn’t speak until the grandfather’s death, on account of their differences regarding the war. At this moment, I am fully aware that Mr. Vu, a man whose

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<sup>53</sup> January 21 – 9 July 1968.

family had experienced the exact sadness and division that was often just a fact in my research documents, is confirming the multiple historical accounts that refer to the Vietnamese conflict as “a civil war.” I had been looking for the Vietnam War, and here it was; in human form, no less, yet it still seemed so far away.

Vietnam has preserved the memory of the “American War” well, but it does not live in the shadow of that war. Vietnam is moving, building, and progressing; it does not have time to dwell on the past. During my tour of the DMZ area with Mr. Vu, I casually ask about Vietnam’s current relationship with its neighbor, China, where I had just spent over three weeks. His face is sober as he explains current issues regarding China making a land grab at islands that belong to Vietnam in the “Eastern Sea” (also known as the South China Sea, depending on who you talk to). He then laughs: “We like the Americans more than the Chinese.” Considering that we just visited the Vinh Moc tunnels, a space where an entire village lived, for three years during the war, in a underground rabbit’s warren of tunnels due to their village’s unfortunate proximity to the northern border of the DMZ, I am stunned. The Vinh Moc area in August of 2012 is populated by an eager bunch of local women selling bottled water and snacks, several stray chickens, and hollows in the ground clearly marked “bomb crater.” The *Americans* dropped the bombs (some of which are on display and some remain undetonated and abandoned) on Vietnam that caused these permanent scars in the country’s landscape. The *Americans* dropped 7 million tons of bombs on Vietnam –more than *twice* the amount the United States dropped on

Asia and Europe in World War II – but I, an *American*, was a favored guest in the country compared to the Chinese?

Our disconnection between the past and the present remains an inherent problem of being human; humanity cannot fully grasp or understand history and, these days, we rarely make nor have the time to do so. The historical relationship between China and Vietnam is much longer and more complicated than the United States' relationship with Vietnam, obviously. China has shared a border with Vietnam longer than the United States has been a country. I am not the only person who might not realize what is an otherwise obvious fact; the majority of citizens in the United States have very little knowledge of Asia in general, and that continent's history is certainly not part of the average public education in America. We know where Japan is and who the Japanese are, because that's where we dropped nuclear bombs on in World War II (and where many of our cars come from). We know China as well, because we're told to fear and mistrust its citizens and because that's where our iPhones are made. However, beyond these peripheral, contemporary facts about Asia, the United States, as country, knows very little about our history on the continent, let alone the history of Asia.

Standing in a mock tunnel at the former Khe Sanh airbase, near an old C130 plane, I get a sense of the terror and horror of the Vietnam War. I try to imagine what sitting in this tunnel for days on end, hearing the constant thud of mortars while trapped in a hot and muddy tunnel, truly felt like, yet it feels perverse to "play pretend" here. Imagining the past – and the past reality of this

war site – pulls images and ideas from a multitude of sources; not only has the research for my dissertation influenced my vision of this mock site, but scenes from Hollywood films and documentaries also shape my idea of Khe Sanh. Local Vietnamese men trying to sell old military medals, Zippo lighters, and dog tags near the entrance of the site interrupt my concentration. My visit in Vietnam – as a scholar, a historian, and a tourist – is a commodity to them. Do they care if the war relics they are selling are real? Why should I care if they make money off a devastating war that happened over 30 years ago? Their actions sully the “sacred” space that I have created in my mind, quite simply. I still think of any life lost in war as a sacrifice, no matter how senseless the war, and as a Vietnamese man tries to push an old “war medal” into my hand, I recall an experience I had in 2008 at the University of South Carolina, Upstate. I was teaching there when the “Traveling Vietnam Memorial Wall” came through the area, and the University hosted a memorial event and invited the greater South Carolina community to visit the wall. During my lunch break, I watched an American veteran walk silently up to the wall, brush his hands over a few names, pause on a particular one, and then turn away and rush back toward the parking lot, sobbing. I had seen similar displays of emotional memory at the Wall in Washington, D.C., but this particular memory retains a potency that I cannot forget. I can never imagine what the name that veteran read on the traveling wall meant to him, nor can I truly understand what the relics the Vietnamese men are selling me represent to them.

The symbolism and agency we assign any part of the Vietnam War is subjective to our collective memory. Am I angry about the relic-hawkers' behavior on any American veteran's behalf? Am I perversely happy that Vietnam, still a poor country, has found a way to make money off the tragic carnage that was their "American War?" Antonow believes that by looking for answers to these questions I will only find more questions in this sacred space. The grassy field amid the mountains holds only traces of American presence in Vietnam, some of which has been replicated through the re-constructed tunnels, the scattering of dilapidated old planes, and the prevalence of on-site museum exhibits or monument plaques, yet I know how much blood was shed in this beautiful, quiet spot – I just cannot *see* it.

Mr. Vu walks with my traveling companion and me across the (reconstructed) Route 1 bridge over the Ben Hai River, showing us a metal beam that represents the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel. He explains that this "parallel" was not a construction of the Vietnamese, but rather that of a delegation of foreigners at the 1954 Geneva Convention. This beam is only about two inches wide, yet it represents so much more in the sense of a sacred space. Vietnamese, American, French, and Australian blood spilled because of the division these two inches caused. If Mr. Vu had not shown us the beam, we would not have noticed it; perplexingly, it is not marked in any way – no placard to distinguishes it from any of the other beams. We walk from the south side of the DMZ to the northern side. Old propaganda speakers are on the northern side, bordered by a large arch, painted with a slogan that has always proclaimed that Vietnam always will

be one unified country – even during the war. Northern Vietnam underscored this fact during the Vietnam War, according to Mr. Vu; by always matching their color of paint on their side of the old Route 1 bridge to the color the South Vietnamese chose. These “paint wars” continued throughout the war; who was fighting this part of the war? The spirit of the Vietnamese people and their unwillingness to give up their struggle for independence, something I had read about over and over conducted research on the Vietnam War, is evident in this anecdote, yet the bridge I am hearing the story on is a reconstruction of the original structure. A slick, four-lane bridge passes to our left; the ox loafing around the river bank seems oblivious to the cars and trucks whizzing by overhead, and those vehicles, in turn, appear oblivious to the various monuments that adorn both sides of the riverbanks. But if you drive past something every day – for several years I drove by a monument to Camp Sutton, a World War II hospital in Monroe, North Carolina – you don’t really think about it very much, if at all. The monuments and recreations of the DMZ area are for international memory; the Vietnamese know the history of their country, but they do not revisit it and revise it in the way the United States does. As we drive through the countryside, I keep seeing small shrines sitting in front of every house, business, and in every rice field. Mr. Vu explains: “This particular area of Vietnam has seen many wars and many battles, and those little pagodas are for the spirits of all the dead... they are there so the dead have somewhere to go and aren’t lost.” The dead, thus, are still very much alive in Vietnam, but the Vietnamese expression of this cultural memory of sacred sacrifice is not

instantly recognizable to the foreign visitor – it has to be explained to us. As a historian, a researcher, a tourist, and a student, I am reminded that cultural histories remain hidden when we do not make more of an effort to understand the cultures we study.

In his 1984 lecture *The Reality of the Historical Past*, historian Paul Ricœur reminds us that “[t]he past is a guiding-guiding concept as much as a limiting-concept” (4). The “true” past – the “true” history of the Vietnam War – remains a something concocted by the historian. As I walk across reconstructed bridges and try to imagine a war zone in a peaceful, clean, reconstructed battle tunnel, I am limited to consulting “documents” or “artifacts” that rely on my imagination and research to make them “real.” When Ricœur asks, “[w]hat does the term ‘real’ signify when it is applied to the historical past? What do we mean when we say that something really happened?” he emphasizes that the “recourse” to historical artifacts and texts “marks a dividing line between history and fiction” (1984, 1). The historical and cultural reality of the Vietnam War that I have written about in here is my own invention; I am, as Ricœur insists, “well aware that [my] re-construction is a different construction than the course of events reported” (1984, 26). My “re-construction” of the Vietnam War – even though it includes interviews with American Vietnam War veterans, the study and exploration of Vietnam’s “American War” sites, extensive research of Vietnam War-era American historical texts, films, and the analysis of American music lyrics from the era in the United States – is incomplete. My understanding of the war will always be what Ricœur calls an “Analogous” comprehension; the



Vietnam War forms part of my cultural history (cf. “Same”), but it will always remain a distant part of my cultural history (cf. “Other”). Ricœur explains:

[Analogous] joins the Same to the Other. But the paradox is that by abolishing the difference between others today and others of yesteryear, it obliterates the problematic of temporal distance and eludes the specific difficulty related to the survival of the past in the present – a difficulty that constitutes the difference between knowledge of other people and knowledge of the past. (1984, 17)

The survival of the Vietnam War in the present – in the moments where we simultaneously view photos of war sites on an iPad and in person or see an American Vietnam War Veteran react to a name chiseled into a wall – underscores the difficulty of comprehending *how* the war has survived in present-day American cultural history. Mr. Vu makes a living showing people – notably many American veterans – battle sites of *their* past. His “present” reconciles the past and the present for those curious about the Vietnam War, but there is no way that I can have a truly comprehensive knowledge of this war, no matter how hard I try to “know” people and their pasts.

These Vietnam War sites are sacred spaces that “whisper” to me because I listen; my imagination of the war – and this textual “re-construction” of it through historiography and music lyrics – is only one small piece of a larger narrative. The most potent message of my particular “re-construction” is that the Vietnam War was a mistake in American foreign policy, and while the sacrifices and voices of the veterans of the war should be honored, remembered, and recorded, the ethos of the antiwar movement – war is *not* the answer – is the lasting legacy of the war. The tragedy of this thesis – there are options available to the United States that do not include war – is that recognizing these

ideological flaws in American national identity and cultural history requires us to question the foundations of American national identity. The Anti-Vietnam War music, however, continues to be a constant reminder to America that governments could and should negotiate peace before dropping bombs or scarring citizens. The only catch to regarding Anti-Vietnam War music lyrics as lessons from the past is that we must continue to “re-construct” the horrors of the war without America’s historic compulsion to justify aggressive acts with more aggression. America can “re-construct” its historical past in Vietnam into a lesson that teaches us, as citizens, that war is not always the answer to our fears and things – communism, socialism, terrorism – that we do not understand.

***Oh my friend, what time is this – to trade the handshake for the fist?***  
**Joni Mitchell, 1969; “Fiddle for the Drum”**

The Anti-Vietnam War movement was on to something – an ideology that war was not the answer, and that, given a chance, peace could work – and the movement brought the United States to a previously unseen cultural crossroads. However, despite the recognition that the United States had the option to remove troops from its chosen war, those against the Vietnam War were ultimately unable to pronounce the antiwar movement as truly victorious. The United States government essentially co-opted the movement’s ethos and manufactured it into a moment in history that remains curious and groundbreaking to this day – the movement’s clothing, language, and ethos gradually became reshaped into the advertisement of commodities like

deodorant and Coca-Cola or fodder for films and television sitcoms. What was communicated, however, from the song lyrics of the era about the war, was a created space where harmony and unity with one's fellow human beings could be realized. These songwriters starkly contrasted these utopian dreams with the realities of the era, thus presenting today's scholars with snapshots of the United States experiencing a crisis of identity as it faced the opportunity to choose diplomacy over battle. The horrors of war in Vietnam and the angry cries for change raged in the background of the Vietnam War and in all the art from the era. By juxtaposing these lyrics with history, literature, philosophy, and other art forms of the era, we can ultimately see that the United States' decision to enter the Vietnam War was wrong in hindsight.

In 1988, American social and political activist Tom Hayden reflected on the Anti-Vietnam War movement and the general counter-culture efforts of the 1960s in *Reunion* magazine.<sup>54</sup> As expected, the former Anti-Vietnam War protester and politician expressed a positive view regarding one of the most tumultuous eras in American history, remarking that the legacy of the social changes that occurred during the war had a decisive impact on American culture:

What did the generation of the sixties achieve? What does it mean today? [...] We accomplished more than we expected, than most generations ever accomplish [...] We opened closed systems. From Georgia to Mississippi to the South as a whole, from Newark and Chicago to the cities of the North, from 1965 Vietnam teach-ins to the 1973 War Powers Act, from the Democratic convention of 1968 to that of 1972, there was a steady

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<sup>54</sup> Hayden, T. (1988). "Epilogue," originally published in *Reunion* magazine, New York: Random House. 501-507.

evolution from patterns of exclusion toward greater citizen participation in basic decisions. (Levy 1998, 258)

Hayden's assertion that activism in the 1960s "opened closed systems" and left "a steady evolution [...] toward greater citizen participation" speaks volumes in today's society, where social activists focus attention on a wide variety of social problems. One of the "systems" opened by the 1960s generation, in terms of social protest, was the idea of a safe space for Americans to disagree with their government in regard to war. Those who lived through the Vietnam War era had to battle censorship and rally against preconceived notions of American national and cultural identity while simultaneously protesting war; protestors today benefited from the earlier "unlikely" trail-blazers of social protest, such as Edward R. Murrow, Herbert Marcuse, and, eventually, Walter Cronkite. Those who protested against cultural norms during the Vietnam War era set the stage for contemporary protests – such as Madonna's call for "world peace" during the 2012 Super Bowl Halftime Show<sup>55</sup> or the Occupy Movement's antiwar demonstrations<sup>56</sup> – as well as offered a blueprint and created a cultural space for those interested in taking a firm "antiwar" stance within the American cultural experience.

The 1960s Anti-Vietnam War movement holds a noteworthy position within the cultural history of the United States; this movement marked one of

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. "Madonna's Super Bowl Halftime: A Perfect Pep Rally for Pop Music" Feb. 6, 2012 : (<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/02/madonnas-super-bowl-halftime-a-perfect-pep-rally-for-pop-music/252604/>).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. "Wall Street protests mix with antiwar demonstrators" Oct. 7, 2011 : ([http://articles.cnn.com/2011-10-07/politics/politics\\_occupy-wall-street\\_1\\_demonstrators-protests-dozens-of-college-students?\\_s=PM:POLITICS](http://articles.cnn.com/2011-10-07/politics/politics_occupy-wall-street_1_demonstrators-protests-dozens-of-college-students?_s=PM:POLITICS)).

the most memorable moments of “greater citizen participation in basic decisions” regarding the actions of the nation (Hayden 1988). Unfortunately, many historians working today have come to realize that the social revolutions that activists were working toward in the 1960s, including the Anti-Vietnam War movement, didn’t have the public magnitude that our revision of the era’s history normally presents. The majority of Americans did not march in the streets in protest of the war, nor did the majority of Americans listen to Anti-Vietnam War protest music and take to public places to sing the ideals these songs often espoused. Most Americans in the United States willingly “[gave] peace a chance” if only to stop the headaches that social strife caused within their homes and communities. A large number of Americans voiced their opposition to the Vietnam War after it had dragged on for several years. Government mistakes and missteps regarding the war, such as the controversial publication of *The Pentagon Papers*, the CIA’s involvement with the antiwar movement, and Nixon’s 1970 bombing of Cambodia, made their way into the public forum, resulting in increased public dissent.

Supporters of the Vietnam War faced dissent from antiwar protesters throughout the duration of the war; many in the opposition camp cited the war’s flawed and faulty political rhetoric as their key issue with the United States’ involvement in Indochina. On April 7, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson addressed a student audience at Johns Hopkins University regarding the “promises” the United States made to South Vietnam and why the U.S. was

obliged to “keep” these promises.<sup>57</sup> The speech echoed the same type of rhetoric that had become commonplace in Cold War-era America; the Vietnamese needed the United States’ help to protect them from the evils of communism, and the Cold War hawks in the Johnson Administration believed that Vietnam (and the world) would be a better and happier place through the eradication of communist threats. Johnson directly addressed dissenters in his speech, reminding his audience that the United States had a responsibility to ensure the “continued...defense of freedom” throughout the world:

There are those who wonder why we have a responsibility [in Vietnam]. Well, we have it there for the same reason that we have a responsibility for the defense of Europe. World War II was fought in both Europe and Asia, and when it ended we found ourselves with continued responsibility for the defense of freedom [...] Our objective is the independence of South Viet-Nam [sic] and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves – only that the people of South Viet-Nam [sic] be allowed to guide their own country their own way. (Levy 1998, 137)

Johnson’s speech contained a major flaw by Anti-Vietnam War protesters standards; the citizens of South Vietnam – a “country” created by the Geneva Conference of 1954 – were not allowed to “guide their country their own way” because of American intervention. Flouting the Geneva Accords, the United States prohibited the Vietnamese from voting in 1956; sources informed the Eisenhower Administration that the overwhelming majority of Vietnamese supported Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese independence revolutionary – and communist – in charge of North Vietnam. Ho, who had repeatedly appealed for

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<sup>57</sup> Johnson, L.B. (1965). “Address at Johns Hopkins University – we have promises to keep.” Reprinted from *Department of State bulletin* 52, no. 1348. April 26, 1965. 607-609.

Vietnam's freedom in the 1950s, was not a suitable leader in the United States' eyes due to his communist leanings. The proximity of China and Russia to Vietnam led the United States to doubt the democratic claims of Ho, whom they perceived as just another domino destined to fall to communism. It did not matter that Ho's political ideology scantily resembled the same type of communist rhetoric present in China or Russia at the time; it was simply inconceivable to the United States that the Vietnamese could *vote* for communism. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution of 1964<sup>58</sup> underscored what the United States believed about Vietnam: the South Vietnamese were being unfairly attacked by the communists in North Vietnam, and the freedom of the South Vietnamese was in a jeopardy and needed U.S. intervention. The Resolution asserted:

The United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military, or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these peoples should be left in peace to work out their own destinies their own way. (Levy 1998, 136)

While it is likely that the United States had no real "territorial ambitions" in Vietnam, each U.S. presidential administration had marked "political ambitions" in the area: the United States was pushing an agenda of democratic society in Vietnam, yet America was only able to realize this vision by indulging leaders which the U.S. specifically put in power. The United States' intervention in Vietnam resulted in a scarred landscape, civil strife, and the death of many innocent Vietnamese civilians. The actions of the United States in Vietnam from

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<sup>58</sup> "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" (1964). *Congressional Record*, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 110, part 14. August 5, 1964.

1955 – 1975 hardly appeared to fulfill the responsibility of keeping global peace, never mind leaving “these peoples...in peace to work out their own destinies their own way” (Levy 1998, 136). The disparity between the United States’ actions and words did not go unnoticed by the antiwar protestors of the 1960s, and activist groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), as well as musicians of the era, refused to consent to the United States’ policies and actions in Vietnam.

***All we are saying... is give peace a chance.***

**Plastic Ono Band, 1969; “Give Peace a Chance”**

“The incredible war in Vietnam has provided the razor, the terrifying sharp cutting edge that has finally severed the last vestige of illusion that morality and democracy are the guiding principles of American foreign policy” SDS member and Anti-Vietnam War activist Paul Potter asserted on April 17<sup>th</sup> of 1965 (qtd. Levy 1998, 139-40). Only ten days after President Johnson gave his Johns Hopkins speech advocating “continued responsibility for the defense of freedom” in Vietnam, Potter, like many Anti-Vietnam War protestors, found flaws in the United States government’s rhetoric regarding its policy in Vietnam. The U.S.’s failure to honor the 1954 Geneva Accords election, as interpreted by Potter, meant, “there is no indication that we were serious [about Vietnamese self-governance or] that we were ever willing to contemplate the risks of allowing the Vietnamese to choose their own destinies” (Levy 1998, 141). Furthermore, Potter and the SDS railed against the President’s words. Potter’s



speech, entitled “We Must Name the System,”<sup>59</sup> pointed out that the United States no longer acted with morality with regard to its foreign policy in Vietnam. To recall an earlier quote from Tom Hayden, another prominent SDS member, the United States’ foreign policy was operating as a “closed system,” and Potter’s rhetorically designed his speech to begin the process of prying this “system” open. Potter “named the system” in power as one that had fostered an “illusion...that democracy [was a guiding principle] of American foreign policy”; this “illusion” hinged on the United States government’s cunning misuse of the idea of “freedom.” President Johnson, as well as most members of the pro-war Administration, purposefully and repeatedly manipulated the word “freedom” to trick the public into believing that the United States’ mission in Indochina served the best interests of the Vietnamese people, whom the Administration depicted, falsely, as a nation of innocent victims besieged by communist criminality. Potter explained that the United States, not the communist North Vietnamese, was the greatest threat to freedom in Indochina:

The President says that we want freedom in Vietnam. Whose freedom? Not the freedom of the Vietnamese. The first act of the first dictator, Diem, the United States installed in Vietnam, was to systematically begin the persecution of all political opposition, non-Communist as well as Communist. The first American military supplies were not used to fight Communist insurgents; they were used to control, imprison, or kill any who sought something better for Vietnam than the personal aggrandizement, political corruption, and profiteering of the Diem régime. (Levy 1998, 140)

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<sup>59</sup> Potter, P. (1965). “We must name the system,” April 17, 1965, Washington DC. Originally published in the *Students for a democratic society papers*; State historical society of Wisconsin, Madison.

Potter's explicit mention of "the first dictator the United States installed in Vietnam," Ngo Dinh Diem, points out a system that contained flaws from its very beginning: the United States should not "install" dictators. Setting up a dictator in another country runs contrary to popular American-espoused beliefs of freedom, liberty, and democracy.

How can the South Vietnamese truly make choices for themselves concerning their own freedoms and liberties when another nation has elected a leader for them? Furthermore, Potter decries the hypocrisy in sending "American military supplies" in order to "systematically [persecute] all political opposition [as well as] control, imprison, or kill" anyone who disagreed with the Diem régime; how do these actions relate to freedom?

Herbert Marcuse also criticized the warping and manipulation of language in the name of war, and he was particularly angered by the excessive aggressive rhetoric produced in the western world. In his 1966 essay "Vietnam – An Analysis of an Example," Marcuse asserts that "warfare and its language" contributes to chaos and aggression in society, obscuring the "truth" of war under layers of false rhetoric:

Normalcy and war impacts man as constant repression, and these administered people, the objects of this repression, respond to it with a diffused aggression. This aggressiveness, which accumulates in excess in society, must be triggered and made useful in a way that is tolerable and profitable for society [...] And from warfare and its language, brutalization invades the sphere of entertainment and amusement. Here we have an effective acclimatization and dehumanization, and this in turn leads to a kind of mass hysteria. The image of the enemy is blown completely out of proportion, and the insensitivity, the inability to distinguish between propaganda, advertising, and truth is becoming ever clearer. (Marcuse 1966)

Though he lamented the “dehumanization” that occurred in a brutal, wartime society, Marcuse refused to only play the role of philosopher during the Vietnam War. He actively protested the war in events around the world, professing in a 1969 interview with Harold Keen, “the young people in protest [...are] our great hope [so are] the people in general, who do their best to fight against the mental and physical pollution in this country” (qtd. Juliaanten 1996). Marcuse contends that, despite the “mental and physical pollution” brought upon civilization by war, humanity had a “right to peace, [and a] right to abolish exploitation and oppression” (Marcuse 1967, 73). He lectured that these “universal rights” deserved “resistance,” and one form of resistance he approved of was questioning closed systems in a way that ran counter to the “diffused aggression.” Marcuse hesitated in accepting his role as an advocate for non-violent opposition, though he did allow that violence sometimes became an inevitable part of social protests. In essence, Marcuse pointed out that the decision to go to war, and the decision to foster an aggressive, hysterical and “mentally and physically” polluted national climate, was a decision. The Vietnam War was a choice that the American government made, and it was up to Americans to point out that this choice was a poor one.

The idea that the United States had a clear choice concerning its decision to enter into conflict in Indochina was not a foreign concept to every member of the Johnson Administration. Senator Frank Church was one of two dissenters; he made it clear in a major Senate speech that “no unilateral intervention by any white nation could achieve long-term success in the developing areas of the

world” and advocated “a greater role of the United Nations in bringing peace to Indochina” (qtd. Logevall 2009, 169). Church attacked the notion that an escalated war was the answer, and spoke against attacking Northern Vietnam as the war progressed (Logevall 2009, 169). Church may have been alone in his opinions in the United States government, but plenty of dovish, Anti-Vietnam War allies in other parts of the world agreed with him. The Vietnam War was not popular in the global community.

Herbert Marcuse found support for the Anti-Vietnam War effort in Paris, where student riots – not to mention France’s failed efforts in colonizing Vietnam – made French President Charles de Gaulle a major ally to the Anti-Vietnam War movement. De Gaulle stunned President Johnson in September of 1966 by making a speech in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in which he deplored the U.S. presence in Vietnam and voiced his preference to bring China, long seen as an axis of communist evil, into solving the Indochina conflict. “There is no political reality in Asia,” de Gaulle said, “which does not interest or touch China. Neither war nor peace is imaginable on the continent without China’s becoming implicated. Thus it is absolutely inconceivable that without her participation there can be any accord on the eventual neutrality of Southeast Asia” (qtd.

Logevall 2009, 103). Though he had little support from the global community,<sup>60</sup> Johnson remained dogged in his efforts to “win the war in Vietnam,” and he did not feel the need to consult with communist China about the United States’ democratic aims in Vietnam.

Johnson faced a great deal of opposition to his policies in Vietnam from various sources throughout his tenure as President, and it can be argued that the constant chanting of Anti-Vietnam War protesters outside the White House contributed to his own weariness over the war and eventual refusal of the 1968 Democratic Party Presidential nomination. Anti-Vietnam War protesters were an extremely vocal bunch; by chanting popular slogans such as “1-2-3-4-We-Don’t Want-Your-Fucking-War” or “Hey, hey LBJ/ How many kids did you kill today” and singing refrains from antiwar songs, protesters disrupted the President’s life, not to mention his daughter’s wedding in the White House Rose Garden in 1966. Anti-Vietnam War protesters were constantly in the public’s view; several events were broadcast on television, and many Americans felt uncomfortable watching the scraggly, often unkempt protesters. Another source of discomfort for much of the American public was the Beatles’ transformation.

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<sup>60</sup> “Not one of the eleven countries targeted in the Johnson cable was prepared to contribute personnel [...] ‘Most people,’ one British official wrote Prime Minister Douglass-Home, ‘feel that if the South Vietnamese cannot cope [even] with American help, it is because they are war weary, apathetic, and fed-up.’ [Foreign governments] remained unwilling to openly challenge Washington over the war, and on occasion made tepid public professions of support, but they ruled out even a token military contribution to the war. Their pledges to provide a few million dollars in economic aid to Saigon meant little to a Johnson administration already spending more than one and a half million dollars a day in Vietnam. Most embarrassing still to the administration, Asian allies were also lukewarm in their support for the war effort” (Logevall 2009, 179).

By the late 1960s the four pop musicians grew beards and began experimenting with drugs along with more sophisticated lyrical subject matter. The Beatles – the once “loveable mop tops” – now resembled the antiwar protesters, and they still reigned supreme on the music charts; it disturbed many Americans that this rock group retained such a cultural supremacy. After the Beatles met folk musician Bob Dylan in 1964, they began to introduce lyrics exploring “social and political themes” that had previously been left out of their pop repertoire (Hall 2005, 125). Furthermore, “[from] the Beatles’ arrival until the end of the decade, British artists recorded 28 percent of America’s number one pop hits”; the prominence of the “British Invasion” assured that the Beatles were just as much a part of America’s cultural landscape as the Vietnam War (Hall 2005, 125).

While each of the Liverpool lads expressed vague antiwar statements, John Lennon was the most vocal Anti-Vietnam War Beatle. He challenged “the notion that protest music was simply a fad” in contemporary pop music, going so far as stating that “all [the Beatles’] songs are antiwar” during a 1964 interview (Hall 2005, 129-30). In March of 1969, Lennon famously took his new bride Yoko Ono on a “Bed In” honeymoon, which lasted two weeks and drew a great deal of media attention. When asked by a reporter what he wanted to achieve by staying in bed, Lennon answered spontaneously “All we are saying is give peace a chance” (Kruse 2009, 15-6). The impulsive answer gave way to one of the most popular Anti-Vietnam War anthems of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Plastic Ono Band’s 1969 single “Give Peace a Chance.”

Lennon later told *Rolling Stone* magazine that he wrote this song explicitly for the purpose of chanting it during demonstrations such as The Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam. He explained: "In me secret heart I wanted to write something that would take over 'We Shall Overcome.' I don't know why. That was the one they always sang, and I thought, 'Why doesn't somebody write something for the people now, that's what my job and our job is'" (Whitehead 2011). Lennon's dedication to writing a great protest song grew when he saw television footage of folk singer Pete Seeger leading nearly half a million Anti-Vietnam war protesters singing "We Shall Overcome" song outside the White House in November 1969 (Whitehead 2011). The British artist considered it "one of the biggest moments of [his] life," even though he wasn't there (Whitehead 2011). Lennon felt a collective empathy with the Anti-Vietnam War protesters, and his rambling, somewhat incoherent "Give Peace a Chance," recorded during his second "Bed In" in Montreal in May of 1969, included a vocal performance by 1960s counterculture and antiwar luminaries such as Norman Mailer, Timothy Leary, Tommy Smothers, and Allen Ginsburg. The song, released in July of 1969, consists mostly of the repeated refrain "All we are saying/is give peace a chance." Its verses mix counterculture hot button terms with nonsense terms – as well as the names of the people singing the song – which appealed to the sense of levity often expressed by the hippies and flower children within the Vietnam generation's countercultures:

Ev'rybody's talkin' 'bout Bagism, Shagism, Dragism,  
Madism, Ragism, Tagism This-ism, that-ism, ism ism ism

(C'mon) Ev'rybody's talkin' 'bout Minister, Sinister, Banisters and  
Canisters, Bishops, Fishops, Rabbis, and Pop Eyes, Bye bye, Bye byes

(Let me tell you now) Ev'rybody's talkin' 'bout Revolution, Evolution,  
Masturbation, Flagellation, Regulation, Integrations, Mediations, United Nations,  
Congratulations!  
(Lennon 1969).

“Give Peace a Chance” quickly became a popular anthem of the antiwar movement; on October 15, 1969, a multi-city demonstration called The Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam, featured protesters singing this song *en mass* (Whitehead 2011). The irreverent lyrics of the song’s verses – “bagism, shagism... that-ism, ism ism ism” were a direct commentary on the flood of false information and pro-war rhetoric that the world, and especially the American public, was exposed to on a daily basis. The fact that “Everybody’s talking” about these amorphous topics, which Lennon expands to include religious figures such as “ministers, sinisters...bishops, [and] rabbis,” underscores the importance of cultural dialogue surrounding the war. The imagery and figures in the song’s lyrics represent what Tom Hayden might call the “closed systems” that the Anti-Vietnam War protest movement could not penetrate precisely because of rhetorical distortion. Lennon’s “isms” made about as much sense as the constant bickering over the war, thus giving the song a metaphorical lens to use in efforts to clarify the heated debates within both the pro- and antiwar sides of the conflict.

The mention of “revolution, evolution...integrations, meditations” extends the song’s scope to include the goals of the Anti-Vietnam War movement, but Lennon couples them with sexual images (“masturbation/flagellation”) and



“closed systems” (“regulation... United Nations”) to show the obstacles the antiwar movement faced. The United Nations, in particular, appears to be mocked, as though all the bluster over the war within the UN is worth little more than Lennon’s flippant “congratulations.” Lennon sarcastically congratulates the UN through his belief that the organization may not be doing enough to live up to their name, and they most certainly should not be “congratulated” for doing nothing about keeping unity and peace in the world. In the midst of great ideas such as “revolution” and “[giving] peace a chance” there remained the vestiges of the old system, or what was commonly called “the Establishment” in the countercultures within the United States. The repeated, at some times droning and at other times joyful, refrain of “all we are saying/is give peace a chance” offers a meditative koan within an otherwise rollicking song. “Everybody’s talking about” all the “physical and mental pollution” that Marcuse rejected, and the repeated refrain crystallizes the message of the Anti-Vietnam War movement, allowing the listener to finally discern “the truth” from “the insensitivity, the [...] propaganda, [and] advertising” that propelled America’s aggressive war culture. Within the messy structure and anarchic delivery of “Give Peace A Chance,” a space has been created where an opening of the “closed systems” can be perceived. Art’s job, according to Marcuse,<sup>61</sup> is not to direct man

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<sup>61</sup> “...art by itself cannot under any circumstances change the social condition. And that is the necessary and essential powerlessness of art, that it cannot have an effective, direct impact on the praxis of change. I don't know of any case in which you could say that art has changed the established society. Art can prepare such change. Art can contribute to it only via several negations and mediations, the most important being the change of consciousness and, especially, the change of perception.”  
Hartwick, L. (1978) "On the *Aesthetic Dimension*: a conversation with Herbert Marcuse."

past one-dimensional, war-based society, but rather its function is to reveal an alternative to reality, or a glimpse of another sort of reality. Lennon's request to "give peace chance" appears to be a simple enough appeal, but the reality of the Vietnam War is that the option to end the war in peace was rarely given a chance, despite the many voices – in politics, in academia, in music, in popular culture, and in antiwar demonstrations – that asked for it.

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## APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE   INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) APPROVAL LETTER (IRB #12.0431) FOR SURVEY “COMPILING AN ORAL HISTORY OF VIETNAM VETERANS’ MUSICAL MEMORIES.”	233
SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT (HSPPO #09.0636) FOR “COMPILING AN ORAL HISTORY OF VIETNAM VETERANS’ MUSICAL MEMORIES.”	236
APPROVED LIST OF SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR “COMPILING AN ORAL HISTORY OF VIETNAM VETERANS’ MUSICAL MEMORIES.”	239



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**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS**

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University of Louisville  
MedCenter One, Suite 200  
501 E. Broadway  
Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1798

Office: 502-852-5188

Fax: 502-852-2164

**To:** SoldatJaffe, Tatjana  
**From:** The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 20, 2013  
**Subject:** Approval Letter

**Tracking #:** 12.0431  
**Title:** Compiling an Oral History of Vietnam Veterans Musical Memory  
**Approval Date:** 1/23/2013 12:00:00 AM  
**Expiration Date:** 1/22/2014 12:00:00 AM

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The revised document(s) for the above referenced study have been received and contain the changes requested in our letter of 10/22/2012. This study was reviewed on 01/23/2013 by the chair/vice chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and approved through the Expedited Review Procedure, according to 45 CFR 46.110(b), since this study falls under Expedited Category (7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The following items have been approved:

- "Compiling an Oral History of the Vietnam Veteran's Experience with Music During the Vietnam War"
- Subject Informed Consent, not dated

This study now has final IRB approval from 01/23/2013 through 01/22/2014. You should complete and return the Progress Report/Continuation Request Form EIGHT weeks prior to this date in order to ensure that no lapse in approval occurs. The committee will be advised of this action at their next full board meeting.

Site Approval

If this study will take place at an affiliated research institution, such as Jewish

Hospital/St Marys Hospital, Norton Healthcare, or University of Louisville Hospital, permission to use the site of the affiliated institution may be necessary before the research may begin. If this study will take place outside of the University of Louisville Campuses, permission from the organization should be obtained before the research may begin. Failure to obtain this permission may result in a delay in the start of your research.

#### Privacy & Encryption Statement

The University of Louisville's Privacy and Encryption Policy requires such information as identifiable medical and health records; credit card, bank account and other personal financial information; social security numbers; proprietary research data; dates of birth (when combined with name, address and/or phone numbers) to be encrypted. For additional information: <http://security.louisville.edu/PolStds/ISO/PS018.htm>.

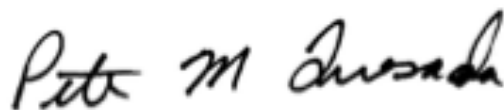
The following is a link to an Instruction Sheet for BRAAN2 "How to Locate Stamped/Approved Documents in BRAAN2":

<http://louisville.edu/research/braan2/help/ApprovedDocs.pdf/view>

Please begin using your newly approved (stamped) document(s) at this time. The previous versions are no longer valid. If you need assistance in accessing any of the study documents, please feel free to contact our office at (502) 852—5188. You may also email our service account at [hsppofc@louisville.edu](mailto:hsppofc@louisville.edu) for assistance.

Best wishes for a successful study. If you have any questions please contact the HSPPO at (502) 852-5188 or [hsppofc@louisville.edu](mailto:hsppofc@louisville.edu).

Thank you.



Board Designee: Quesada, Peter

Once you begin your human subject research the following regulations apply:

1. Unanticipated problems or serious adverse events encountered in this research study must be reported to the IRB within five (5) work days.
2. Any modifications to the study protocol or informed consent form must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
3. You may not use a modified informed consent form until it has been approved and validated by the IRB.
4. Please note that the IRB operates in accordance with laws and regulations of the United States and guidance provided by the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and other Federal and State Agencies when applicable.
5. You should complete and SUBMIT the Continuation Request Form eight weeks

prior to this date in order to ensure that no lapse in approval occurs.

Letter Sent By: Carter, Cathy, 2/20/2013 9:11 AM

*Full Accreditation since June 2005 by the Association for the Accreditation of  
Human Research Protection Programs, Inc.*



## Subject Informed Consent Document

### Compiling an Oral History of Vietnam Veterans' Musical Memories

Sponsor(s) name & address: Dr. Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe, A&S Humanities, Bingham Humanities Building, University of Louisville, Louisville KY 40292

Investigator(s) name & address: Erin R. McCoy, 2033 Alta Avenue #1 Louisville KY 40205

Site(s) where study is to be conducted: University of Louisville

Phone number for subjects to call for questions: 502.852.7134 (TSJ)/ 704.254.9530 (ERM)

HSPPO # 09.0636

#### Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by **Dr. Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe, Ph.D.** and **Erin R. McCoy, ABD, University of Louisville**. The study is sponsored by the University of Louisville, Department of Humanities. The study will take place at the **University of Louisville**. Approximately **25** subjects will be invited to participate.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to inform my dissertation of music heard by soldiers stationed in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. My dissertation, entitled *The Historical and Cultural Meanings of American Music Lyrics During the Vietnam War* looks at American music produced during the Vietnam War, and I am using this study to inquire after what music soldiers heard – and how they heard it – during their time in Vietnam .

#### Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to answer five questions (listed below) regarding how you heard music and what sort of music you heard while in country. Our interviews shouldn't take longer than 30 minutes to complete, though I am open to talking to you regarding your experiences in the war per your request. **Only** the information regarding the questions below will be used in my dissertation, and this study will be complete by December 2012. If any questions make you uncomfortable, you are not obliged to answer them. None of your personal information, such as your name, will be required or necessary for this study.

#### Potential Risks

There are no foreseeable risks related to this study, although there may be unforeseen risks that are common to all veterans when recalling any memories of war. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during our interview, you are welcome to terminate the session for your own psychological well being. Declining or ceasing your participation in this study will not result in any punitive actions.

#### Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include **a better understanding of the soldier's experience in the Vietnam War, as well as information that may better inform the experience of soldiers**

**and their relationships to music while in combat areas in general.** The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others.

#### **Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your time, inconvenience, or expenses for your participation in this study

#### **Confidentiality**

Total privacy cannot be guaranteed. Your privacy will be protected to the extent permitted by law. If the results from this study are published, your name will not be made public. While unlikely, the following may look at the study records:

The University of Louisville Institutional Review Board, Human Subjects Protection Program Office  
Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP),  
Office of Civil Rights

The information you provide may be released and published in my dissertation, but no personal information – your name, etc. – will not be published or documented in any publishable material related to this study. All files will be kept digitally for one year after the study, after which the material may be destroyed. All information related to this study will be kept in a secure location in the Humanities Office at the University of Louisville and E.R. McCoy's locked desk at her home. All documents related to this study will be password protected.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

Please ask the investigator how (1) the institution, (2) the investigator or (3) the institution and investigator will benefit by your participation in the study.

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

You will be told about any changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

#### **Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints**

If you have any concerns or complaints about the study or the study staff, you have three options.

You may contact the principal investigator at 502.852.7134

If you have any questions about your rights as a study subject, questions, concerns or complaints, you may call the Human Subjects Protection Program Office (HSPPO) (502) 852-5188. You may discuss any questions about your rights as a subject, in secret, with a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or the HSPPO staff. The IRB is an

Compiling an Oral History of Vietnam Veterans' Musical Memories

independent committee composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The IRB has reviewed this study.

If you want to speak to a person outside the University, you may call 1-877-852-1167. You will be given the chance to talk about any questions, concerns or complaints in secret. This is a 24-hour hot line answered by people who do not work at the University of Louisville.

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This paper tells you what will happen during the study if you choose to take part. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered, and that you will take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this informed consent document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

_____ Signature of Subject/Legal Representative	_____ Date Signed
_____ Signature of Person Explaining the Consent Form (if other than the Investigator)	_____ Date Signed
_____ Signature of Investigator	_____ Date Signed

LIST OF INVESTIGATORS

PHONE NUMBERS

Dr. Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe  
Erin R. McCoy

502.852.7134  
704.254.9530

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
Date Approved 01/23/2013 Valid Thru 01/22/2014



**SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR “COMPILING AN ORAL HISTORY OF VIETNAM  
VETERANS’ MUSICAL MEMORIES.”**

- 1. When did you serve in Vietnam?**
- 2. What music sources were available to you in Vietnam? How did you hear music in Vietnam?**
- 3. Are there any particular songs, song lyrics, or albums that remind you of your time in service during the Vietnam War?**
- 4. Were you aware of songs that referenced the anti-Vietnam War protest in the United States? How did knowledge of the anti-war movement affect you while in Vietnam?**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Erin R. McCoy

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Jefferson Community and Technical College  
109 East Broadway | Seminary West 206  
Louisville, KY 40202  
+1.704.254.9530  
Ermcco03@cardmail.louisville.edu  
<http://www.ErinRMcCoy.com>

### EDUCATION

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2008 – 2013                      Ph.D. Humanities, University of Louisville    Louisville, KY  
2009                                      University of Louisville, Panamá    Panamá City, Panamá

Doctorate (Ph.D.), Humanities, Cultural Studies focus.

- Dissertation: *The Historical and Cultural Meanings of American Music Lyrics from the Vietnam War*. Defense: April 5, 2013.
- Committee: Drs. Mary Makris (chair), Mark E. Blum, Benjamin Harrison (all University of Louisville) & Dr. Clarence Wyatt (Centre College).
- Abstract: My dissertation examines a variety of cultural artifacts from the Vietnam War era – literary, historical, philosophical, social, artistic – to serve as representations of a larger narrative of American national identity and America at War. My discussion of the Vietnam War hinges on critical analysis of music lyrics composed about and during the war, as well empirical research such as oral historical accounts of Vietnam Veterans’ “musical memories” and an investigation of current transnational cultural memory of the war in Vietnam. My inter-disciplinary argument asserts that the Vietnam War era marks a unique break from the country’s dominant social attitudes and cultural identities, and analyzing music lyrics in their historical and social context adds a new dimension in thorough constructions of cultural historiography.

Graduate Certificate, Latin American & Latino Studies.

- Degree awarded August 2011.
- Specialized in Central and South American cultural performance studies.

2005 – 2007	M.A., English, Clemson University	Clemson, SC
2006	Università Popolare di Roma (formerly Università della Terza Età)	Orvieto, Italy

Master of Arts, English.

- Creative thesis: *Sky Mines*.

2003 – 2004	B.A. English, Wingate University	Wingate, NC
2003	University of Birkbeck	London, UK

Bachelor of Arts, English.

- Inducted into Sigma Tau Delta, 2004.

2000 – 2002	Central Piedmont Community College	Charlotte, NC
1999 – 2000	University of North Carolina, Asheville	Asheville, NC

- Credits toward Associate’s Degree/transfer credits for Bachelor’s Degree.

### **TEACHING APPOINTMENTS**

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2008 – present	Jefferson Community & Technical College 109 East Broadway, Louisville, KY 40202	Louisville, KY
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- Adjunct Instructor of English; alternate between instructing freshman composition, introductory college writing, and business and technical writing course sections.
- General Education (GE 100/101) Certification, 2009.

2011 – 2012	Indiana University Southeast 4201 Grant Line Rd. New Albany, IN 47150	New Albany, IN
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- Adjunct Instructor of English; taught freshman composition as well as business and technical writing courses.

2007 – 2008	University of South Carolina, Upstate Department of Languages, Literature and Composition 800 University Way, Spartanburg, SC 29303	Spartanburg, SC
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- Visiting Professor of English; this “visiting professor” temporary appointment allowed me to teach a 4/5 course load (freshman composition, introductory freshman literature and argument, business

writing, and 400-level writing and technology course) and introduced me to the departmental and academic service duties required of full-time professors.

- 2006 – 2007                      Clemson University                      Clemson, SC  
College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities,  
101 Strode Tower, Clemson, SC 29634
- Graduate Teaching Fellow; taught freshman composition lecture and lab sections.

### **PEDAGOGICAL EXPERIENCE**

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- 2008 – present                      Olga S. Peers Athletic Center Tutor                      Louisville, KY  
University of Louisville's Olga S. Peers Athletic Center  
E202 Student Activities Center, Louisville, KY 40292
- Tutor; rhetoric, history, religion, freshman writing, and general humanities.
  - Certified REACH Level One Tutor; December 2011.

- July 2012                      Crane House Teach In Asia Program                      Jiujiang, China  
1244 S. Third Street  
Louisville, KY 40203-2906
- English Conversation Instructor; developed and implemented conversational English curriculum for a three-week intensive course for Chinese secondary school students.

- 2009                      Louisville Free Public Library                      Louisville, KY  
Iroquois Branch  
601 West Woodlawn Avenue  
Louisville, KY 40215
- Intern; Assisted Library in ESL population outreach activities.
  - Focused study: Cuban refugee population of Louisville, KY.

- 2007                      Tri-County Technical College                      Pendleton, SC  
7900 Highway 76, Arts and Sciences Division  
Pendleton, SC 29670
- Writing Center Assistant; one-on-one composition assistance and creator of writing assistance materials for college writing courses.

- |             |   |               |
|-------------|---|---------------|
| 2006        | Clemson University  | Clemson, SC   |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Intern; <i>Clemson World</i> Alumni Magazine Internship.</li> <li>• Experience with Adobe InDesign and Photoshop.</li> </ul>  |               |
| 2005        | Clemson University  | Clemson, SC   |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate Research Assistant; College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities sponsored Center for Electronic and Digital Publishing (CEDP); assisted with various duties of Clemson University's Publishing house, online and print.</li> <li>• Graduate Research Assistant; College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities sponsored Multimedia Authoring Teaching and Research Facility (MATRF).</li> </ul> |               |
| 2005        | Vickery Athletic Center<br>Clemson University<br>Clemson, SC 29634  | Clemson, SC   |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Athlete Mentor; advised student athletes on balancing course work with their athletic scheduled.</li> </ul>  |               |
| 2004 – 2005 | Union County Public Schools<br>Wingate Elementary<br>301 Bivens Street, Wingate, NC 28174   | Wingate, NC   |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified CORE Tutor; assisted first and second grade students, 50% of which qualified as ESL, with reading and writing skills.</li> </ul>   |               |
| 2001 – 2003 | Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools<br>East Mecklenburg High School<br>6800 Monroe Road, Charlotte, NC 28212   | Charlotte, NC |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified AVID Tutor; worked with 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students with potential for college-level academic achievement on various subjects.</li> </ul>  |               |

## PUBLICATIONS

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## ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

- 2014 “*Yo Protesto!*: How Roy Brown’s Anti-Vietnam War and Pro-Puerto Rican Independence Music Lyrics Reveal Puerto Rican Resistance to the Vietnam War.”  
“The Politics of Collective Memory Making” themed issue of *Latin American Perspectives*; revise and re-submit.
- 2013 “National Advisory: Explicit Lyrics’: Considering Censorship of Anti-Vietnam War Era Songs.” In press; *War and Music*. Cambridge Scholars Press.
- 2012 “Disputed Worlds: Performances of Heritage in Cusco’s Tourism Economy.”  
*Rupkatha Online Interdisciplinary Studies of Humanities Journal*, Volume 3, Number 3, Winter 2011-2012, 419-25.  
<[http://rupkatha.com/V3/n3/06\\_Heritage\\_Tourism\\_Cusco.pdf](http://rupkatha.com/V3/n3/06_Heritage_Tourism_Cusco.pdf)>.
- 2011 “‘The Ballad of the Green Berets’ Fails ‘My Son John’: Change in the Mythology of the American Soldier during the Vietnam War.”  
*[Inter]sections: Peer Reviewed Quarterly Journal of American Studies by the University of Bucharest*, Vol. 4, No. 14, April/June 2011. 10-13.  
< <http://www.americanstudies.ro/libs/docs/1311500320-00320.pdf>>.
- 2010 “Not Just a Change of Style: the Americana Commentary of the Grateful Dead’s *Workingman’s Dead*.”  
*The Grateful Dead in Concert: Essays on Live Improvisation*, MacFarland & Company, February 9, 2010. 118-126. ISBN: 078644357X.
- 2006 “Shell Rings and Sea Turtles,” article.  
*Clemson World Alumni Magazine*, winter 2006.  
<<http://www.clemson.edu/clemsonworld/archive/2006/fall06/feature1.htm>>.

## CREATIVE PUBLICATIONS

- 2012 “Son of the Morning.” fiction  
*Ishaan Literary Review*, Issue #2, Summer 2012.  
<[http://ishaanliteraryreview.com/?page\\_id=356](http://ishaanliteraryreview.com/?page_id=356)>.
- 2011 “Sky Mines,” fiction.  
*A Few Lines Magazine*, September 2011.  
<<http://www.keepandshare.com/doc/3145733/aflm-volume-1-issue-2-1-0-meg>>.

- 2008 "All the Good Things You Are," fiction.  
*InterCulture*, Vol. 5, #3: "Perspectives on War, Media and Memory." June 2008.  
<[http://dih.fsu.edu/interculture/volume5\\_2/mccoy\\_all\\_the\\_good\\_things\\_you\\_are.pdf](http://dih.fsu.edu/interculture/volume5_2/mccoy_all_the_good_things_you_are.pdf)>.
- 2004 "Dine-In\*," poem.  
*Counterpoint*, Wingate University's Student Journal, 2004.  
\*Also selected for submission to Sigma Tau Delta's fiction journal, 2004.

## CURRENT SUBMISSIONS

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### PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS

- "Star-Spangled Lyrics: The Cultural and Historical Importance of Analyzing Popular American War Songs."
- Submitted for *The International Journal of Humanities*; under review.
- "The Fiddle for the Drum: The United States' Choice & the Vietnam War."
- Submitted for the Spring 2013 "Crossroads Conference" issue of *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, under review.
- "Possessing *La Pollera*: Exploring Panama's National Dance and Dress."
- Submitted to *The Delaware Review of Latin American Studies*, under review.

### CONFERENCE SUBMISSIONS

- "The Art of War: Examining Australian Anti-Vietnam War Protest Art and Memory."
- 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities. Eötvös Loránd University; Budapest, Hungary, June 2013. (Accepted)

## CURRENT PROJECTS

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### *Cultural Historiography of the Vietnam War*

- Book proposal for *War, Culture & Society* research monograph series, Bloomsbury/Continuum Press, UK; under review.

Book review: Logevall, Frederick. *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam*. New York, NY: Random House. 864pp.

Nominee, 2013 Outstanding Adjunct English Faculty Award, Jefferson Community & Technical College.

Selected for Post-Doctoral Membership and Participation: III Lisbon Consortium Summer School for the Study of Culture, June 2013.

- Presentation: "The Quiet Americans: The United States & Global Social Protest."

## CONFERENCES

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Panel Chair, "A Tour of a War: Examining the Sacred and Secular in Vietnam War Sites."

- "Sacred Sites, Secular Spaces: Scenes, Sounds, and Signs in Humanistic, Artistic, and Technological Culture," Humanities Education and Research Association Annual Conference, March 2013.

Panel Chair, "Truth Commissions and Collective Memory."

- "Memories of Conflict, Conflicts of Memory" International Conference, Senate House, London. February, 2013.

"The Protestor and the Soldier: Conflicting Cultural Memories of the Vietnam War in the United States."

- "Memories of Conflict, Conflicts of Memory" International Conference, Senate House, London. February, 2013.

Attendee, Annual Modern Language Association (MLA) Conference, Boston. January, 2013.

"*Yo Protesto!*": "How Roy Brown's Anti-Vietnam War and Pro-Puerto Rican Independence Music and Lyrics Reveal Puerto Rican Resistance to the Vietnam War"

- American Studies Association Annual Meeting, "Dimensions of Empire and Resistance: Past, Present, and Future," San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 2012.

"Green Ideas: Going Green Pedagogy for English Classrooms"

- "Bioneers Campus Community Partnerships for Sustainability Conference," Jefferson Community and Technical College & the University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky. November 2012.



“Star-Spangled Lyrics: The Cultural and Historical Importance of Analyzing Popular American War Songs.”

- 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities. Montréal, Canada. June 2012.

“The Fiddle for the Drum: The United States’ Choice & the Vietnam War.”

- Annual Humanities Education and Research Association (HERA) Conference. Salt Lake City, UT. March 2012.

“National Advisory: Explicit Lyrics’: Considering Censorship of Anti-Vietnam War Era Songs.”

- Words and Music Conference, The University of Maribor Department of English, Music, and American Studies. Maribor, Slovenia. December 2011.

“I’m Down Like My Internet Connection’: The Global, Technological and Political Artistry of M.I.A.”

- Southeast Popular Culture and American Culture Associations Conference, New Orleans, LA. October 2011.

“Hallelujah! His soul is marching on!’: The Transformation of the Soldier as a National Symbol in America During the Vietnam War.”

- “Transformations.” Humanities Education and Research Association Annual Conference (HERA). San Francisco, CA. March, 2011.

Panel Chair, “Art and International Politics: Comedy, Memoir and Religious Tolerance.”

- University of Louisville’s Annual “Conference on Literature and Culture Since 1900.” Louisville, KY, February 2011.

“How Can You Run When You Know?': The Effect of Anti-Vietnam War Songs on American Patriotism.

- The Tenth International Conference of the Department of Musicology. University of Arts in Belgrade: Between Nostalgia, Utopia, and Realities. April 2010.

“Serious Joy: How Vietnam War-Era Protest Songs Invoke Pleasure.”

- One-Day Conference of the British Forum of Ethnomusicology: Taking Pleasure Seriously: Theorising Pleasure and Music. London, UK, November 2009.

“Machiavelli and Makaveli: How Tupac Shakur’s Interpretation of *The Prince* Reveals the Parallels Between Modern and Renaissance Battles for Power.”

- Southern Popular Culture and American Culture Associations Conference, Wilmington, NC, October 2009.

“Prehistoric or Pre-Feminist?: How the Grateful Dead’s *American Beauty* and *Workingman’s Dead* Contribute to Feminism.”

- Southwest Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Associations Conference, Albuquerque, NM, February 2009.

“The Brawny Balladeer: The Ethnomusicology in ‘The Widow of Windsor’ by Rudyard Kipling.”

- 13th Annual Victorian Interdisciplinary Studies of the Western United States Conference, Seattle, WA, November 2008.

“Crazy Diamond Set in Platinum: How Pink Floyd’s Commercial Success Exists Under the Specter of Syd Barrett.”

- Southeast Popular Culture and American Culture Associations Conference, Louisville, KY, October 2008

“Not Just a Change of Style: The Americana Commentary of the Grateful Dead’s *Workingman’s Dead*.”

- Southwest Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Associations Conference, Albuquerque, NM, February 2008.

Attendee, “Fixed Stars Govern a Life’: The 5<sup>th</sup> International Ted Hughes Conference.” Atlanta, GA, October 2005

### **AWARDS, GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS**

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2013	Service Excellence Award, Humanities Education & Research Association (HERA).
2013	Graduate Bursary, “Memories of Conflict, Conflicts of Memory” Conference, Senate House, London.
2012	Dr. M. Celeste Nichols Professional Development Award, University of Louisville.
2012	Annette K. Baxter Travel Grant, American Studies Association.
2011	Honorarium Recipient, Pearson Education Publishing Company.
2011	Honorarium Recipient, “Arts & Culture: Brazil,” Jefferson Community & Technical College.

2010, 2011	Arts & Sciences Graduate Research Award, University of Louisville.
2009, 2011	Graduate Student Council Travel Award, University of Louisville.
2009	Panama Scholars Scholarship, University of Louisville.
2009	Lilyalyce Akers Travel Award, University of Louisville.
2009	Richard & Constance Lewis Scholarship, University of Louisville.
2003	Wingate Alumni Scholar, Wingate University.
1994	George Shinn Foundation/Charlotte Hornets Scholarship.

### **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS & COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

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2012 – present	Association of Cultural Studies.
2012 – present	American Studies Association.
2012 – present	Oral History Association.
2012 – present	Crane House / The Asia Institute of Louisville.
2011 – present	Humanities Education and Research Association.
2011 – present	Modern Language Association.
2011 – present	American Historical Association.
2010 – 2012	American Popular Culture Association of the South.
2010 – 2011	College Music Society.
2009 – 2010	British Forum of Ethnomusicology.
2009 – 2010	American Popular Culture Association of the Southwest.
2009 – 2010	First Annual Association of Humanities Academics (AHA) Graduate Conference Committee, University of Louisville.
2006 – 2007	Society of English Graduate Students (SEGS), Clemson University.

## ACADEMIC SERVICE

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### ARTICLE, BOOK AND TEXTBOOK REVIEWS

- 2012 Associate Editor: *The International Journal of Communication and Linguistic Studies*; winter 2012-2013.
- 2011 Book review: *Interdisciplinary Humanities*. Vol. 28.2, Fall 2011. Lynskey, Dorian. (2011) *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs from Billie Holiday to Green Day*. New York, NY: Ecco/Harper Collins. 688 pp.
- 2011 Reviewer: *Crosscurrents*, Pearson Education.

### INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

- 2013 Newsletter Editor & Non-Voting Board Member, Humanities Education and Research Association (HERA).
- 2013 Judge, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) Regional Competition, Jefferson Community & Technical College.
- 2012 – present Faculty Member, Jefferson Community & Technical College “English Club.”
- 2010 – present Faculty Member, Jefferson Community & Technical College “Green Team.”
- 2009 – present. Student Mentor, University of Louisville Humanities Ph.D. Program.
- 2012 Faculty Participant, Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Workshop: ENG 101.
- 2011 Team Member, Jefferson Community & Technical College’s “Pink Striders” team, American Cancer Society “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer” charity walk.
- 2011 Participating Instructor, “Arts & Culture: Brazil,” Jefferson Community and Technical College Event, Southwest Campus.

- 2008 Participating Instructor, “Remembering Vietnam: Traveling Vietnam Wall,” University Event, University of South Carolina, Upstate.
- 2008 Participating Instructor, “Focus the Nation: Global Warming” University Event, University of South Carolina, Upstate.
- 2007 Participating Instructor, “National Coming Out Day,” University Event, University of South Carolina, Upstate.
- 2007 Judge, South Carolina Speech and Theater Competition, University of South Carolina, Upstate.
- 2007 – 2008 Alumna Fiction Editor, *Clemson Poetry Review*.
- 2003 – 2004 Judge, Union County Shakespeare Recitation Contest, Wingate University.
- 2002 – 2004 Columnist, Wingate University’s *Weekly Triangle* University student newspaper. Wingate University.
- 2002 Actor, “Screwtape” & “Dandelion Wine,” Wingate University Theater. Participant in North Carolina College Theater Competition.

#### COMMUNITY SERVICE

- 2009 – present English Conversation Club, Iroquois branch of the Louisville Free Public Library, Louisville, KY.
- 2010 – 2011 No Kill Louisville, Spay/Neuter Committee, Louisville, KY.
- 2009 – 2010 Olmstead Parks “Nut” Volunteer Program.
- 2004 – 2005. Angelic Riders’ Equine Therapy for Children, Marshville, NC.
- 1994 – 1996 Volunteer, Loaves & Fishes Community Outreach; St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Monroe, NC.

#### PROFESSIONAL TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

- 
- 2005 – present Director, Cross-College and Cross-Classroom Blog Projects.

	< <a href="http://www.ErinRMcCoy.com">http://www.ErinRMcCoy.com</a> >.
2012	Participant, "Arts & Culture: Latin America" Professional Development Workshop, Jefferson Community & Technical College.
2012	Participant, "JCTC Goes Green – Going Green in the Classroom," Professional Development Workshop, Jefferson Community and Technical College.
2010	Participant, "Arts & Culture: Brazil" Professional Development Workshop, Jefferson Community & Technical College.
2010	Participant, Blackboard & Wimba Workshop for Online Teaching Certification, Jefferson Community & Technical College.
2006	Dramaturg, Clemson University Centennial Play.
2004	Certified CORE Tutor, Union County Public School System.
2003	Search Committee Student Member for new British Literature & Shakespeare professor, Wingate University.
2002	Certified AVID Tutor, Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System.
2001 – 2006	Writer, SilentUproar.com / SilentUproar Records.
1999 – 2000	Web Developer, Interstate-Johnson Lane Wachovia.

### **OUTSIDE INTERESTS**

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2012 – present	Member, American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).
2011 – present	Member, World Wildlife Federation (WWF).
2011 – present	Member, National Parks Conservancy (NPC).
2011 – present	Kentucky Derby miniMarathon trainee.
2009 – present	Eternal Health Yoga Student, Louisville, KY.
2006 – 2008	North Main Yoga Student, Greenville, SC.

1999 – 2005

MAFC Yoga Student, Monroe, NC.