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Whoopee, We're All Gonna Die: The Role and Reception of Music and Protest Songs during the Vietnam War and the Iraq/Afghanistan Wars

Abstract

The Vietnam War sparked a lasting legacy of protest music. Moreover, the lyrical exploits of the Vietnam era often detailed the horrors of war and reflected the political opinions of parts of the population. These songs have become staples of popular culture, especially in media treating the period.

Comparing this trend to the years under the presidency of President George W. Bush, which themselves had a major conflict in the 9/11 attacks and the resulting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, is then the aim of this thesis, as both eras and wars had very different responses musically and lyrically. Contrary to the Vietnam protest music, there has not been a historically lasting crop of songs that survived the Bush era and are as fondly remembered. However, similarly to the Vietnam War, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were largely opposed by parts of the US population. As we find ourselves again in an era of rising tensions between the US and both the Middle and Far East, we would do well to heed the criticisms of the protest songwriters of the Vietnam and War on Terror eras, and my comparative analysis aims to investigate the similarities and differences between the music of these eras to better understand and criticise the international conflicts of today.

In order to find the causes for this difference, several songs from both the Vietnam era and the Bush era will be analysed in detail. This is accomplished through a comparative approach and close reading.

As pro-war music has to be mentioned too, Richard Slotkin's thoughts on violence in relation to the United States will be used as a reference to those.

The thesis will also apply scholarly research that has been done on specific areas relevant to the topic in order to accurately depict certain findings that lead toward the conclusion.

Abstrakt

Eine Folge des Vietnamkrieges war das lang andauerndende Vermächtnis der Protestmusik. Oft verdeutlichten die Songtexte der Ära die Schrecken des Krieges und reflektierten die politische Meinung von Teilen der Bevölkerung. Viele dieser Lieder sind zu integralen Bestandteilen der Popkultur geworden, auch durch ihre Wiederverwendung in Medien, die die Ära behandeln.

Diese Entwicklung mit der Bush Ära, die auch mit Konflikten wie den Angriffen des 11ten Septembers und den Kriegen im Irak und in Afghanistan konfrontiert war, zu vergleichen ist das Ziel dieser Arbeit, da beide Perioden und Kriege sehr verschiedene musikalische und lyrische Reaktionen auf diese Probleme aufzuweisen hatten. Im Gegenteil zur Protestmusik der Vietnam Ära gab es keine Lieder der Bush Jahre die sich über ihre Zeit hinaus im kollektiven Bewusstsein der betreffenden Generation festgesetzt haben. Ähnlich zum Vietnamkrieg wurden die Kriege in Irak und Afghanistan jedoch grösstenteils von Teilen der US Bevölkerung abgelehnt. Da wir uns in einer Zeit befinden in der die Spannungen zwischen den USA und dem Mittleren Osten, sowie dem Fernen Osten, immer wieder aufflammen,

wäre es angebracht die Kritik der Musik aus der Vietnam Ära und der Bush Ära zu beachten. Meine komparative Analyse hat es zum Ziel die Gemeinsamkeiten und die Unterschiede in der Musik der beiden Ären zu untersuchen um die heutigen, international Konflikte besser zu verstehen und kritisieren zu können.

Um die Gründe für diese Unterschiede zu finden, werden bestimmte Songs aus beiden Perioden im Detail analysiert. Dies wird durch einen vergleichenden Ansatz und ein Close Reading gewährleistet.

Da kriegsunterstützende Musik auch behandelt werden muss, werden Richard Slotkin's Ausführungen über die Beziehung der USA zu Gewalt ebenfalls als Referenz genutzt.

Die These wird ebenfalls akademische Erkenntnisse zu spezifischen Bereichen des Themas anwenden um so genau wie möglich bestimmte Ergebnisse aufzuzeigen, welche zur Schlussfolgerung führen.

1. Introduction

The war in Vietnam and the, more recent, 'War on Terror' fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, seem to be etched deeper into cultural consciousness than others that took place between them. With the Vietnam War ending in 1975 and the US campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan beginning in 2003 and 2001, respectively, the world has seen many large scale wars between those dates that involved the US military, the largest being the first Gulf War, as well as the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, taking place in the 1990s. However, these wars were swift, as the Gulf conflict and the Kosovo War concluded after a year, and the Bosnian War lasted for three. Moreover, these wars involved large numbers of other forces fighting alongside the United States. However, the wars in Vietnam and the Middle East were fought mainly under the direction of the United States, which deployed more personnel and machinery exponentially to the respective warzones than their coalition partners fighting alongside. Furthermore, these were, and are in the case of the Afghanistan War, prolonged wars lasting for decades. The Vietnam conflict lasted from 1955 to 1975, which included US involvement for most of its duration, the Iraq war from 2003 to 2011, and the Afghanistan war started in 2001 without a conclusion in sight, becoming the longest war in U.S. history in the process.

Each of these wars were heavily protested. As part of these protests, music became an essential tool for those in opposition to these conflicts to voice their concerns and find solace and comfort. Additionally, protest music, and music in general, was and is an essential point of referral for the population at large and the members of service fighting the wars in question.

However, when considering the music released during these periods, the Vietnam War's musical catalogue seems etched into the cultural fabric of the period, while no such development can be observed when it comes to the twenty first century wars in the Middle East. This thesis aims to analyse this idea of different cultural impact of these eras of protest music and compare music from the respective periods while engaging with the social framework that may or may not have influenced the embrace of the Vietnam era protest music while essentially forgetting the music dealing with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To understand the protests against these wars, there needs to be context about what led to and happened during these conflicts.

It must be noted, however, that protest music is not objective in its consumption by listeners. As Rachel S. Vandagriff explains: "sympathetic listeners tend to congratulate anything that purports to be or dresses up as protest music. We find ourselves agreeing with a protest artist's work or point of view without actually being challenged to discover our own moral response" (334).

This critical distinction is to be kept in mind throughout this thesis. Those quoted, either artists themselves or critics, have a particular position which undoubtedly influences their work.

Moreover, it is vital to keep genre conventions in mind when discussing music in this realm. Some songs are registering universally as protesting or critiquing a specific event, while other pieces only register as protest because they differ from their genre's lyrical conventions. Vandagriff uses country music as an example: "a country song that is heard as anti-American goes against the generally patriotic tenor of American country music" (335).

Secondly, it is crucial to make a distinction between music inspiring protest and music inciting protest. Many of the songs covered in this thesis belong to the first of these categories. As Vandagriff explains:

> There are songs that can be read as protest, but within generic conventions are not heard as protest or certainly do not protest one specific event. Alternatively, there are songs that witness or testify to acts of protest. But unless there is a direct call to action in a song, or an enactment of action via a call-and-response form…, the song is a narrative or a lamentation. (ibid.)

These laments may be as effective as a direct call of action through, for instance, vivid descriptions, well-formed arguments, or impassioned positions portrayed in the song. However, these songs do not represent a call for action in and of themselves: “They are there until someone does something to or with them” (ibid.). Hence, these songs often only serve as inspiration for protest as opposed to inciting protest themselves.

Nonetheless, a crop of protest music has universally been acknowledged as part of the Vietnam era especially. John Street states that:

> 'We shall [sic] overcome [sic]', 'Blowin' in the Wind', 'With God on Our Side', 'A Change is Gonna Come', 'Mississippi Goddam', 'People Get Ready'. These songs and many others form part of the soundtrack to the protests over civil rights, the nuclear bomb and the Vietnam war [sic]. (122)

Within this collection of songs, positions are also versatile, all depending on the respective artist. As John Morgan O’Connell explains: “the role of music in conflict was complex since music was used both to promote conflict and to further conflict resolution. Here, the power of music to incite violence (both in its actual and symbolic forms) or to assuage aggression (both in theory and in practice)” (O’Connell, 117) needs to be acknowledged. All of these general points need to be kept in mind when approaching this topic.

Thus, this thesis will approach several songs from both eras through close reading to uncover if they share similar ideas. Additionally, these songs will be placed in their corresponding historical context to present their reception and appreciation. Lastly, these

findings will be combined to establish if the perceived idea of protest music being more prevalent for the Vietnam War is a correct assumption or not.

The Frontier Myth

When considering music in conjunction with war, it is essential to note that not only protest music is released. Frequently, songs in support of the war are released by artists favouring the conflict in question. Therefore, many of these songs follow the tradition of the US Frontier Myth, which cultural historian Richard Slotkin has done large amounts of research on. While Slotkin focuses primarily on domestic conflicts, he links the concept to and Iraq and Afghanistan in an interview with Bill Moyers. The relevant parts of this interview will be analysed in detail to give theoretical background to the pro-war music of both eras.

Moyers asks Slotkin the following:

> You said that central to the myth, the myth of America, the myth of how we came to be is the belief that 'violence is an essential and necessary part of the process through which American society was established and through which its democratic values are defended and enforced.' So we invoke violence because we think it not only saves us but nurtures us and that we have some kind of obligation to use it in the service of spreading democratic values? (Slotkin n.p.)

To which Slotkin replies that "it validates our beliefs, … values, the things we stand for if we're willing to fight for them. Nothing validates them like combat" (ibid.). Slotkin essentially states that the history of the United States and its understanding of itself is inextricably linked to violence. This violence is used to propagate the country's values and essentially serves as proof for the honesty of these values. Since established in the Frontier Myth, fighting for these values has been applied to various situations and has found new meaning after the Second World War in that, "through the platoon [sic] movie, that ethnically and racially mixed unit now becomes a multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy united how? Through war against a

common enemy, a good war" (ibid.). Hence, the Frontier Myth is now applied to war and its capability to forge a coherent unity between people that are necessarily otherwise divided.

Thus, the war serves as the ultimate realisation of US values. War is seemingly the only setting where these values can be achieved entirely (even though this is also grossly idealised when considering the racial tensions between soldiers in Vietnam, for instance.) Given authority by President Roosevelt's comments that "a savage war, a war against savages, is always a righteous war," applying the conquering of the land that now constitutes the United States to more "international" ambitions, "this idea of the frontier continues to summon us" finds Moyers (ibid.). Hence, when considering the wars in the Middle East, Slotkin explains how pertinent this idea still is:

> Why is it that for liberals, I'm thinking about Obama particularly, the war in Afghanistan was a war of necessity, whereas the war in Iraq was a war of choice. They're both wars of choice. But the war in Afghanistan has all of the hallmarks of savage war, a primitive enemy bent on our destruction, can't make a deal with them, can't liberate them, can only destroy. (ibid.)

Slotkin also explains the shifting opinion on the Iraq War similarly by describing how the Frontier yth's continuing influence impacts thinking in that

> Iraq was supposed to be World War II, was supposed to be a war of liberation, but it wasn't. And it soon became obvious that it wasn't that. And so you've got a kind of public revulsion against that, among some liberals who supported it initially, but not against-- not until recently anyway, not against Afghanistan. (Slotkin n.p.)

It is thus imperative to note that, in hindsight, some of the pro-war songs might seem revolting, reactionary, or short-sighted. These songs are informed by centuries of newly veiled interpretations of the Frontier Myth in which violence affirms ideals. It is also not surprising then that genres that are widely considered to be liberal voice support for a war. As some pro-war songs will be mentioned as part of this thesis, the idea of the Frontier Myth still being

relevant is important to remember, especially since some of its beliefs are either supported or opposed in protest music.

Additionally, while Slotkin touches upon the wars in the Middle East in this interview, it is not difficult to make parallels with the Vietnam War, which was sold to the public as a preventive strike against the threat of communism. Initial support, certainly informed by the ideas that Slotkin explains above, only wavered when the war showed itself to be a disastrous mistake in that it claimed a horrible death toll without coming closer to the objective of defeating communism. Slotkin's comments explain why these wars have initial support and supporting voices in music, which - in turn - find large numbers of listeners as the Frontier Myth is still prevalent in US American culture and finds new incarnations.

2. Context

The Vietnam War

To understand the conflict in Vietnam, it is imperative to know that the initial conflict between North and South Vietnam was a conflict of opposing political ideas. This is very well described in Max Hastings' *Vietnam: An Epic History of a Tragic War*. Under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, the North was aiming for a united Vietnam under communist ideals. At the same time, the South, headed by Emperor Bao - who was backed by France - wanted a close allegiance with the global West. After gaining control in the North, North Vietnamese forces defeated the Southern army after continuing conflict between both parties decisively at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, ending French colonial rule in the area. The country was officially split, with Ho controlling the North and Bao the South. Yet, Ngo Dinh Diem quickly superseded the latter as president, who had a strong anti-communist stance and started persecuting Vietcong (short

for Vietnamese communists). As the Cold War was intensifying and the United States, under President Eisenhower, decided to take a more rigid stance against any Soviet allies, the US started providing military training and equipment to Diem, which were used for hunting down Vietcong.

As the famous “domino theory” (which stated that once a country in Southeast Asia would fall to communism, many others would follow suit) began gaining traction in Washington, President Kennedy doubled down on providing South Vietnam with, among others, military aid. Diem was subject to a deadly coup three weeks before Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. As the political situation in South Vietnam grew increasingly volatile after the coup, newly sworn-in President Lyndon B. Johnson, and Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, believed it best to increase the already growing US aid. After the DRV attacked US destroyer ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, Johnson decided on retaliatory bombings. Johnson soon followed up with Operation Rolling Thunder, beginning regular bombings of North Vietnam and neighbouring Laos. As public support was apparent, Johnson decided to send in the first batch of combat troops in early 1965 to support the South Vietnamese forces. As deployment grew, more and more soldiers and countless civilians were killed and injured, which nurtured the growing anti-war movement.

Considering the first notable protest against the war descended on the Pentagon in October 1967 with 35000 protesters, followed by the largest anti-war demonstration in the history of the United States in November 1969, when 250000 people peacefully protested the war in Washington, the war dragged itself on under condemnation until 1973 when the U.S. and North Vietnam brokered a peace deal. The conflict between South and North Vietnam continued until 1975 and ended when Saigon was captured and renamed Ho-Chi-Minh-City,

and the country was reformed as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1976. The United States failed in its initial goals for entering the war and had to stomach enormous personal and economic costs. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington is graced with the names of 58200 military personnel who died in the conflict. Many veterans were perceived negatively by both proponents and detractors of the war, either for losing the war or being involved in killing civilians. Many suffered from PTSD and physical injuries or impairments.

The 9/11 Attacks and the War in Afghanistan

On September 11th, 2001, a total of four passenger planes were hijacked by Al-Qaeda terrorists to carry out attacks on US domestic soil. With the motives of opposing US support for the country of Israel, US sanctions against Iraq, and the presence of American soldiers in Saudi Arabia, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists set out to commit what would become the most significant terrorist attack the world had seen. Two of these planes crashed into the World Trade Center towers in Manhattan in New York City, resulting in the subsequent collapse of the two towers. A third plane was flown into the Pentagon, headquarters of the US Department of Defence, resulting in the partial destruction of the building. In contrast, the fourth plane, en route to Washington D.C., crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after the plane's passengers could overpower the hijackers and prevent the plane from hitting its initial target at the cost of their own lives. The attacks were responsible for the deaths of almost 3000 people and injuring over 25000, either physically or producing long-standing health conditions. In addition, the U.S. suffered billions in structural damages ("September 11 Attacks" n.p.).

Moreover, the towers' destruction resulted in economic damage to New York and negatively impacted global financial markets. These devastating attacks resulted in immediate US legislation launching the 'War on Terror,' which resulted in several long-lasting and incisive decisions taken by President George Bush's administration. One of the most significant and most impactful decisions taken in the immediate aftermath of the attacks was the invasion of Afghanistan with its goal of fighting and ousting the Taliban, who refused to turn over Al-Qaeda terrorists residing in the country. In addition to the human cost the attacks had in their immediate impact, their traumatic effects on the US population were immense.

Thus, it is understandable that a lot of the population supported a retaliatory war effort in the Middle East to avenge the attacks and hold accountable those responsible for the traumatic event, Osama Bin Laden chief among them.

Lynskey summarises this effort effectively:

> Before the dust around ground zero had even cleared, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was a foregone conclusion. The Taliban was proudly sheltering Osama Bin Laden and al Qaeda, the prime suspects in the 9/11 attacks, rejected the U.S. ultimatum to hand over all al Qaeda leaders and close terrorist training camps in the country. With Bush's approval rating at a priapic 90 percent, and a similar number of Americans in favor [sic] of military action, there was never any real prospect of averting conflict. The first air strikes hit Afghanistan on October 7th. (Lynskey 508)

Hence, the war in Afghanistan was launched swiftly while the country was still mourning the traumatic events of September 11th, 2001. The war's approval was primarily due to an emotional retaliatory wish to hold accountable those behind the World Trade Center attacks.

The War in Iraq

By many accounts, the war in Iraq was a disaster. Iraq was imagined as a swift war that would produce a thankful Iraqi population that would hail the US as liberators, which did not come

to fruition. Instead, it created a prolonged conflict that involved American forces in a lengthy guerrilla war, much like they encountered in Vietnam. While being portrayed by officials as a response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks as Saddam Hussein was supposedly working with Al-Qaeda and possessed weapons of mass destruction, these claims were all debunked. Thus, the invasion was based on misinformation, as

> the Bush administration's massive disinformation campaign, abetted by lazy and timid press, succeeded spectacularly in driving the public to support its long-planned war. In the end, it was the power of lies, not logic, that was the deciding factor. At the same time, the fact that several of the key players most aggressively pushing the war had originally outlined it for the benefit of another country years earlier raises the most troubling conflict-of-interest questions. (Bamford 377)

In addition to fabricated reasons to go to war, the initial invasion of the country came under scrutiny too as "many of the weapons used in the air attacks were deadly cluster bombs that opened up like clamshells to spew hundreds of mini-bombs over densely populated areas, causing hundreds of civilian casualties" (Bamford 392.) In a tragic twist, "the U.S. military was killing and maiming, by the tens of thousands, the very people it had come to liberate" (Bamford 394).

However, not only Iraqi civilians were dying. By September of 2004, roughly a year after the war had started, the 1000th American soldier had been killed in action. In response, "around the United States, small gatherings of anti-war protesters and relatives of service members killed in the conflicted marked the milestone with sadness and dignity" (Bamford 397). Furthermore, "vigils in 900 other cities around the country drew upward of 40,000 people" (ibid.). Criticism also came from high-ranking public figures and politicians such as Al Gore, who criticised the "Bush administration's disastrous decision to invade Iraq and its cynical selling of that war to the public" in his book *The Assault on Reason*, published in 2006 (n.p.; qtd. in Kakutani 31).

The war was swiftly losing support, both domestically and in Iraq. The response by the Iraqi population was arguably even harsher. The Iraqi people had indeed been living in a dictatorship, but "despite of years of harsh treatment under Hussein, in the eyes of many in Iraq, one bloody dictator had simply been replaced by another." (Bamford, 393) This rejection diametrically opposes the idea of US officials being seen as liberators as they did not have the support of those they were trying to liberate. Diaa Rashwan, a political scientist at Cairo's Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, picked up on this development and framed it as follows once the initial push into Iraq was underway:

> The American media and people are in a state of euphoria right now, but they are not seeing it the way we are seeing it at all. The Arab street is very frustrated, and to America, I repeat, I repeat, I repeat, the real war hasn't started yet. We have to be careful with such euphoria. It will only increase the feelings of anger in the Arab world. No Arabs want to welcome an occupying power." (n.p.; qtd. in Bamford 393)

When keeping in mind that the US portrayed itself as liberators while simultaneously killing many of those it aimed to liberate, it comes as little surprise that the Arab world was not supportive of the US effort. As stated by Dr. Walid Hamed: "Anyone who hates America has come here to fight: Saddam's supporters, people who don't have jobs, other Arab fighters (…) All these people are on our streets. But everyone is afraid of the Americans, not the fighters" (n.p.; qtd. in Bamford, 396). While the U.S. imagined a swift action to liberate Iraq, as the war developed into the opposite direction and became a long, drawn out conflict, as many in the Arab world had seen coming.

Furthermore, the US intervention in the country directly influenced the development of terrorism in the country. Beyond hurting its population, Iraq's

> invasion created the insurgency, its brutal occupation kept it growing, and its utter lack of planning and foresight armed it with a virtually unlimited supply of powerful weapons. This makes for bitter irony. The Bush administration invaded Iraq in large part to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists. Now because

> of its invasion and lack of planning, the Bush administration is responsible for weapons of mass destruction going into the hands of terrorists. (Bamford 403)

Hence, the war in Iraq is by many accounts based on a fabricated idea of threat “posed by a country that did not attack the United States on 9/11 and lacked the terrifying weapons of mass destruction that administration hawks scared Americans into thinking it possessed” (Kakutani, 31). The invasion, however, created the enemy it made Iraq out to be as an excuse to invade by that very invasion, which in turn resulted in a lengthy and bloody conflict that produced countless military and civilian casualties over its near-decade development. The US returned to Iraq in 2014 as leaders of the Combined Joint Task Force, created to combat ISIL, which has a history as part of the Iraqi insurgency following the US invasion of Iraq.

All in all, the wars in the Middle East and the war in Vietnam have several striking similarities, as explains this quote by Bamford:

> Never before has the United States launched a pre-emptive war. And only once before, in Vietnam, have so few manipulated so many at such a great price. “We were wrong, terribly wrong,” said former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara about the Vietnam War. “We were all wrong,” said former CIA weapons hunter David Kay about the war in Iraq. (Bamford 377)

Moreover, considering Slotkin's assessment of the Frontier Myth, these wars were sold to the public as affirming US values overseas, especially in light of those values supposedly being threatened by either Communism or terrorism and therefore righteous.

The Military Draft and Voluntary Forces

When considering the impact of protest music, and music in general, on a population during a war, it is essential to note that there needs to be a distinction between two groups of people. On the one hand, those deployed to the warzone in either a military or civil role, directly involved in the war and its combat actions. On the other, the public at large,

uninvolved in these developments. These groups have massively differing experiences relating to war and thus react differently to music related to said war hence why this thesis will make a distinction between these groups and analyse them separately.

Moreover, when discussing those deployed in a war, especially as it relates to the Vietnam War and the Iraq/Afghanistan wars, there is a secondary distinction that is paramount: conscription. The soldiers deployed in Vietnam were recruited mainly through conscription. Often referred to as “the draft,” those deployed to Vietnam primarily did not sign up for it voluntarily. While there indeed were military personnel who were part of the Army (and other branches of the US military) as a career choice, these people were most often to be found in higher circles, or specialised units, as opposed to ground soldiers, often referred to as GIs (referring to “Government Issue” as relating to the equipment of soldiers and airmen) who entered military service due to the draft and did not sign up to fight in Vietnam of their own volition. Hence, when discussing the personnel that fought in these wars, it is imperative to remember that the corps in Vietnam were primarily made up of conscription soldiers, while those that fought in Iraq and Afghanistan did so as part of their chosen career, as conscription ended in the US in 1973.

However, while the US military deployed voluntary forces to Iraq and Afghanistan, it is essential to note that these forces are still disproportionately made up of the social groups that were massively targeted by conscription during the Vietnam War’s draft process: “As usual, but especially with an all-voluntary military it was the young and the poor, those with the least education and those from small and rural towns, that paid the highest price” (Bamford 397). Furthermore, this is illustrated when considering that “more than half of those killed came from the lowest-paid enlisted ranks, with only about 12 percent from the officer

corps" (ibid.). While becoming a soldier has shifted from a forced proposition to a simple career choice, the military still heavily recruits those it would have simply drafted into the military during the Vietnam War. Being able to provide a stable career opportunity, it is no wonder that "their key targets were schools in working-class neighborhoods [sic] and students who have little prospect for further education" (Bamford 398). Where money, and, thus, possibilities to pay for further education is scarce, it makes sense to aggressively recruit those who might see the military as one of their only opportunities. This tactic is exemplified by the fact that Kurt Gilroy, who directs recruiting policy in Secretary Rumsfeld's office, says the idea is "to go where the low-hanging fruit is. In other words, we fish where the fish are" (n.p.; qtd. in Bamford, 398). It is thus evident that the soldiers who fought in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan largely stem from the same background, with the only difference being that those who served after conscription signed up of their own volition, albeit after being heavily and aggressively recruited.

3. Soldiers and Music

Soldiers and Music in Vietnam

When firstly looking at the music that was listened to by the soldiers deployed in Vietnam, it is essential to note that much of the music took on a life of its own in the context of war. As put by Doug Bradley and Craig Werner: "Music in Vietnam didn't deliver a preordained set of meanings to the troops. Rather, the songs afforded a set of overlapping fields for making, sharing, and at times rejecting meaning" (3). In that sense, the music gave soldiers a possibility of finding expression of their experiences vocationally. When considering a song such as 'Like a Rolling Stone,' soldiers would find meaning that was almost exclusive to them due to their

extraordinary circumstances. Being caught in a war they did not choose to fight, “as Bob Dylan put it in a song that meant something far more poignant and haunting in Vietnam than it did back in the world, they felt like they were on their own with no direction home” (Bradley & Werner 2).

Moreover, while a lot of music resonated with both soldiers and the public at large, uninvolved in combat action, the specific markers that tied the songs to the warzone for the soldiers were oblivious to those not fighting the war. As the war gradually descended into chaos, in addition to the consumption of music, drug consumption among soldiers was high. With the emergence of psychedelic rock, which was heavily influenced by drug use, the music and drug consumption did not only go hand in hand in the US, but also in Vietnam, as “most GIs who were there estimate that more than half of the troops smoked grass, and a sizable minority dabbled in acid, heroin, and opium” (Bradley & Werner 92-93). The music created on home soil and the drugs consumed both in the US and in the warzone presented new ways of sonic and psychedelic emergence. However, the music consumed in Vietnam took on a different sphere due to the setting. For instance, “no one listening to the Jimi Hendrix Experience’s ‘Purple Haze’ in a college dorm room was likely to associate the title with the color[sic] of the smoke grenades used to guide helicopters into landing zones. ‘Ring of Fire,’ ‘Nowhere to Run,’ ‘Riders on the Storm’: all of them shifted shape in relation to the war” (Bradley & Werner 3). Thus, it is essential to note that songs can take on different roles and meanings because they are experienced in a warzone.

The song that exemplifies this discrepancy of experience best is The Animals’ ‘We Gotta Get Out of This Place,’ released in 1965. While the track “had only reached number sixteen on the American charts in 1965, it became a theme song for many who served in

Vietnam during this time" (Bradley & Werner 17) and "more than any other song, 'We Gotta Get Out of This Place' was the glue that held the improvised communities of Vietnam together then" (Bradley & Werner 9-10). Considering the song has no direct link, either lyrically or musically, this shows how music could shift meaning in the context of a warzone, creating a bond between soldiers who experienced it. As retold by Bobbie Keith, an Armed Forces Radio DJ from 1967 to 1969, "We counted our blessings each time the song played, that we were still alive" (Bradley & Werner 10)

Especially when looking at the chorus of 'We Gotta Get Out of This Place', it becomes obvious why the song resonated so heavily with soldiers in Vietnam:

> We gotta [sic] get out of this place
> If it's the last thing we ever do
> We gotta get out of this place
> 'Cause [sic] girl, there's a better life for me and you. (The Animals n.p.)

The narrator underlines the need for escaping the current situation even "if it's the last thing we ever do," as it seems to be a matter of life and death. Moreover, as there is "a better life for me and you," it promises that once "this place" has been escaped, a better life becomes a real possibility.

In addition to the chorus of the song being relatable to the feelings of many a draftee deployed to Vietnam, the song's mere recital showed differences in the make-up of the US military:

> First time I was fully aware of the line of demarcation between the careerists and the rest of us looneys and captains was when they came to 'We Gotta Get Out of This Place.' The junior officers all stood up and sang at the top of their voices, and the senior officers remained glued to their seats and glared at us. I knew the war was lost because we really didn't understand each other and didn't want to spend the time to find out why. (Bradley & Werner 11)

This account underlines the discrepancies within the military during the war as many of the senior officers alluded to in it have significantly different motivations and reasons for them being in Vietnam, as opposed to the junior officers. The latter were essentially forced to be in Vietnam. Relating to the song was far more accessible and more important to them. The low-ranking military members were often a lot closer to the frontlines as the senior officers were sheltered far away from enemy territory in office buildings and military bases.

Another song that deals with this discrepancy thoroughly is ‘Fortunate Son’. Creedence Clearwater Revival released ‘Fortunate Son’ as part of their fourth album, *Willy and the Poor Boys*, in November 1969. The war would end roughly six years later, in April 1975, and the song was released during a time of massive US involvement in Vietnam. Regarding the lyrics, the song does not explicitly mention the conflict. The lyrics express a general feeling of discontent with the draft system rigged towards excluding wealthy people who could afford to procure deferments through the bribery of doctors or other avenues. This observation is also reflected in the song’s title. Using the word “fortunate” can be said to imply a double meaning. There is certainly the element of luck, having dodged a draft that would send one to war and could potentially end in death. Secondly, the word also bears the meaning of “wealth.” This creates an ironic reading of this combination, as luck is certainly influenced by bribery. This irony is also reflected throughout the song. The first quatrain, simultaneously being the song’s first verse, analyses the waning patriotism in the US:

> Some folks are born, made to wave the flag
> Ooh, their red, white and blue
> And when the band plays "Hail to the Chief." [sic]
> Ooh, they point the cannon at you, Lord. (Creedence Clearwater Revival n.p.)

Fogerty evokes the imagery of parades, in which flags are flown and waved by jubilant people. Moreover, Fogerty mentions “Hail to the Chief,” the anthem of the President of the United States. These references lead to the fact that “they point the cannon at you,” which in connection with the imagery, reminds the listener of the famous Uncle Sam poster, on which an elderly man draped in US colours and representing the federal government points the finger at the viewer in tandem with the words “I want you for U.S. Army.” Thus, in this verse, Fogerty presents the status quo; he shows how the ruling class pictures the response to their request in an abiding and triumphant manner. However, Fogerty immediately rejects this in the following chorus, exclaiming:

> It ain't [sic] me, it ain't me
> I ain't no senator's son, son
> It ain't me, it ain't me
> I ain't no fortunate one, no. (ibid.)

The songwriter ccomplishes two things here. Firstly, Fogerty opposes this patriotic view of military service categorically. In positioning himself in diametrical opposition to it, Fogerty is unmistakably rejecting the idea of selflessly serving out of patriotism. Secondly, in proclaiming that he is neither a “senator’s son” nor a “fortunate one,” Fogerty shows that he is not in a position to avoid this unfair procedure. Being a senator’s son, one would most probably be able to dodge the draft, at the very least being stationed out of harm’s way. At the same time, the narrator -a regular man without significant ties or wealth- would not be able to influence his drafting significantly. Moreover, rhyming “senator’s son” with “fortunate one,” Fogerty once more underlines the double meaning of fortunate, equating luck with wealth.

Interestingly, George W. Bush, who would later start the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in the wake of 9/11, was one of those possibly being described as a “senator’s son.” As his father

was a sitting Congressman and his grandfather being a US senator, Bush entered the Texas Air National guard in 1968 without being deployed to Vietnam.

The juxtaposition of verse and chorus continues with the second verse in which Fogerty paints a picture of the affluent class as greedy and egotistical:

> Some folks are born, silver spoon in hand
> Lord, don't they help themselves, y'all
> But when the taxman comes to the door
> Lord, the house looks like a rummage sale, yeah. (ibid.)

Fogerty begins by stating that some people are born into wealth, and some are not. However, those who are "help themselves" by faking poverty when being audited for taxes to avoid paying more. In that sense, the wealthy do not only avoid paying their fair share to society in terms of the draft but also in terms of tax, which is most often used to provide services to all, irrespective of social standing. Once again, the chorus that follows shows Fogerty rejecting this, this time juxtaposing "fortunate one" with "millionaire's son." In addition to the first chorus, which eluded to influence, this chorus eludes to affluence.

The last verse brings to light more insightful statements:

> Yeah, yeah
> Some folks inherit star spangled [sic] eyes
> Ooh, they send you down to war, Lord
> And when you ask 'em [sic], 'How much should we give?'
> Ooh, they only answer 'More! More! More!', Y'all [sic]. (ibid.)

Inheriting "star spangled [sic] eyes" alludes to the patriotism that drives many to join the army. However, "they send you down to war" can once again be interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, patriotism might lead you to war. However, "they" might also refer back to

the military-industrial complex that is set to gain by military conflict and hence invests in sparking interest in the military among the young. The "star spangled eyes [sic]" might be a result of propaganda more so than genuine feeling.

Further, answering the question "How much should we give?" and the subsequent answer of "More! More! More!" also bears more than a single meaning. Firstly, the answer is a direct reference to recruitment tactics in which recruiters were pushed to get longer duty terms out of the conscripts. Secondly, however, it is also an allusion to the spike of troop deployments in general, which gradually became larger and larger. It might then be the country itself asking how many more of their young they should send to war.

The song concludes with an extended chorus. Fogerty mentions the "military son" and subsequently shows he is neither of the three factions that would allow for either not being drafted or rejoicing in being drafted. Yet, the narrator is forced to fight as the draft has chosen him to. Writing the song was a very personal affair for Fogerty. As stated in a Rolling Stone article:

> Fogerty said he wrote 'Fortunate Son' in 1969 at the height of the Vietnam War after he'd been drafted himself and done his own stint in the military. Fogerty noted that during the draft, however, people of privilege frequently used their position and influence to avoid military service." (Blistein n.p.)

As a first example of a protest song that resonated with the soldiers deployed in Vietnam, it is essential to note that the issue discussed in the song deeply resonated with the soldiers deployed in terms of the lyrics. These soldiers were directly impacted by the words of Fogerty and hence could engage with the music not only based on enjoying its musicality but also engage with its lyrics and meaning. As stated by Peter Bukowski, who was deployed in Vietnam, "Two words: Creedence Clearwater. They were the one thing everybody agreed on. Walking down the streets, didn't matter who you were. Black, white, everyone. You'd hear

that music, and it brought a smile to your face" (Bradley & Werner 67). Bukowski identifies the band as a unifying force between the soldiers, who do not share a common background, showing how the band and the song let these soldiers bond.

"We were very much aware, and we supported the guys, and we knew what it was like to be in the military and be forced to do what you didn't want to do," (Bradley & Werner 68) says John Fogerty himself, emphasising the direct connection between his band and members of service deployed in Vietnam.

Furthermore, drummer Doug Clifford, who also served as a member of a Coast Guard reserve unit, states that

> Several songs were written about our connection with the guys in the service. (…) John was in the Army Reserve and saw the inequities of the lower classes and the middle class going while the privileged class didn't have to. That's what 'Fortunate Son' is all about. (Bradley & Werner 68-69)

Through these statements, it becomes unequivocally clear that shared experiences between the members of Creedence Clearwater Revival and those deployed in Vietnam made it possible for a familiar chord to be struck. While none of the members of the band served in the warzone, having completed service under the rigged draft system made it possible for the band's songwriters to transpose their experiences into their songs, which in turn made them relatable for the soldiers that were dealt an arguably even worse fate through the military draft. Outside of the already mentioned songs, the band also wrote, among others, 'Run Through the Jungle,' 'Bad Moon Rising,' and 'Proud Mary' that resonated heavily with the deployed forces and underlined their "anti-war and pro-veteran" stance (Bradley & Werner 69). However, 'Fortunate Son' takes a unique position in their catalogue. Loren Webster, a Vietnam veteran, explains how the song "pretty well summarized [sic] my feelings about

serving, particularly since I had to serve in the reserves with a whole lot of rich draft dodgers after I returned" (Bradley & Werner 70). Furthermore, Webster explains that

> Considering my personal experiences in Vietnam, perhaps it's not surprising that my favorite [sic] protest song is 'Fortunate Son' (…) I never joined the protests against the war after I got out of the Army out of deference to my friends who were still fighting there, but I never supported the war and to this day I still resent the rich Republican son-of-a-bitches who advocate war but who hid in the National Guard or Army Reserves while the rest of us did their fighting for them. (ibid.)

The idea of draft-dodging reveals itself to be, understandably, a massive point of contention for massive numbers of the then-young men who were not able to use wealth or influence to sway their deployment favourably and were sent to fight on the frontlines. At the same time, a small minority could use said wealth and power to avoid these assignments. As the song directly references this minority, despised by an overwhelming majority of draftees, it is unsurprising that 'Fortunate Son' has reached such a singular position among the songs associated with the war. Hence why the song can often be found in media set in or during the Vietnam War.

This use is exemplified by the popular US animated sitcom *Family Guy*, which satirised this fact in one of its episodes. In a hypothetical setting in which the show plays out during the Vietnam War, *Family Guy's* main character, Peter Griffin, inquires one of his friends, Quagmire -who has served in the war- to retell stories that Peter can pass on to his son, who is about to be deployed to Vietnam: "So, Quagmire, Chris is shipping out tomorrow morning, and he's pretty nervous. I know you enjoy staring, like, 3,000 feet out into dead space, but you got [sic] any good stories I could tell him about how cool 'Nam [sic] is?" ("Through The Years." n.p.).

Quagmire responds with the following:

> You know, there's lots of things you expect in war... carnage, the sleepless nights... but what they don't prepare you for is the incessant use of ‘Fortunate Son.’ I'd hear that song any time I was in a helicopter. Or taking a swift boat deep into the jungle, that song again. My penis would even play "Fortunate Son" while I was visiting a whorehouse (ibid.).

Peter, shocked about this, states that “there must have been some other song you heard,” to which Quagmire replies: “Yeah, there was. That "there's something happening here" song” (ibid.), alluding to Buffalo Springfield’s ‘For What it’s Worth’, a song released in 1967 with a similarly significant legacy to ‘Fortunate Son.’

While crude humour, which is usually part of the show’s appeal, might put off some viewers, the point it makes about ‘Fortunate Son’ remains valid. The sequence shines a light on the fact that the song was a massive point of reference for many soldiers and a representative of the soundtrack that is often used to allude to the war in media. The bit underlines the almost symbiotic relationship the song has with portrayals of the war, rooted in the piece being massively important to the soldiers deployed in the war.

Soldiers and Music in Iraq and Afghanistan

When it comes to the soldiers’ listening habits in Iraq and Afghanistan, one can observe a wholly different situation in contrast with soldiers’ music consumption in Vietnam. Namely, while Vietnam saw many soldiers using music as an outlet that expressed the same opinions as them, soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan often used music to motivate themselves for combat. With the increased popularity of musical genres such as heavy metal or and hip hop, soldiers resorted to these to prepare for combat action. Jonathan Pieslak has analysed these developments as part of his book *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War*. Pieslak relays this development to the fact that “metal music contributes to the long-standing recruiting strategy of depicting military service as a form of action, adventure, and

excitement" (31). In that sense, loud rock music, which was often used as an expression of anti-establishment thought during the Vietnam War, has since been adopted by the military for recruitment and has, hence, shifted its meaning. Pieslak sees this adoption gradually taking place since the 1980s, especially with the US military-supported film *Top Gun* as, "in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, cinematic scenes of war, military action, and violence were rarely paired with metal music. *Top Gun*, however, demonstrates the increasing association between metal and such scenes" (36) In addition with this alignment of the music with military imagery, "given the technology that allows music to be heard more frequently and in a greater variety of settings, like military vehicles, music's role as an inspiration for combat seems stronger than in previous wars" (Pieslak 50). Soldiers' accounts of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars reflect these observations of metal music, as metal music was played to increase motivation in military vehicles: "'Much of the music I listened to at the time was to get myself wound up…amped up so that I was ready for anything at that point. Being on an adrenalin rush felt good, and having some AC/DC or some Megadeth accompanying it was even better.' These devices allowed music, in this case, hard rock and metal, to be heard in settings like military vehicles" (Pieslak 48).

The use of rap and metal is a logical choice when considering Pieslak's statement that "the songs chosen as an inspiration for combat appear to lend themselves, through timbre, performance, text, or some musical feature, to an understanding of meaning that relates to the experience of combat or violence" (147). In addition, "the influence of gangsta rap seems to derive more frequently from the lyrical themes rather than from timbre" (Pieslak 152). The loud and aggressive nature of metal music, as well as rap lyrics, thus lends itself ideally to reflect combat situations and, hence, is consumed by soldiers as motivation for combat, and songs such as Eminem's 'Go To Sleep,' Drowning Pool's 'Bodies' and Dope's 'Die Motherfucker

Die', which Pieslak all mentions in his book, are consumed before combat solely for their aggressive nature. This shift in musical consumption is also reflected in the production of music by soldiers. In addition to the music produced with acoustic guitars, as can be seen during the Vietnam War as well, these two prevalent genres were, and still are, also produced by soldiers as "many soldiers feel that writing or recording music is a necessary act of expression or something they must do to handle their experiences in war" (Pieslak 133). As the emerging genres of heavy metal and rap music proved popular with soldiers deployed in the Middle East in terms of combat motivation, it is natural for these genres to also be used for soldier expression. Pieslak features a rap song by a soldier nicknamed Saunders which is extremely violent towards the native population and features lines such as

> Light 'em [sic] up 'til they talk, if they won't talk, fuck 'em
> They too will change, when you kill enough of 'em (Pieslak 30).

Pieslak assesses that these lyrics "may strike some readers as overwhelmingly violent and hostile to the Iraqi population, and one may be shocked at how Saunders advocates crushing noncompliant resistance, creating peace through violence and fear" (130-131). Thus, musical production by soldiers in the Middle East can mirror the violence seen on the battlefield as well as the violence of the music consumed in motivation for combat.

Other soldier productions, such as videos, also feature rap and metal music and are equally violent. For instance, "the web site Grouchy Media (…) broadcasts dozens of military music videos created by American soldiers" (Pieslak 42). In these videos, soldiers use, among others metal and rap music and images taken on the battlefield, often in Iraq and Afghanistan, to express their experiences in these wars.

These findings exemplify a shift in soldiers' behaviour concerning music between the Vietnam War and the Iraq/Afghanistan wars. Through technological development, allowing for instance the use of music in military vehicles, and, more importantly, cultural development, such as the military's adoption of new genres to be connected with the military, music is consumed differently by soldiers and with a different goal than in Vietnam.

4. Protest Music in the Vietnam Era

Early Protest: Masters of War

It is important to note that, even before the war in Vietnam had started, a general feeling of protest was gathering in the young generation. The growing folk scene produced several artists who openly criticised social issues, including Bob Dylan. While not necessarily popular with the general public, the folk scene found many admirers, listeners, and participants among young people. David James establishes the genre-founding idea as a "popularly created and constantly rewritten collective musical practice outside the commodity function, one without individual authorship and without a distinction of producers from consumers" (125) While these ideals were undoubtedly impossible to implement and were swiftly upheaved through the emergence of folk stars such as Dylan and Joan Baez, it speaks towards the honest effort of the folk scene and musicians to create something tangible and believable beside "commodity" music. Consequently, it may come as little surprise that "recent accounts of the folk revival of the 1960… argue that the political and musical movements were … intimately linked" (Street 123).

Bob Dylan is unmistakably retained as the artistic leader of this scene. While Dylan outgrew the folk scene quickly and explored other musical avenues, his legacy within the

scene is immense. As Street establishes, many of the songs released within the folk genre “are worthy in their political correctness, but musically uninteresting” (Street 128). Dylan forms the glowing exception, as his “caustic delivery, lyrical invention, and melodic imagination highlight his comrades' aesthetic in adequacies. (ibid.). One of the prime examples of these traits is ‘Masters of War.’

Adapting the melody of a medieval English song, Dylan released ‘Masters of War’ as part of his *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan* album in the spring of 1963. Importantly, the song was released before the United States engaged in an all-out war in Vietnam. While the country had long been supplying military and financial aid to the South Vietnamese regime, it had not yet engaged in combat action against North Vietnam. Hence why Dylan stated that the song "is supposed to be a pacifistic song against war. It's not an anti-war song. It's speaking against what Eisenhower was calling a military-industrial complex as he was making his exit from the presidency” (Gundersen n.p.). Seeing the growing danger of nuclear war stemming from the Cold War conflict between the US and the Soviet Union leading to an arms race, Dylan penned a vicious song criticising those in power and the “military-industrial complex” Eisenhower had warned of. It is not a stretch to see how those providing military aid in South Vietnam at the time were profiting off of selling machinery or deploying training personnel and would be interested in escalating the conflict as it would result in more money for them. This is notable because it shows that when the US entered the war in Vietnam, many social issues were at the forefront of the US’ concerns. In addition to the Cold War, the country saw the civil rights movement fighting for equal rights for people of colour. Hence, Dylan’s song foreshadows the feelings that would be amplified once the country was heavily involved in Vietnam and the song became synonymous with protesting the war. Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, Lynskey calls it “the most evil-sounding protest song Dylan ever recorded” (Lynskey 57). ‘Masters of

War' features eight verses without a chorus, explicitly homing in on the idea of Dylan creating a strong narrative, gradually criticising more aspects of those involved in the "military-industrial complex" piece by piece. The song's sole instrument is Dylan's guitar, and the music itself is simple, following the same chord pattern throughout the song, creating an almost droning atmosphere in which Dylan belts out his accusatory words at the "masters of war", as seen in Dylan's opening verse:

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

This addressal immediately characterises the "you" in the song. Dylan is directly speaking to the politicians, the weapons manufacturers, and the high-ranking military personnel he sees involved in warmongering. After enumerating their warmongering in opposition to their cowardice, Dylan tells his accused warmongers that he "can see through [their] masks," having recognised their true identities, which he will reveal in the rest of the song. This reveal is started in the second verse:

> You that never done nothin' [sic]
> But build to destroy
> You play with my world
> Like it's your little toy
> You put a gun in my hand
> And you hide from my eyes

And you turn and run farther
When the fast bullets fly. (ibid.).

Dylan delves deeper into the idea of those in power profiting from war, while the lower classes are left to fight it themselves, without having a real incentive to do so. Dylan further adds a level of shame and cowardice to those in power in having them "hide from my eyes." It adds to the distinction of "me" or "I" and "you," the "you" being clearly in the wrong and the "me" in the absolute right. Making this discrepancy between the social classes prominent, one using the other as a "toy," the leitmotif of the song is reminiscent of Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Fortunate Son,' which features the same idea as Dylan's central message. The third verse of 'Masters of War' adds another layer to this:

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. (ibid.)

Likening the "you" to Judas Iscariot, who infamously sold out Jesus Christ for financial gain, is a damning comparison, especially in a nation as devoutly Christian as the United States. Dylan then identifies the lie as them stating that a "world war can be won," which he goes on to state that he has seen the real motivations that the masters of war have not revealed to the general public. However, by showing how easy it is to see through them "like I see through the water that runs down my drain," Dylan shows how blatant their lying and deceiving is. He follows this with a verse that heavily uses juxtaposition:

> You fasten all the triggers
> For the others to fire
> Then you set back and watch
> When the death count gets higher
> You hide in your mansion
> As young people's blood
> Flows out of their bodies
> And is buried in the mud. (ibid.)

Those in charge of the war are the rich, who avoid combat while the young and poor do the actual fighting. The accusatory notion of the lyrics is unmistakable here, as Dylan paints the “masters of war” as lazy and calculating, as they “set back and watch when the death count gets higher,” almost adding a notion of morbid pleasure to the feelings of those in charge, not caring about the results of their actions, yet knowing that they are in the wrong as they are hiding from the consequences “in [their] mansion[s],” evoking the same imagery as in ‘Fortunate Son.’ Dylan then builds on those hurt by the “masters of war” in the following verse:

> You've thrown the worst fear
> That can ever be hurled
> Fear to bring children
> Into the world
> For threatening my baby
> Unborn and unnamed
> You ain't worth the blood
> That runs in your veins. (ibid.)

In Dylan’s eyes, making the world such an uninhabitable, hateful place makes people reconsider having children, which he considers the “worst fear.” For their complicity in

causing such fear, Dylan outright hates these “masters of war”, stating that they are not worth “the blood that runs in [their] veins,” clearly showing his despise, here, even more so than before. Dylan adds to this in the fifth verse:

> How much do I know
> To talk out of turn
> You might say that I'm young
> You might say I'm unlearned
> But there's one thing I know
> Though I'm younger than you
> That even Jesus would never
> Forgive what you do. (ibid.)

Disarming the arguments that could be made against him through acknowledging that he is “unlearned” and “young,” Dylan ironically sees that he is, therefore, technically talking “out of turn” yet sees it as his duty because of the wrongs he observes. Dylan then again homes in on the Christian hypocrisy of the US, telling the “masters of war” that even “Jesus would never forgive what you do.” As many Christians believe that forgiveness is automatically given when asked for it in the face of God, Dylan suggests that these actions are so reprehensible that not even the entity most likely to grant forgiveness would do so, condemning the warmongers’ activities to the fullest. Adding to his criticisms, Dylan continues:

> Let me ask you one question
> Is your money that good?
> Will it buy you forgiveness?
> Do you think that it could?
> I think you will find
> When your death takes its toll
> All the money you made

Will never buy back your soul (ibid.).

Here, Dylan asks if the money the "masters of war" make in profiting from war will buy salvation and states that some things are above material and financial wealth and that those who are willing to do anything for profit will never be able to retrieve the "soul," which they have lost or sold in that process. Dylan implies that these (likely) Christians have sold their soul to the Devil in that they directly profit from the demise of countless innocent people, and consequently, they will not be able to retrieve their humanity. All of these ideas lead up to paint a picture of those in charge as hypocritical and misusing ideals to profit from war.

Recalling Slotkin's ideas on the Frontier Myth, this Myth is often reused, yet not out of genuine conviction, but out of a calculated effort to generate profit. Dylan has identified this and his criticism stems from the fact that he wishes to inform the public of this injustice. Genuine ideals are manipulated to trigger certain patriotic ideals, to the detriment of many. The few that trigger this do so because they know that it touches an emotional chord with the public at large, which has been retold the Frontier Myth over and over again, and, thus, drive support for the war which generates profit for the "masters of war." Dylan, who has obverved this, despises them for it, which is exemplified by a sombre last verse:

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 over your grave
'Til I'm sure that you're dead. (ibid.)

Dylan starts the final verse with a straightforward bluntness by wishing death upon the masters of war. The songwriter shows a vindictive side to himself in that he wants to make sure “that [they’re] dead,” as that is the only thing saving others from the grasp of the masters of war, at least in Dylan’s eyes. As Lynskey states: “You imagine that he might clamber down into the grave, crack open the casket, and give the corpse a good kick just to be sure. He turns the topic of the military-industrial complex into an ancient horror story in which a wrongdoer is pursued by a vengeful spirit” (57).

‘Masters of War’ is a furious song. While Dylan is renowned for being an excellent wordsmith, the music is exceptionally blunt and sees Dylan lashing out against those in power. Dylan’s other massively popular protests songs, ‘The Times They Are a-Changin’’ and ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’, are somewhat contemplative, whereas ‘Masters of War’ is much more direct. While ‘The Times They Are a-Changin’’ is trying to have a positive outlook, “even when Dylan set out to write an anthem of hope,” his lyrics are “foreboding” (Lynskey 61). The song does, however, not come close in its’ anger to ‘Masters of War.’ Considering ‘Masters of War’, in all its’ vindictiveness, even before the Vietnam war, foreshadows a decade filled with protest and anger that only amplified when the war kicked into high gear.

Protest Music goes Number One: Eve of Destruction

‘Eve of Destruction’, written by P.E. Sloan and sung by Barry McGuire, combined many of the fears haunting US society. As Lynskey describes it: “It was a somewhat gauche shopping list of reasons to be fearful: segregation, nuclear war, Vietnam, Red China, the JFK assassination, all conspiring to sweep humanity into an early grave” (66). Released in 1965, initially as a B-side, the song was “reissued in its own right, it topped the charts two months later, selling six

million copies to become by far the biggest protest song to date" (ibid.). Topping the charts is monumental for a song this divisive, especially since "radio and TV stations banned it, with one DJ asking, "How do you think the enemy will feel with a tune like that No. 1 in America?" (n.p.: qtd. in Lynskey 67). This statement underlines how the song was subverting the pro-war stance of the government, its message and popularity calling into question the validity of the war as the public, appreciative of the song, did apparently not support the war. Hence why this DJ believes the song's success would boost morale of the enemy as it hints toward a country tired of war. Moreover, the "Young Republicans and Citizens for Conservative Action vilified it," (Lynskey 67) showing that the political right was decidedly pro-war and criticised the song for its anti-war stance. It thus serves to analyse what Sloan chose to include in his song as it gives a clear indication of what struck a chord with the general public. The song features four verses and a repeating chorus in between each of them. The song has a specific call and answer feel to it as McGuire sings about a particular danger of fear and then criticises an unnamed person in the chorus for not believing that humanity is on the "eve of destruction." In the first verse, Sloan centres this fear on the escalating war in Vietnam:

> The eastern world it is exploding
> Violence flarin' [sic], bullets loadin' [sic]
> You're old enough to kill but not for votin' [sic]
> You don't believe in war but what's that gun you're totin' [sic]?
> And even the Jordan River has bodies floatin' [sic]. (McGuire n.p.)

The "eastern world" saw many communist revolutions, chief among them the events in Vietnam that led to US involvement in the region. Hence, Sloan focuses on the plight of soldiers who, at 18, were old enough to be drafted into the military yet were not allowed to vote until they were 21. Thus, they were sent to war by people they had no hand in electing

to positions in which these decisions were made. The following line feels a little misdirected as it attacks the soldiers for "totin'" a gun, yet the song is aware of the draft leaving not much choice to those deployed whether they joined the war or not. Nonetheless, Sloan sees the world in a dire situation as "even the Jordan River," part of the Holy Land and generally considered a sacred river, having "bodies floatin'." Then, the song moves into its first chorus:

> But you tell me
> Over and over and over again my friend
> Ah, you don't believe
> We're on the eve of destruction. (ibid)

The narrator criticises their counterpart for continually denying the world being "on the eve of destruction" after what they have just reported. This opposing dynamic continues throughout the song. The second verse moves into thematising the threat of nuclear war:

> Don't you understand what I'm tryin' [sic] to say
> Can't you feel the fears I'm feelin' [sic] today?
> If the button is pushed, there's no runnin' [sic] away
> There'll be no one to save with the world in a grave
> Take a look around you boy, it's bound to scare you boy. (ibid)

The verse begins with an addition to the chorus almost, once more calling into question someone's inability or unwillingness to recognise the trying times the world finds itself in before bringing the threat of nuclear war into play. Using the idea of the button being "pushed," Sloan revives the image of both the US and the Soviet Union having nuclear warheads ready to be fired at a moment's notice. If fired, "there'll be no one to save with the world in a grave," underlining the idea of there not being a winner of such a war as there will not be anyone to survive this disaster. Hence, the verse is finished with the narrator

underlining that these events are “bound to scare you” and adding the chorus to this, once more calling into question how someone could not see the trying times the narrator experiences. Sloan then moves towards the civil rights movement and politics:

> Yeah, my blood's so mad feels like coagulating
> I'm sitting here just contemplatin' [sic]
> I can't twist the truth it knows no regulation
> Handful of senators don't pass legislation
> And marches alone can't bring integration
> When human respect is disintegratin' [sic]
> This whole crazy world is just too frustratin' [sic]. (ibid.)

Lynskey comments on this verse: “It had none of the judgement day terror of Dylan’s apocalyptic songs, and none of their agility (the third verse has no fewer than seven rhymes for “frustratin’”)” (Lynskey 67). Commenting on the somewhat forced rhyme scheme, Lynskey shines a light on the song’s shortcomings, as its message is bogged down by a convoluted way of expressing its ideas. However, even if expressed somewhat laboriously at times, the song still makes valid points. The verse focuses on the unwillingness of lawmakers to “pass legislation,” which is needed for equal rights as “marches alone can’t bring integration.” Adding a further issue to the list, the song follows this again with the chorus criticising the inability of some to realise how dire times were. Then, the last verse serves as a kind of summary of all these situations:

> Think of all the hate there is in Red China
> Then take a look around to Selma, Alabama
> You may leave here for four days in space
> But when you return it's the same old place
> The pounding of the drums, the pride and disgrace

> You can bury your dead but don't leave a trace
> Hate your next door neighbor [sic] but don't forget to say grace. (McGuire n.p.)

By rhyming “Red China” with “Selma, Alabama,” Sloan connects the rise in communism, generally feared in the United States, with the civil rights movement and its effort to gain voting rights for people of colour, which ultimately succeeded later in 1965. These plights cannot even be escaped by leaving for “space,” alluding to the Gemini 4 mission, as the astronauts had to return after “four days” to the “same old place.” Sloan then adds a further comment on the military before calling out the hypocrisy of many in the US that believe religion can absolve them from their sins even if they “hate [their] next door neighbor [sic].” The song then ends with another rendition of the chorus.

It should serve as no surprise that the song was as successful as it was when considering the potpourri of included topics. Each listener can identify a critical issue important to them. Yet, the song was criticised for this, as it can easily seem like a calculated move to play on the fears that were governing society at the time. However, exactly because of this, it offers insight into the many social developments that the Vietnam War ran concurrent to.

Merging Soldiers with Woodstock: I-feel-like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag

Written by Country Joe McDonald and first released in 1965 before being rereleased in 1967 as part of the band’s second album, Country Joe and the Fish’s ‘I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag’ was one of the most controversial, yet popular, protest songs released in conjunction with the Vietnam War. Notably, the song gained a lot more traction when rereleased and performed at the Woodstock music festival. As Dorian Lynskey explains:

> When a few dozen copies of the record first appeared on the counter of a Berkeley bookshop, US troops had officially been in Vietnam for just six months. The death toll had not yet passed one thousand, three in five Americans polled supported the intervention, and President Johnson's approval rating was sky-high. But by August 1969, when ''Fixin'-to-Die' became one of the most seminal moments of the Woodstock festival and the most famous anti-war song in the country, over forty thousand US service personnel had died, public support for the war had halved, Johnson was gone, and America was a very different place. (87)

The song's lyrics are much more direct and poignant than many of its contemporaries, offering a satirical look at politics, military officials, and industry, all in the context of the war. Moreover, like 'Fortunate Son', the song criticises the draft process heavily. To show Country Joe McDonald's criticism of the draft process, this thesis will offer an analysis of the song's last verse and the chorus:

> Come on mothers throughout the land
>
> Pack your boys off to Vietnam
>
> Come on fathers, and don't hesitate
>
> To send your sons off before it's too late
>
> And you can be the first ones in your block
>
> To have your boy come home in a box. (Country Joe and the Fish n.p.)

This last verse starts with a rallying cry to inspire mothers and fathers to send their sons to join the war effort before morbidly concluding in "you can be the first ones in your block / to have your boy come home in a box." Considering the satirical and ironic tone of this statement and lacing it with gallows humour, Country Joe McDonald considers it "the most radical line in the song" (Bradley & Werner 97).

Furthermore, he states that "it's military humor [sic] that only a soldier could get away with. It's a soldier's song from a soldier's background and point of view. It comes out of a tradition of GI humor in which people can bitch in a way that will not get them in trouble, and

that also keeps them from the insanity that can be experienced during war" (Bradley & Werner 97).

As "McDonald joined the US Navy for three years," (Lynskey 90) serving in Japan until 1962, he had direct experience of this GI humour and was able to use it to the song's benefit. Hence why soldiers were able to connect with it strongly. The song featured many traits of the satirical and ironic humour the soldiers themselves employed to get through the ordeal of fighting in Vietnam. As such, many of the soldiers found a connection with the song, such as on the USS Princeton, where soldiers "sang that song all the time" (Lynskey 99).

The song's chorus perfectly exemplifies it's visceral satire:

> And it's one, two, three
> What are we fighting for?
> Don't ask me, I don't give a damn
> Next stop is Vietnam
> And it's five, six, seven
> Open up the pearly gates
> Well there ain't no time to wonder why
> Whoopee! we're all gonna die. (Country Joe and the Fish n.p.)

The confusion and fear of drafted soldiers deployed to Vietnam is perfectly recaptured here. Using the counting in between the lines, McDonald creates something that sounds cheerful before opposing it with the macabre content of the lyrics, perfectly juxtaposing these emotions. The moral question "What are we fighting for?", which no answer is given to, as well as the satirical "Whoopee! We're all gonna die," shows these emotions through the lens of GI humour and are thus highly relatable to soldiers serving, as well as people opposed to the war who viewed it with a cynical stance. As Lynskey explains, "no other Vietnam song

captures the confusion and gallows humor [sic] of the average soldier's experience quite like this" (Lynskey 91).

Furthermore, the song sparked many individual versions that altered the lyrics. As Tom Englehardt, a civilian who snuck into an air base, explains: "I became good friends with the medic who brought me in. He played a mean guitar and had written this enraged, ironic anti-war song. It was a mix of Country Joe's 'One, two, three, what're we fighting for," 'Johnny Comes Marchin' Home Again,' and his own experience" (Bradley & Werner 100). Once more, this shows how the anti-war music connected with soldiers fighting in Vietnam, as the lyrical content was relatable to them, in this case even inspiring service member to write their own songs. Englehardt then recites some of medic's song:

> Well, it's one, two three, look at that amputee
> At least it's below the knee,
> Could have been worse you see.
> Well it's true your kids look at you differently,
> But you came in an ambulance instead of a hearse,
> That's the phrase of the trade,
> It could have been worse. (ibid.)

Using 'I-Feel-like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag' as a template to base an expression of personal wartime experience shows how closely the song resonated with soldiers. While this version of the song is even cruder in its use of gallows humour, it keeps many of the beats that Country Joe McDonald's lyrics introduced. Furthermore, it, along with many other songs covered in this thesis, features "the equation of historical incomprehension and ecstatic death" which "is a key trope in accounts of the GI's battle experience; it is endemic in rock

songs about the war, and also informs the use of rock and roll in other representations of the war" (James, 132).

Furthermore, Bradley and Werner that

> one ex-POW told him that Hanoi Hannah, the English-speaking North Vietnamese propagandist, used to play the song to residents of the prison nicknamed the Hanoi Hilton, in the belief that it would break their spirits. Instead, he said, "the prisoners would smile and hum along." McDonald owns a recording of a GI singing it in Vietnam, two months before he was killed in action. Another soldier explained to the singer how his friend had bled to death in his arms, singing, "Whoopee, we're all gonna die." "Those things are just chilling," McDonald says quietly. "I never dreamed that would happen. But I like it. They said it provided them with a touchstone to keep them from going insane." (Lynskey 108)

Consequently, this song serves as a marker of soldier expression regarding the war. While McDonald did not serve in Vietnam, his military background allowed him to, in a way, speak for the soldiers deployed. Applying his own experience, the lyrics McDonald wrote resonated deeply with the soldiers who were in Vietnam, so much so that they would create their own versions of 'I-Feel-like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag.' It serves as a testament to the song's importance that it is generally regarded as one of the most critical moments of the Woodstock music festival. Itself a seminal event, the song was sung by thousands upon thousands of attendees, among them many who had returned from Vietnam, and perfectly summarised the attitude and mindset of those opposed to the war effort; this is especially remarkable considering that the performance was initially not planned and just done to fill time. Leading with the 'Fish Chant', which preceded the song on the recording, and which would spell out the word "fish" in a call and response repetition, McDonald instead decided to spell out the word "fuck", roping in the audience before creating a moment of unison and singing the song together with the massive audience of the festival.

Protest at Home: Ohio

On May 4th, 1970, four students, Allison Beth Krause, Jeffrey Glenn Miller, Sandra Lee Scheuer, and William Knox Schroeder, were killed due to an anti-war protest. Students at the Kent State University staged a rally to protest the US involvement in Vietnam and the war's expansion into Cambodia, resulting in minor altercations leading up to May 4th. As the National Guard was called in to disperse the students on that day, the situation escalated, and the soldiers opened fire on the crowd, resulting in the death of the four students mentioned above. The tragic events resulted in massive outrage and protest, triggering the, at the time, largest student strike in US history as many universities, colleges, and high schools saw walkouts and rallies, further adding to the war's challenging standing in US society.

Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young recorded 'Ohio' a mere 17 days after the tragic events at Kent University, chronicling and criticising the shooting, and finished tracking after just three takes. Between the shootings and the band recording the song, Washington saw a massive anti-war protest with around 100000 participants on May 9th, and another shooting at Jackson State in Mississippi resulted in the death of two more (this time African American) students, giving rise to a renewed surge in protest against the war in Vietnam. The song was released on May 21st as a single and peaked at number fourteen on the US Billboard Hot 100 chart. The song, written by Neil Young, has -lyrically- a very spontaneous feel to it. Principally, it only has a hook and a verse:

> Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,
> We're finally on our own.
> This summer I hear the drumming,
> Four dead in Ohio. (Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young n.p.)

The opening line focuses on “tin soldiers” and President Nixon, likening the National Guard to mindless toys acting out the administration's orders as pawns without a moral conscience. The following line laments that their generation has been abandoned by those in power and is now being openly attacked. This feeling of abandonment could be felt through different actions by the soldiers deployed to Vietnam, for instance, through the unfair draft process. Hence why, for example, “one anonymous soldier, quoted in *Life* magazine, stated, “Many soldiers regard the organized [sic] anti-war movement campaign in the United States with open and outspoken sympathy” (n.p.; qtd. in Bradley & Werner 108). The similarities in how young people, whether deployed or not, felt becomes obvious. Any connection between the young, and perhaps those critical of the war, and the institutions (especially government and military), and those favouring their actions, had now been severed. This severance is heard through the “drumming” that can be heard during “this summer,” possibly referring to the drumbeat to which soldiers are marching; in this case, marching on college campuses. A result of this intrusion on the campuses is the “four dead in Ohio,” which sets a sombre and sobering end to the hook. However, these four dead students became a symbol for this severance, both within the song and for the generation living through the period. These sentiments are continued in the verse.

> Gotta [sic] 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 n.p.)

“Gotta get down to it” might allude to several things. Firstly, the line seems like a call to action to finally get to the bottom of what happened as “soldiers were cutting us down,” who, in turn, were claiming self-defence even as students and protesters were unarmed. Moreover, the line can also mean that now is the time to protest even more as the military has now openly fired on its own population. Furthermore, it is essential to note that Young sings “cutting us down,” including his whole generation in those who were shot, making those who died out to be symbolic victims for everyone part of that generation. As it could have been anyone, Young underlines how the National Guard did not only open fire on those who passed away but also on a whole generation of students and young people. Young follows this with the sarcastic “should have been done long ago,” echoing the sentiment of many opposing the protests that those protesting had it coming to them. Simultaneously, it may also be a further call for mass protest as more “should have been done long ago” against the government’s actions. Young cleverly meshes these messages in the verse, however, he clears up the double meaning with how he ends the verse. By asking, “what if you knew her and found her dead on the ground,” Young speaks to those believing the protesters deserved what happened. Looking at the tragic event Young believes that no one could speak favourably of the situation. This is homed in on by asking, “how can you run when you know?”, meaning that it is impossible to flee from the truth, both in terms of the unjust action by the National Guard, as well as the need for protest against the government’s actions (both on US soil and in Vietnam) more than ever. The song repeats both hook and verse before ending in an outro in which the band hauntingly repeats “four dead in Ohio” with changing adlibs of “four dead,” “four,” “how many?”, “how many more?” and “why?” repeating the cruel facts of the tragedy. (ibid.)

Interestingly, it can be observed how the song solicited empathy from serving soldiers, whereas before, that empathy was directed at them.

As veteran Russ Armstrong stated,

> I'm thinking of the song about the shootings at Kent State, "Ohio" … At the time, because I was bitter about some things that happened at the end of my tour and I was being drawn into that position in life where I hate America, I felt some empathy towards the song when I first heard it. (Bradley & Werner 115)

This quote shows the difficult situation veterans often found themselves in after returning home, finding themselves outcast from the public at large. However, it is interesting to observe how, in this case, the roles are reversed, and the soldier feels empathy for the protesters, whereas usually, the protesters would be emphatic towards those being sent to war. This reversal creates an interesting dichotomy which almost links the soldiers and the protest directly in a reciprocal relationship of solidarity.

Incidentally, both Neil Young and Stephen Stills, both members of CSNY, were involved in another massive protest song. As members of Buffalo Springfield, Young and Stills released 'For What's It's Worth,' this time penned by Stills, at the tail end of 1966, peaking on the Billboard charts at number seven. The song "became an anthem for the counterculture at home and for many GIs in Nam [sic]" (Bradley & Werner,108). In addition, the music also incorporated the theme of alienation between young and old, also found in 'Ohio': "Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth" detailed the generation's isolation from the Establishment as well as their alienation from each other: "battle lines being drawn, nobody's right if everybody's wrong"" (Bindas & Houston 4).

As has been seen before, 'Ohio' features the same ideas of alienation between different societal groups, namely affluent and poor and old and young.

The Influence of Race on Protest Music and the Vietnam War

The influence of race as a vital factor in the protest music released during the Vietnam War becomes apparent when looking at the civil rights movement that gained traction throughout the 1960s. By the end of the war,

> racial tensions played a large role in the decaying situation. Appy points out that black soldiers increasingly saw the war as an extension of the racism they faced at home, a finding confirmed by the African American journalist Wallace Terry in a series of reports he wrote on racial attitudes among black troops. By the end of the sixties, the racial divide in Vietnam mirrored the one that had set fires blazing in the streets of the Los Angeles neighbourhood of Watts as well as in Detroit, Newark, and dozens of other American cities. In more than a few units, black soldiers set up separate "soul hootches," and in some instances simply refused to carry out missions they saw as pointless or suicidal. (Bradley & Werner 94)

Statements like this underline the difficult racial relationships in the warzone that mirrored the developments in the US. An increasing effort by African Americans for equal rights was not online observable in the United States but was equally present in the country's military. The situation in Vietnam was as difficult, if not more, due to the necessity of soldiers working together, no matter their background. Utterances such as "'Turn that goddamn nigger music off!'" (Bradley & Werner 117) were to be heard and

> The only serious fighting was between black guys and white guys. There would be this power struggle over the field. All the white guys wanted to play softball. We wanted to play basketball. And we could go into a barracks, and there would be nothing but Confederate flags all over the place. And one time, they burned a cross. And we were more or less head hunting, too. Payback. (ibid.)

Considering these stories, it becomes obvious that the US military was struggling with racism too, all the while being at war. The infighting between US troops reflected the issues that the country had to face and overcome on a much larger scale back home. Hence: "Just as there were riots back home, there were riots in Vietnam; just as there was racism at home, there was racism in Vietnam¸, just as there were drugs back in the world, there were drugs in-country too" (Bradley & Werner 95).

When it comes to race and its depiction in music, James Brown's 'Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)' is difficult to overlook. Though a protest song not necessarily focused on the soldiers deployed in Vietnam, it still made a massive impact on black GIs. The subject matter aside, the song, released in August 1968, struck a massive chord with US troops because of James Brown's tour of Vietnam in June 1968. The song was recorded after Brown toured the war-torn country to play for American service members and deployed soldiers. Moreover, the song's release and Brown's tour were both preceded by the killing of Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968. As Bradley and Werner explain, "James Brown, whose 'Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)' served as a Black Power anthem, offered to play for the troops in Vietnam. The timing of the proposed tour in the immediate aftermath of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination exacerbated the worries" (Bradley & Werner 121). Moreover, the Black Power movement offered "an oppositional alternative to nonviolence" (Lynskey 110). These charged times of social change were kicked into overdrive by the loss of Martin Luther King Jr., not only in the US but also overseas in Vietnam, between soldiers: "The death of Martin Luther King created a lot of hostility in Vietnam. … Things were always cool until the assassination, when the racial situation got tense, and it was hard for people to get along. Even those who'd been friends had a hard time associating" (Bradley & Werner 121). This feeling was undoubtedly shared by Brown himself, who recalls, "I knew better than to give Black Power salutes to the GIs. That would have been causing a problem" (Bradley & Werner 123). Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that 'Say It Loud' was released during a time filled with tension and change.

Brown starts the song by uttering, "Uh! With your bad self!" before launching into the chorus:

Say it loud: I'm black and I'm proud!

Say it loud: I'm black and I'm proud! (Brown n.p.)

This chorus is often repeated and fashioned as a call and response structure. While the artist sings "Say it loud," "Brown had a notion that the chorus should be sung by a jubilant crowd of children" (Lynskey 122). Hence, Brown is responded to each time by a large crowd that answers his call. Thus, it comes as no surprise that this chorus mimics a rallying cry, focussing on taking pride in one's skin colour and the culture that that entails. "Urgent, commanding, and repetitious, the sound was tailor-made for a good slogan" (Lynskey 122). This harkens back to Vandagriff's distinction between songs inciting or inspiring protest. As this song is mimicking a call and response choir, the chorus of Brown's song can be said to incite protest while the verses take up the idea of lamentation.

In the first verse, Brown gives more depth to the initial statement of the chorus:

Some people say we've got a lot of malice
Some say it's a lot of nerve
But I say we won't quit moving until we get what we deserve
We have been 'buked and we have been scorned
We've been treated bad, talked about as sure as you're born
But just as sure as it takes two eyes to make a pair, ha
Brother we can't quit until we get our share. (Brown n.p.)

Brown explains how, for a long time, people of colour have been getting "a lot of malice," msotly by the white majority, which is largely unsupportive of their effort for equality. Brown then refers to 'I've Been 'Buked', which is a classic spiritual song, famously sung by Mahalia Jackson at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, firmly putting Brown's song in a similarly socially aware and active realm. Brown then finishes by encouraging people of colour

to stay strong until justice and equality are served. This verse is immediately followed again by the chorus.

The second verse makes a more direct link with Brown’s personal life as well as hard work:

> I worked on jobs with my feet and my hands
> But all the work I did was for the other man
> Now we demand a chance to do things for ourselves
> We're tired of beating our head against the wall
> And working for someone else. (ibid.)

This verse illustrates Brown’s position. In addition to not being necessarily very active within the civil rights movement, Brown was a firm believer in hard work: “He believed passionately in equality of opportunity but always with the sobering addendum that black people needed to earn their place through hard work and self-discipline” (Lynskey 116). Accordingly, “legend has it that [Brown’s] consciousness was raised by a grenade left in his dressing room by Black Panthers” (Wolk 114). This event was forcing his hand at becoming an active part of the struggle for equal rights. Brown seems to, however, allow for the idea of self-governance and being freed from being in an inherently secondary position to the white majority. The chorus again follows this verse.

Then, Brown introduces a bridge:

> Ooh-wee, give it to me
> All right, you're out of sight
> All night, so tough
> You're tough and rough
> Ooh-wee, uh, you're killing me. (Brown n.p.)

This passage might also underline Brown's idiosyncrasies, as he references one of his songs, 'Out of Sight'. Often reputed to have a massive ego, Brown tried to appease all of his different demographics of fans with the song. While including politically charged lyrics, this bridge utilises many of the markers of his traditional work void of political agency. Trying to merge the two in 'Say It Loud', Brown might try to appease both his politically active and politically nonactive listeners. Initially a great success, Brown must have been satisfied,

> but later, he would complain that it cost him a portion of his white audience that would never return. "I paid the price for 'Say It Loud,'" Brown claimed. "The white community took it entirely the wrong way, as a kind of aggressive statement meant to induce fear." Naïve enough to believe that he could control listeners' reactions to his songs, he was horrified that 'Say It Loud' had gotten away from him and found a new calling as a radical battle cry, but how could it not? (Lynskey 124)

The bridge exudes some of Brown's signature utterances that are part of his irresistible funk and soul sound, celebrating an inherently African American style of music before launching back into the chorus. He then follows this with two more verses that are later revisited and sung again too:

> We demand a chance to do things for ourselves
>
> We're tired of beating our head against the wall
>
> And working for someone else
>
> We're people, we like the birds and the bees
>
> We'd rather die on our feet
>
> Than be living on our knees. (Brown n.p.)

Here Brown sings very directly about what he thinks needs to be improved, emblematically introduced by stating "we demand." These demands echo many of those made by the civil rights movement, making a passionate call for freedom. Brown also finishes the last verse with a statement that he first made during his famed residence at the Apollo: "But no matter what, remember: Die on your feet, don't live on your knees" (Lynskey 117). Brown then

introduces a second bridge, which once more dives deeper into his funk musings without adding to the lyrical content per se.

> All right now, good God
> You know we can do the boogaloo
> Now we can say with the funky talk, and we do
> Sometimes we sing and we talk
> You know we jump back and do the camel walk
> All right now, all right
> All right. (Brown n.p.)

The rest of the song is made up of repetitions of the bridges, verses three and four and the chorus.

It stands as a testament to Brown's talent that a song he had such a difficult relationship with, resonated so heavily. As Lynskey puts it: "If 'Say It Loud' was not the sole catalyst for a new wave of racial consciousness in pop, then it was certainly the flagship, selling 750,000 copies in its first two weeks" (123). This success was a two-edged sword for Brown's career. As stated previously, Brown mourned the loss of part of his white audience;

> "They thought I was saying kill the honky," he complained. Meanwhile, those who really were saying "kill the honky" maintained their belief that he was an establishment suck-up. He was like a man trying to lash down a tarpaulin in a gale: however hard he sweated, there was always one corner coming loose. (Lynskey 124)

However, the song resonated heavily with the soldiers in Vietnam. While the civil rights movement was ferociously opposed to the war effort and thus did not necessarily appreciate Brown's tour in Vietnam, the decision certainly played favourably among the deployed soldiers. For instance, Tom Miller Juvik wrote an open thank you letter to Brown for his appearance, the introductory paragraph of which reads: "First, I want to thank you for coming

to Vietnam and performing for the soldiers at Long Binh. Second, I want to apologize for the racist behavior [sic] of Eddie and Jerry. I should have known better than to bring them along." (n.p.) This passage is illustrative of many of the points discussed here: the blatant racism rampant in Vietnam and Brown's meaningful action appreciated by the soldiers. It comes as no surprise then that the song is one of the most well-remembered protest songs for Vietnam veterans, especially black soldiers and servicemen.

The Economics of Protest Music during the Vietnam War

It is important to note that the output of protest music during the Vietnam War remained a fringe activity. Kenneth J. Bindas and Craig Houston note that "while a few antiwar [sic] rock songs became popular hits, when placed in the broad context of rock music's anti-Establishment stance from 1965 to 1974, the attention given to the Vietnam War by the rock 'n' roll industry was minimal" (1). Thus, while many songs have become cultural staples, reproduced and celebrated in other media and media set in that era, during the conflict, rock songs written in protest of the war were by no means the overarching mode of music release. In addition to this, it is essential to look at the popularity of these songs. While releasing such music speaks toward a particular opinion of the artist, the connection with the consumer can create a link that goes beyond the individual and allows a more extensive view on societal opinion. In that respect, Bindas and Houston state that "Rock 'n' roll, with its anti-Establishment credo, broke from the patriotic tradition and became the first popular music to be antiwar [sic], but was limited in sales and scope until 1970" (6).

Other genres, such as "country/western—stood solidly behind America's involvement," (ibid.) speaking for a divisive musical landscape. As can be seen with Sgt. Barry

Sadler's 'Ballad of the Green Berets,' which topped the US charts early during the war, popular opinion was still supporting the war when it began. While other artists such as "Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and others wrote many folk songs to protest the war from 1962 to 1968, … these protest ballads had limited market potential" (ibid.). In these initial months and years of the war, the war was also still supported by many young people: "Finally, antiwar [sic] music faced a limited market because fewer than twenty-nine percent of those aged 21-29 opposed the war. This age group comprised almost eighty percent of the record-buying market, and their prowar [sic] attitude toward Vietnam lessened the likelihood of their purchasing antiwar [sic] records" (Bindas & Houston 7-8). In their analysis, Bindas and Houston often focus on the economic realities of selling records. These analyses are somewhat one-sided as they present protest rock as a solely calculated financial endeavour trying to capitalise on popular anti-war sentiment. Bindas and Houston state that "rock, as a commodity, marketed these anti-Establishment themes in order to capture the consumer whose ideals it mirrored" (4). As the growing counterculture movement connected the Vietnam War to everything else they rejected about the Establishment, "logically, rock music should have exploited what appeared to be a huge antiwar [sic], anti-Establishment market" (ibid.). This analysis omits the probable genuine feeling of opposing the war and expressing this in the chosen artistic field of a musician. However, the economic reality of these songs cannot be overlooked. It is especially telling when considering how more songs against the war released once public opinion shifted: "Taking the growing disillusionment with the Vietnam War into consideration, the rock music industry in 1968 released five antiwar [sic] songs, as many as in the previous three years combined, with four of these reaching the top 100" (Bindas & Houston 10). What Bindas and Houston omit or forget here is that a growing dissent with the war might just as well include musicians, who voice their opinion in their art.

It cannot, however, be denied that “the years 1969-1974 witnessed a boom in antiwar [sic] sentiment, and the release of thirty-four antiwar songs reflected the change” (Bindas & Houston 14) and that “the popularity of antiwar [sic] rock songs peaked between 1970 and 1971 with the release of twenty-two such compositions, fifteen of which made the weekly top 100 singles chart” (Bindas & Houston 17).

Positioning oneself either in favour or against the war as a musician or group could thus have lasting ramifications in the public's eyes. While the latter years of the war saw a rise in anti-war sentiment and the subsequent success of anti-war music, early opposers of the war did not sell many records. Considering the case of The Beatles, one of the bestselling groups of all time -in the early Vietnam era especially- making them one of the biggest, if not the biggest group of the 1960s, the band did not speak publicly for or against the war. While the band’s John Lennon would release songs such as ‘Imagine’ and ‘Give Peace a Chance’ after the group had disbanded in 1969, he stated that

> the reason the group failed to record antiwar [sic] songs (…) was because their manager, Brian Epstein, "stopped us from saying anything about Vietnam or the war." Lennon added that Epstein even prohibited press questions about the conflict. Following Epstein's death and with Yoko Ono's influence, Lennon became more outspoken. In 1969 he and Yoko participated in the "Bed-in for Peace" in Amsterdam and soon thereafter recorded "Give Peace a Chance". (Bindas & Houston 14)

This shows that managers and labels certainly considered the economic reality of releasing protest music. While Lennon, after the Beatles’ disbandment, was no longer managed by Epstein, the latter deemed it detrimental for the band to speak about the war and thus, Lennon only spoke out and made politically charged music once he was a solo artist.

Once public opinion shifted, this consideration shifted too. When looking at artists signed to famed Detroit label Motown, which rose to prominence with their sound of mixing soul music with pop appeal, Bindas and Houston conclude that “artists such as The

Temptations, Marvin Gaye, Freda Payne, and Edwin Starr now understood that ‘protest songs were commodities manufactured for profit,’ just like love songs” (16). While all these artists released songs containing anti-war sentiment, Starr chief among them with his chart-topping hit ‘War’, this statement does underline the economic response to the shifting popular opinion. It does, however -perhaps willingly- omit that these songs were probably written with genuine intent. This intent is especially evident when considering that Marvin Gaye released ‘What’s Goin’ On’’ despite label owner Berry Gordy fearing backlash due to its social commentary. However, when considering the bulk of protest music released, it is accurate to state that they are “incapable of approaching the reality of the war” (James 134) and that “all these songs can mobilise against it is a vague pacifist lament. John Lennon’s ‘Give Peace a Chance’ (…) exemplifies an endemic refusal of ideological or historical specificity” (ibid.). This lack of specificity reveals the underlying complexity of writing protest music against a war that one does not have first-hand experience of. While the songs often criticise war as a concept, the songs do not feature specific references as these are impossible to produce authentically without being deployed. As some of the musicians discussed before had military experience, they could use this when writing their songs. However, this is only for the absolute minority of artists who released protest music during the Vietnam era. As James explains:

> The war is objectionable, but it is engaged directly only in respect to the threat it entails to the countercultures’ disaffiliation – a threat which only became severe as the late sixties troop build-ups made the draft a reality for the middle-class. The music celebrates anti-materialism, spiritual reawakening, and social disengagement; but the dominance of idealist thought in the countercultures prevented structural social analysis except for theories of youth as a class in revolt against a generalized establishment, an ideology well-fuelled by the passage of the postwar baby-boom into an economic expansion, itself at least partially the result of the war. (James 133)

Hence, influences such as race and class are equally crucial for protest music during Vietnam. While many of the songs feature similar ideas and comment on essentially the same issues, they do not penetrate beyond that and remain stuck in their talking points. As James explains, in its idealism and opposition to the Establishment, the movement could not comment on how to change the latter positively as it excluded itself from it. This exclusion might be a possible explanation for the similarity of content within these songs and their growing popularity as the war went on.

5. Protest Music during the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars

Early Iraq and Afghanistan Responses

After delving into US music surrounding the Vietnam War, this thesis will now look at the musical developments around the conflicts in the Middle East. It is important to reiterate that protest was coming from musicians. In 2002, Steve Earle released 'John Walker's Blues', which takes the point of view of John Walker Lindh, an American who had joined the Taliban and was captured by US forces during the war effort. The song's chorus is constructed by a line from the Koran, which is sung both in Arabic and English:

> A shadu la ilaha illa Allah, There's no God but God. (Earle n.p.)

As Earle explained, "It became increasingly obvious to me that John Walker was being set up as a warning to any American that got out of line while this war against the new bogeyman was being pursued (…) I was trying to humanise him, because everybody else was trying to vilify him" (Lynskey 509). Yet, as Lynskey notes, "In the jingoistic hothouse of America

in 2002, however, this kind of empathy was a tough sell" (ibid.). The 9/11 attacks massively shifted ideals and ideas within the country, and "there was suddenly no room in America for dissent" (Lynskey 506). In addition, Clear Channel, a vast radio conglomerate, e-mailed a list, which was subsequently published by many media outlets, to its DJ's with over 150 songs which it deemed "lyrically questionable" (ibid.). Many of these songs were contextually linked to war. Among them were Barry McGuire's 'Eve of Destruction', John Lennon's 'Imagine' and Edwin Starr's 'War', as well as the entire discography of politically motivated rock/metal band Rage Against the Machine who had previously released politically charged protest songs such as 'Sleep Now In The Fire', 'Killing in The Name' and 'Bulls on Parade.' This list was often treated as a blacklist as "most DJs obeyed the list … in the name of "sensitivity"" (Lynskey 507). This creeping censorship certainly did not help to promote protest music for either listeners or musicians. Lynskey notes that Rage Against the Machine guitarist Tom Morello was "right to observe that the human tragedy of 9/11 was, like a dust cloud obliterating any public discussion of the political context of the attacks" (ibid.). Thus, the only songs that gained a lot of traction, while politically motivated, were pro-war patriotic anthems. "Predictably, Americans turned en masse to songs they could wear like armor [sic]" (ibid.), hence why it seems only natural that Toby Keith's 'Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)' topped the Billboard Hot Country Singles and Tracks as well as climbing to number twenty-five on the Billboard Top 100, constituting his highest-charting position on the latter list. The song is filled to the brim with patriotic jargon and catchphrases. To illustrate properly, the chorus goes as follows:

> Hey, Uncle Sam put your name at the top of his list
> And the Statue of Liberty started shaking her fist
> And the eagle will fly and it's gonna [sic] be hell

> When you hear Mother Freedom start ringing her bell
> And it feels like the whole wide world is raining down on you
> Oh, brought to you courtesy of the red, white, and blue. (Keith n.p.)

Within these six lines, Keith creates a thoroughly US iconography and links it to the retaliatory war effort in Afghanistan. From "Uncle Sam", "Mother Freedom", and the "eagle" to the Statue of Liberty that is "shaking her fist," the song unequivocally creates the image of the United States as a whole, with all its ideals, launching itself into war. It is rather telling then that this song charted as high as it did. While the Vietnam era experienced something similar with 'The Ballad of the Green Berets,' other songs, explicitly criticising the Vietnam War, rose to prominence and success as the war dragged on, yet there is no similar development when it comes to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. While the Vietnam War saw a gradual, economic incentive to release protest music, a similar effect cannot be documented in the 2000s. Lynskey explains that

> certainly, there was a financial disincentive to rock the boat: the risk of lost airplay, sales and sponsorship deals, of hysterical denunciations by tabloids and talk-radio hosts. Easier to stay quiet. But in many cases, the desire to speak up wasn't there in the first place – the muscles of protest had grown flabby. (510)

This initial disincentive was equally observable during Vietnam. However, the later shift towards more protest music is not replicated. Discernible through all genres, no song gained massive traction that openly criticised the war in Afghanistan. While the hip-hop genre had many critical voices, such as Public Enemy (who have a long history of being politically vocal), those songs had "little or nothing to lose in terms of mainstream exposure" (Lynskey 511). Instead, artists such as the Wu-Tang Clan, Mystikal, and MC Hammer recorded songs or wrote lyrics favouring the war. In his song 'Draft Me,' suspected of being an Eminem diss track (the

Detroit rapper is not explicitly named), Jamaican-born New York rapper Canibus might have had the most explicit pro-war stance of them all. Canibus opens the song by stating:

> Draft me! I wanna fight for my country,
> Jump in a Humvee and murder those monkeys!” (Canibus n.p.)

While the song did not gather any traction, statements like these are remarkable for the fact that in his song ‘What Would You Do?’, San Francisco rapper Paris states:

> “'Fore [sic] 911 motherfuckers couldn't stand his name
> Now even niggas wavin’ [sic] flags like they lost they mind.” (Paris n.p.)

Paris, known for socially-conscious lyrics, having a background as a Nation of Islam member and being highly influenced by the Black Panther movement, analyses the stance of the African American population here and notes that it has subverted and changed its outlook on the war in light of the 9/11 terror attacks, as can be seen with the lyrics by Canibus. Hence, a previously politically vocal and outspoken genre can be seen to take a more silent stance in the wake of the Afghanistan War.

In rock music, Bruce Springsteen released a full album on 9/11 entitled *The Rising* yet steered clear of speaking out against the war (Lysnkey 511). Others, such as Elbow’s Guy Garvey, Billy Bragg, and Blur’s Damon Albarn, signed up to be a part of the Stop the War website (Lynskey 513). Yet all of them were British, and a similar development cannot be seen for US musicians. Moreover, the most significant media stir created by a US rock band did not even come in the form of a song, yet was created by the Dixie Chicks, a female country band from Texas, who spoke out against the war during the first show of their World Tour on March 10th, 2003 in London, a mere ten days before the start of the Iraq invasion. They stated, between songs, “Just so you know, we’re on the good side with y’all. We do not want this

war, this violence. (…) And we're ashamed that the President of the United States is from Texas" (n.p.; qtd. in Lynskey 516). Reported by the Guardian as part of their concert review, the story was quickly picked up by conservative outlets, and the Dixie Chicks were exposed to an immense media storm of unfathomable proportions. The Dixie Chicks were blacklisted from radio stations; their album sales nosedived, and "Lipton Iced Tea withdrew its lucrative sponsorship of the tour" (Lynskey 516). As Lynskey explains, "The Dixie Chicks' perceived sin was threefold: they had personally insulted the president, they had done so on foreign soil, and they had flown in the face of country music's red-state constituency" (Lynskey 516-517). Receiving death threats and having a career almost permanently ruined seems extreme for voicing an opinion shared by much of the world's population, least expressed through immense protests in world capitals. Yet, the affair sparked a discussion around the war that no other musician nor song had been able to do. The question of sexism is also a valid approach for this event, yet this thesis will not delve into it as it has a different focus. Nonetheless, the question of criticising an all-female band this heavily deserves to be analysed.

Moreover, once George Bush gave his famous "Mission Accomplished" speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln on May 1st, 2003, his approval ratings started falling rapidly as the war in Iraq proved far from over. Protest grew larger. In the summer of 2003, the Black Eyed Peas released 'Where is the Love?', reaching number eight on the Billboard Hot 100 and topping the charts in many other countries. The song became a global hit. While not explicitly about the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the song does include a verse that seems to comment on them:

> Overseas, yeah, we tryin' [sic] to stop terrorism
> But we still got terrorists here livin' [sic]

> In the USA, the big CIA
> The Bloods and The Crips and the KKK. (Black Eyed Peas n.p.)

While it still enters in the disproved rhetoric of the War on Terror, the band seems to acknowledge that the CIA is complicit in crimes. It is telling, though, that bandleader Will.I.Am. stated that "I never thought the song was going to be played on the radio, … If I did, I would have never said that. Honestly" (Lynskey 519). Considering the fear of retaliation and the case of the Dixie Chicks, this seems only reasonable, yet it speaks toward the fear of media backlash. Hence several artists who may have wanted to speak out did not. However, as 'Where is the Love?' "expressed a vague, comforting pacifism, Steve Earle and the Dixie Chicks brought compassion and courage to the issue. Every variety of concern was now, at last, finding a voice" (Lynskey 520). Having discussed these initial impulses in protest, it is now worth looking at what protest music was released and how it was responded to, as the respective wars moved out of their initial actions and became the long-lasting conflicts they are known as today.

America in the Crosshairs: American Idiot

It is telling that Dorian Lynskey opens his chapter on Green Day's 'American Idiot' with the tagline "The Protest Song Revival That Never Was" (521). Lynskey explains how Neil Young released his *Living With War* album while stating, "I was hoping some young person would come along and say this and sing some songs about it, but I didn't see anybody, so I'm doing it myself" (n.p; qtd. in Lynskey 521). This album will be discussed in detail later, yet Young's comments seem to play into the prevalent narrative that the Iraq and Afghanistan era was void of protest music. However, Lynskey explains that during the Vietnam War, "a handful of anti-war songs gained such cultural traction that it seemed as if everybody was making them.

During the Iraq war, the opposite happened: many people wrote them, yet it seemed like nobody was" (522). Hence, why "the right question is not, "Where have all the protest songs gone?" but, "Is anybody listening?"" (ibid.)

'American Idiot' might be the most culturally important song of the Iraq War era. For Green Day, as with the album of the same name, it marks the change from harmless pop-punk pieces to a more serious approach, writing politically motivated songs. Initially released in September 2004. the album has since gone on to be adapted into an international major musical, underlining its widespread popularity and appeal. Moreover, the musical's main character is shipped off to war and returns home a drug addict, underlining the possible connection between the album and war.

The song launches into its first verse after a short intro presenting the main riff:

> Don't wanna [sic] be an American idiot
> Don't want a nation under the new media
> And can you hear the sound of hysteria?
> The subliminal mind-fuck America. (Green Day n.p.)

This verse immediately presents the main topic of the song. Singer Billie Joe Armstrong cuts himself off from those he sees as being an "American idiot." While this might be a reference to President Bush, this has never been explicitly stated, and the song offers a broader read when listening to it in context with the other lines. Armstrong identifies "a nation under the new media," which seemingly produces "hysteria." It is then undeniable to read the "American idiot" as someone who buys into the "new media" and thus believes in and furthers the "hysteria" that Armstrong describes. These lines seem to pick up on the general feeling prevalent in the U.S. after the 9/11 attacks. With heightened travel security and the

passing of the Patriot Act, the “hysteria” mentioned in the song seems to criticise these developments. Hence why they are living in the “subliminal mind-fuck America,” which Armstrong sees as manipulating the population through the “media” and “hysteria” into supporting the war effort.

These ideas are further explained in the chorus:

> Welcome to a new kind of tension
> All across the alien nation
> Where everything isn't meant to be okay
> Television dreams of tomorrow
> We're not the ones who're meant to follow
> For that's enough to argue. (ibid.)

The “new kind of tension” once more explains the seemingly paranoid nature of U.S. society in a post-9/11 context. Armstrong sees the US as an “alien nation.” (It might also reference Iraq as alien is synonymous with foreign.) This clever play on “alienation” certainly drives home the point that Armstrong can no longer identify with his home country as it has shifted away from ideals it held before becoming something “alien” to him; a country in which “everything isn’t meant to be okay” as this state of constant disarray furthers the economic and political goals of those in power, promising a better tomorrow through television, which -in context of the first verse- Armstrong sees as shallow and untrue, therefore, why Armstrong refuses to follow this trend.

The second verse adds to these ideas:

> Well, maybe I'm the faggot, America
> I'm not a part of a redneck agenda
> Now everybody do the propaganda

And sing along to the age of paranoia. (ibid.)

Here Armstrong equates the words “faggot” and “redneck” with each other. As an openly bisexual man, the singer reclaims the slur to show how the “redneck agenda” uses these insults, often associated with softness, to hijack the credibility of those, like Armstrong, who argue against the war and for cultural change. However, it is interesting to note that Armstrong uses a derogatory term as well when referring to the opposition, as the word “redneck” is used to describe white, working-class people with conservative views in the US. Using the word “redneck” might also be another dig at the administration as President Bush hails from Texas, and the Southern States are often associated with “rednecks.” Armstrong then once more engages with the topic of the media by taking the point of view of the “redneck agenda,” stating that everybody should buy into the “propaganda” and, by internalising and believing it, furthering its message and aim. This is also presented as a fun activity, as Armstrong adopts lyrical cues from dance songs such as “do the conga” when singing “do the propaganda.” Therefore, people should also “sing along to the age of paranoia.”

After a repetition of the chorus, Armstrong presents a bridge that pinpoints the general ideas of the song:

Don't wanna [sic] be an American idiot
One nation controlled by the media
Information age of hysteria
It's calling out to idiot America. (ibid.)

By repeating the song's first line, Armstrong harkens back to the initial idea of refusing to be a part of the “nation controlled by the media.” This media monopoly has constructed an

"information age of hysteria," showing the war and the supposed need for this War on Terror in 24-hour news cycles, creating more and more crass versions of "hysteria." This call is sent out to "idiot America," answered by those who buy into the information fed and legitimize the administration's actions.

It is imperative to note that this focuses entirely the US. While it is written against the backdrop of the wars in the Middle East, these wars are never mentioned directly. More so than protesting or critiquing the war, the song is much more interested in dismantling the workings of US society (that facilitated the war). The song does not explicitly mention the military, nor the soldiers, or the war. While it ties itself to the country by using "American," the song works as a general statement for most of its runtime. This is not a criticism of Armstrong's effort, yet it might explain why the song is not necessarily tied to the war in cultural memory. 'American Idiot' also faced backlash as people flat out refused its message, with one woman telling Armstrong at a concert in Orange County, California: "I just want you to know that I am proud to be an American idiot" (n.p.; qtd. in Lynskey 524).

Heavy Metal Protest: B.Y.O.B.

System of a Down released "B.Y.O.B. (Bring Your Own Bombs)" in 2005 as the lead single from their fourth album *Mesmerize*. The title itself is an ironic play on the usual interpretation of B.Y.O.B. often used in the context of parties; the abbreviation usually stands for "Bring Your Own Booze," signalling to potential attendants of a party that they should supply their own drinks. In this case, it frames the war in Iraq, on which the song was written, as a party. This cynical reading of the war is continued throughout the lyrics.

The song starts with guitarist Daron Malakian screaming:

You!

Why do they always send the poor? (System of a Down n.p.)

The introductory "you" immediately addresses the listener directly, as well as directly referencing the famous Uncle Sam poster. The question that follows it is thus posed to the listener implicitly. It has been established that both the Vietnam War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan disproportionately affected low-income households. In Vietnam, this was done through the draft, which those without wealth or influence could not escape and were conscripted into serving in the war effort. In this modern setting, facilitated by the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, which allowed military recruiters the same access to high schools as college recruiters, the military focuses its recruiting in poor areas, as these people might be more inclined due to the health benefits and sign-up bonuses that the military offers. As a way to afford higher education, in addition to the points already mentioned, the military seemingly provides a way out of the dire social and economic situations potential recruits might find themselves in. Consequently, the poor disproportionately decide to serve. While "Fortunate Son" and other songs covered in this thesis launched a scathing critique on the draft system, this first utterance directly aims to criticise the insidious recruitment tactics of the military.

This is continued in the first verse of the song, sung by lead singer Serj Tankian:

Barbarisms by Barbaras with pointed heels

Victorious victories kneel for brand new spanking deals

Marching forward, hypocritic and hypnotic computers

You depend on our protection, yet you feed us lies from the tablecloth. (ibid.)

The first line of the verse immediately furthers the contrast between rich and poor. "Barbarisms" obviously evokes images of the vicious nature of war, involving violence and

death. These vicious images are contrasted with "Barbaras," an ordinary white middle-class name. Furthermore, Barbara is the name of the mother of President George W. Bush, president at the time of the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and former First Lady as wife to President George H.W. Bush. These connections evoke the idea of government (and the white middle-class that voted for it) being the principal culprits of the "barbarisms" of war, as they are those in charge of launching it. It takes away the guilt of war from the soldiers and places it firmly on those in authority. In the second line, Tankian introduces the idea of capitalism and its effect on the war. The "new spanking deals" can easily be interpreted as the economic gain that companies involved in the war make. The defence industry is making a significant profit from selling equipment and machinery to the government for the war effort. Hence why "victorious victories" serve only the "deals" that can be made to profit off the misery of war. "Marching forward, hypocritic and hypnotic computers" opposes this capitalistic mentality with the reality of being a soldier and blindly following orders. The connection with computers becomes apparent when considering that soldiers are educated to follow their command without asking questions and combat shifting toward heavier use of computers, for instance, concerning drone strikes. The last line neatly combines the themes presented in the verse. The elites in government rely on public and military support, firstly through votes that let them remain in their position and, secondly, due to the sheer military workforce that they have at their disposal once in power, yet that "protection" is only rewarded with "lies from the tablecloth." "Tablecloth" once more underlining the idea of luxury connected with the elite, Tankian creates a parable that essentially deems those in power as ill-equipped and unworthy of serving in their positions as they reward the trust they are given with falsehood.

Then, the song presents its chorus:

> La, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, ooh-ooh
> Everybody's going to the party, have a real good time
> Dancing in the desert, blowing up the sunshine. (ibid.)

The opening line of "la, la, la" evokes imagery of a party introduced in the title, where people sing and dance, also accentuated by Tankian's vocal range and performance. This ecstatic feeling is further explored in the second line, in which "everybody's going to the party," directly equating the "party" with war. The song once more offers a critique on recruitment, which often portrays joining the military as adventurous and fun to lure in potential recruits. This criticism culminates in the last line, in which the "desert" obviously references the terrain in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The fact that the soldiers are dancing might offer two possible interpretations. Firstly, Tankian might try to evoke an ironic image of soldiers dodging enemy rounds and bombs, likening it to dancing. Secondly, it might prompt the idea of celebration, making the war seem effortless. However, both these possible points of view do not include the harsh brutality of war. These viewpoints are once more contrasted with the second part of the line, which evokes images of bombs exploding and the heavy smoke obscuring the sun. It also evokes Pieslak's analysis of military recruitment, focusing heavily on promoting the military as a vehicle for adventure. These contradicting ideas indeed produce images of Orwellian horror.

Moreover, as System of a Down plays metal music, which soldiers use to motivate themselves for combat, the contrast allows for an interesting dichotomy. On one side, the band is very critical of the war. On the other, soldiers use their brand of music to find the motivation to fight the very war the band criticises. It can only be speculated if "B.Y.O.B." was listened to by soldiers preparing for combat, yet it would undoubtedly subvert the band's intent.

The second verse adds to these contrasting images:

> Kneeling roses disappearing into Moses' dry mouth
> Breaking into Fort Knox, stealing our intentions
> Hangars sitting dripped in oil, crying, "Freedom."
> Handed to obsoletion, still, you feed us lies from the tablecloth. (ibid.)

The “kneeling roses” can easily be seen as the soldiers dying in Iraq, with the mention of Moses being a possible link to the US support of Israel. The “dry mouth” might link to the idea of having a thirst for war and this thirst being quenched by the soldiers’ blood. Wanting to improve Israel's position in the region has long been identified as one of the principal reasons for the US to intervene in the Middle East, exemplified in these lines by referencing the country's geography. Tankian mentions Fort Knox, where the US stores most of its gold reserves, which were regularly tapped to pay for the war effort. Along with the gold, the people’s “intentions” were stolen as the war was launched under pretences that twisted the goals of the war given to the public, as has been discussed beforehand. These pretences are partly mentioned in the third line. While the public was fed the idea of the war serving the ultimate goal of “Freedom,” its real purpose was “oil” and other economic goals, explaining why the hangars are dripped in it. The last line offers a bleak look into the future in which man is “handed to obsoletion.” This observation might refer to wars being fought mainly with autonomous machines that do not require human input outside of the push of a button. However, it might also imply an idea of a false sense of freedom, which seems to exist, yet -upon closer inspection- does not. Thirdly, the statement can certainly mean that the constant warmongering will eventually lead to humanity’s downfall. This all while the elites in government still “feed us lies from the tablecloth,” serving themselves instead of those who voted them in.

Another rendition of the Orwellian chorus follows this. Then, Malakian once more takes over vocal duties for the bridge:

Blast off, it's party time
And we don't live in a fascist nation
Blast off, it's party time
And where the fuck are you? (ibid.)

The verses' sarcastic tone and the chorus are continued by stating that “it’s party time,” once more relating war to a giant party. This statement is followed by the sarcastic, “and we don’t live in a fascist nation,” which, regarding the tone, makes the exact statement it negates. This comment might be concerning the passing of the Patriot Act, which essentially allowed the government to spy on its citizens legally in the name of fighting terror. Often called fascist by political commentators, the song likens the administration to a fascist regime. The song then repeats the first line while ending in “and where the fuck are you?”. The interpretation for this is once more twofold. The excerpt firstly criticises those in power for their lack of direct involvement in the “party.” Yet, it might also show the peer pressure of not being part of the giant “party” (the war), which was declared immensely important by the government and the media.

This is followed by a second chorus, combining both singers, which repeats the same question, among others:

Where the fuck are you?
Where the fuck are you?
Why don't presidents fight the war?
Why do they always send the poor?
Why don't presidents fight the war?
Why do they always send the poor?

Why do they always send the poor?

Why do they always send the poor? (ibid.)

This chorus is, in turn, accompanied by a shift in tone. Malakian and Tankian scream frantically over chaotic music, commanding the listener's attention. The sarcastic tone shifts to an earnest, accusatory tone, this time seemingly directly addressing the country's leadership and its lack of direct involvement. While repeating the initial question of "why do they always send the poor?" they directly ask, "why don't presidents fight the war?" While presidents decide when and how a war is fought, they are not directly involved in combat action. Instead, they delegate "the poor" in their place.

The song then repeats various parts of the lyrics before its end. The piece offers a sarcastic yet scathing critique of the recruiting system, targeting young and poor people in the US while sparing those in power, which essentially decide over the life and death of the lower classes deployed to war. While massively different in tone and music, "B.Y.O.B." makes very similar points to the other songs analysed as part of this thesis; while the wars they thematise are different ones, their issues remain the same.

Popstar Protest: Dear Mr. President

In 2006, as part of her fourth album, *I'm Not Dead*, American pop singer Pink released the song 'Dear Mr. President' as a single. Featuring the Indigo Girls, the song takes the form of a direct address to President Bush, calling into question many traits of Bush's administration and policies. In that sense, the song is similar in its conception to 'Eve Of Destruction,' touching upon many topics at the forefront of societal discussion at the time of its release.

The piece comprises two verses, a pre-chorus, a chorus, a bridge, and an outro. The song opens with the first verse as follows:

> Dear Mr. President,
>
> Come take a walk with me.
>
> Let's pretend we're just two people and
>
> You're not better than me.
>
> I'd like to ask you some questions if we can speak honestly. (Pink n.p.)

The concept is a hypothetical talk between the singer and the president in which they speak about specific issues that Pink has “some questions” about. Pink structures this as a formal letter, beginning with “Dear Mr. President,” as she would in an actual letter. However, Pink immediately adds a somewhat sarcastic comment, asking for the president to “pretend we’re just two people and you’re not better than me.” While the principle that “all men are created equal” (“Declaration of Independence: A Transcription” n.p.) is enshrined in the US Declaration of Independence, the singer seemingly does not believe that the president shares this idea and therefore explicitly asks him to, for the time of the talk at least, pretend they are. Pink then delves into the questions she has as part of the pre-chorus:

> What do you feel when you see all the homeless on the street?
>
> Who do you pray for at night before you go to sleep?
>
> What do you feel when you look in the mirror?
>
> Are you proud? (Pink n.p.)

These questions hypothetically force the president to think about the weakest in society, the "homeless." The questions imply that Pink believes that the president has not taken action to improve the situation of society's most vulnerable while he has all the means to do so. Hence, she asks him who he prays to "at night" and how he feels "when [he] look[s] in the mirror." Pink implies that the way these vulnerable people are left to suffer by the most powerful entity in the country is shameful. Thus, the singer wants the president to face himself in sight of these failings. Pink ends the pre-chorus by asking, "are you proud?" sarcastically implying that there is nothing to be proud of, as well as forcing the president to acknowledge the deep rifts in the very society that he is responsible for. Pink then launches into explicitly accusatory questions in the chorus:

> How do you sleep while the rest of us cry?
>
> How do you dream when a mother has no chance to say goodbye?
>
> How do you walk with your head held high?
>
> Can you even look me in the eye
>
> And tell me why? (ibid.)

All of these questions function based on comparison, juxtaposing the plights of ordinary people with the president's situation. Pink implies the president lacks a conscience as he is able to sleep while society cries as it sees the many injustices that the president seemingly does not. Pink then alludes to the war in Iraq, as mothers cannot say goodbye to their children who die in the war while the president is sound asleep. These antagonisms lead Pink to question how the president can "walk with your head held high," as she perceives the

situation as shameful and holds him responsible. Thus, Pink doubts that he could “look [her] in the eye.” Pink then adds to these criticisms in the second verse:

> Dear Mr. President,
>
> Were you a lonely boy?
>
> Are you a lonely boy?
>
> How can you say
>
> No child is left behind?
>
> We're not dumb and we're not blind.
>
> They're all sitting in your cells
>
> While you pave the road to hell. (ibid.)

This verse is dedicated to thematising the No Child Left Behind Act that Congress passed during the Bush administration and massively reformed public schools. The Act is mainly responsible for shifting focus towards standardised testing and the mass closure of schools in poor areas, resulting in a considerable deterioration of the academic system in the US. Hence, why the title of the Act seems somewhat sarcastic, which Pink points to here. Stating that “we’re not dumb and we’re not blind,” the singer states that the public can see through these results and can identify the horrifying consequences of these decisions. Pink also shows how children that go to underfunded schools, often in areas inhabited by minorities, are more likely to end up in prison as they have no academic possibilities and turn to other occupations. As poor neighbourhoods are often more submitted to crime, many youths risk turning towards that, as school offers nothing to them and sets them up for the “road to hell,” for

which Pink holds the No Child Left Behind Act accountable. The singer then adds to Bush's hypocrisy in the following pre-chorus:

> What kind of father would take his own daughter's rights away?
>
> And what kind of father might hate his own daughter if she were gay?
>
> I can only imagine what the first lady has to say
>
> You've come a long way from whiskey and cocaine. (ibid.)

Here, Pink calls out Bush's efforts in making contraceptives and abortion more complex to obtain for women while being a father to two girls. Bush also supported a constitutional amendment that had the goal of banning gay marriage, even if one of his children could turn out to be gay, which Pink sees as a massively hypocritical act. Pink then adds that the "first lady" may have differing views, as Laura Bush has sometimes implied. The singer finishes the quatrain with a sarcastic jab at Bush's past as a partier, which is well documented, commenting on his stratospheric rise to power. The verse also calls into question if someone who spent his youth with "whiskey and cocaine" is fit to take decisions of presidential magnitude. The excerpt shines a new light on the chorus which follows. After the repeated refrain, Pink introduces a bridge:

> Let me tell you 'bout [sic] hard work
>
> Minimum wage with a baby on the way
>
> Let me tell you 'bout hard work
>
> Rebuilding your house after the bombs took them away
>
> Let me tell you 'bout hard work

Building a bed out of a cardboard box

Let me tell you 'bout hard work

Hard work

Hard work

You don't know nothing [sic] 'bout hard work

Hard work

Hard work

Oh. (ibid.)

This bridge delves deeper into Bush's past, implying that Bush has no experience with "hard work," accentuated by the many repetitions throughout. Pink juxtaposes these statements with real plights such as "minimum wage with a baby on the way," "rebuilding your house after the bombs took them away," and "building a bed out of a cardboard box." The song mentions the issues Pink sees as most important and most trying; minimum wage, homelessness, and the disastrous military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. From a wealthy family and his father being a former president, Bush's background implies that he was given many things instead of having to work for them. Hence, Pink concludes that the president, in charge of the issues just mentioned, has no understanding of "hard work" or what that entails. Pink then finishes with an outro that is closely related to the chorus:

How do you sleep at night?

How do you walk with your head held high?

Dear Mr. President,

You'd never take a walk with me.

Would you? (ibid.)

Pink reiterates two lines from the chorus that underline Bush's dismal record as president before answering the question she posed in the first verse. Pink does not believe the president would consent to their meeting and, thus, take time to take her criticism to hear.

The song criticises many of the US's most critical issues, such as homelessness, poverty, and the wars in the Middle East. However, the conflicts are never explicitly mentioned. When considering the success of 'Eve of Destruction,' which had a similar structure of combining several issues and criticising them, it would only be logical to think that the song has equal success, which it did in a number of countries. It charted in several countries and even topped the charts in Austria, becoming a hit in Europe and Australia. However, it failed to chart in the US, failing to replicate the success of Barry McGuire's smash hit protest song. While becoming a hit elsewhere, the song was unable to connect in the U.S. This underlines that while protest music was produced and released, it failed to connect with audiences in the US even after the conflicts had moved into long-lasting wars led at an immense human cost. Moreover, the song fails to explicitly mention the wars the US was implicated in at the time. Even after a close analysis of the song, while it mentions many topics that occupied US society at the time, the wars are left out. Thus, the song might be more important for what it does not say than for it does say.

Full Circle: Let’s Impeach the President

Neil Young released an entire album chronicling his struggles with the Bush administration. Recorded and written over only nine days at the beginning of 2006, *Living With War* was released on May 2nd, 2006, mere months before Pink’s ‘Dear Mr. President.’ The album had moderate success, reaching number fifteen on Billboard’s Top 200 chart. In contrast to Pink’s work, the album’s lyrics are unapologetically direct and blunt, chief among them the song ‘Let’s Impeach the President.’ While Pink chose to format her piece as an open letter addressing the president, Young already calls for his impeachment in the title.

The song begins with a reference to “Taps”; a military bugle call usually played during flag ceremonies and military funerals. While the original is played on a trumpet only, Neil Young adds a full rock and roll instrumentation to it before launching into the song. This quotation of military music immediately sets a certain mood, as it references other uses of such music, in their initial role as well as, for instance, its use in films, and conjures up images of a patriotic United States before subverting it with the first verse:

> Let's impeach the President for lying
>
> And misleading our country into war
>
> Abusing all the power that we gave him
>
> And shipping all our money out the door. (Young n.p.)

Young’s first line, a plea to trigger an impeachment of President Bush, functions as an unapologetic mission statement for the song. The line does not veil its criticism, nor is it vague

in its wishes or its goals. The lyrics describe a direct change that Young wants to evoke. Moreover, it is a song that is an immediate call to protest and action instead of only wishing to inspire protest and action, as explained by Vandagriff beforehand: “unless there is a direct call to action in a song, or an enactment of action via a call-and-response form…, the song is a narrative or a lamentation” (335). Young is very blunt in his lyrics, plainly stating the reasons for said impeachment, namely “lying,” “misleading” the country, “abusing” his power, and wasting money. These allegations are further explained in the following verse:

> Who's the man who hired all the criminals
>
> The White House shadows who hide behind closed doors
>
> They bend the facts to fit with their new stories
>
> Of why we have to send our men to war. (Young n.p.)

Young begins with questions relating to responsibility. In addition to the President, this verse extends accountability for the wars to “the White House shadows” that are largely unknown to the public yet are responsible for many decisions that led to these wars, “bending the facts,” leading to the deployment of soldiers. However, Bush is the one most accountable as he is the man “who hired all the criminals,” as Young proposes in a sarcastic question that begins the verse. This accusation also prevents Bush from being able to shift responsibility away from himself. As Bush chose the people working for him, he is also responsible for their actions as well as having to sign off on their efforts. The third verse adds to Bush’s list of shortcomings:

> Let's impeach the President for spying

On citizens inside their own homes

Breaking every law in the country

By tapping our computers and telephones. (ibid.)

This verse references the US Patriot Act, enacted by Bush in the wake of 9/11, which widened the possibilities of federal agencies to intercept phone calls domestically and internationally. The Patriot Act is clearly referenced by Young, alleging that the administration is "breaking every law in the country," invading privacy rights, and spying on people who have not implicated themselves in any criminal or terrorist acts. Young adds to Bush's tally of decisions detrimental to his own citizens in the following verse:

What if Al Qaeda blew up the levees

Would New Orleans have been safer that way

Sheltered by our government's protection

Or was someone just not home that day? (ibid.)

This verse references the disastrous response to Hurricane Katrina devastating New Orleans in 2005. While a natural disaster is undoubtedly hard to prevent, Young attacks Bush's lacking relief efforts. These reproaches aim toward showing the president as being more preoccupied with a foreign threat such as Al Qaeda while there are US citizens in dire need of help, which is not given due to this preoccupation. This neglect is incomprehensible to Young, underlined by the sarcastic question that finishes the verse. The song then moves into a bridge that features the words "flip – flop" (ibid.). This line possibly mimics the lackadaisical attitude of

the administration toward the human tragedy occurring both in the US, exemplified by New Orleans, and in the warzones before moving into another verse:

> Let's impeach the president for hijacking
>
> Our religion and using it to get elected
>
> Dividing our country into colors [sic]
>
> And still leaving black people neglected. (ibid.)

This verse attacks Bush's use of his evangelical Christian background in order to get "elected." Young sees Bush's religious background as a means for him to use it to paint himself as a man of faith, appealing to Christian voters while forgetting apparent Christian values and "leaving black people neglected." This juxtaposition shows Bush as hypocritical as his divisive action is impossible to reconcile with the values propagated by Christianity. Bush's lack of effort in improving conditions of African Americans was often criticised, most famously by Kanye West during a televised benefit concert for the victims of Hurricane Katrina, many of them black Americans as Louisiana has a large African American population, stating "George Bush doesn't care about black people" (NBC Television Group n.p.). Young adds this topic to his list of Bush's shortcomings. Young then concludes with a final verse:

> Thank god he's cracking down on steroids
>
> Since he sold his old baseball team
>
> There's lots of people looking at big trouble
>
> But of course our president is clean. (Young n.p.)

Young alludes to Bush's previous ownership of the Texas Rangers baseball team. As professional baseball had major steroid scandals during the 1990s and the 2000s, Young calls out the hypocrisy in only pursuing a steroid-free baseball league after having sold the team and thus having no further repercussions that could be suffered by such a scandal. Hence, Young states sarcastically that while many people are "looking at big trouble," "our president is clean," implying the exact contrary of this statement. Young also concludes the song with a singular, sarcastic "Thank God" (ibid.). Thus, the song paints Bush as a hypocritical human being, interested in furthering his persona while neglecting his citizens. The problems Young enumerates lead to his call for impeachment having enough reasoning behind it.

Moreover, in connection to the song, the discrepancies between Vietnam protests and those protesting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan might be best exemplified in the 2008 documentary film *Déjà Vu* on Crosby, Still Nash and Young, directed by Neil Young himself. Named after their influential 1970 album, the film follows the band on their reunion tour in 2006. When looking at the promo material for the film, the trailer states that "in the '60s they gave voice to a generation" and "in the 70s their music was the rallying cry against the government" (DÉJÀ VU – Movie Trailer n.p.). These statements make it inherently clear that the band, since its inception, has always been writing politically charged music as well as having a bond with their audience, which shared these views. As has been shown beforehand, the band wrote one of the most well-known protest songs of the Vietnam era in 'Ohio,' which was written equally fast and spontaneously as *Living With War*, and some of its members were involved with equally essential songs such as Buffalo Springfield's 'For What It's Worth.' It is thus one of the only bands with an extensive reach and audience to comment on both wars as the band played some of Young's solo material on their 2006 *Freedom of Speech* tour,

including 'Let's Impeach the President.' The documentation of this tour might be the best means of comparison between Vietnam and Iraq/Afghanistan protest music and its reception. The rendition of 'Let's Impeach the President' is interspersed with audience reactions, which are incredibly divided. While some audience members appreciate the song and its message, others are seen leaving the venue. A man can be seen mouthing the words "fuck you" toward the band and, as the narrator explains: "After the first verse of 'Let's Impeach the President', a growing chorus of boos was answered by an equally rousing round of cheers. When it appeared to be a draw, the most passionate voted with their feet and voices" (*CSNY/Déjà Vu* n.p.). These comments are accompanied by images of opposing groups of audience members, either in favour or against the band's message. One woman proclaims that "Neil Young can stick it up his ass" while a man states that the band's "politics are a little too left" (ibid.). Another man exclaims: "Like George Bush said if you're with terrorism, we're gonna [sic] get you. George Bush is right … George Bush needs four more years" (ibid.). Expletive laden tirades like "They can suck my dick, son of a bitch. I'd like to knock his fucking teeth out" are also featured, while other audience members explain that the band has "no right to blame the government" because they have no military experience (ibid.). The segment ends with an audience member tearing up his entry ticket and sarcastically thanking the band for their protest while a woman states, "It was a little political" (ibid.).

These images vividly show the divide of opinion regarding the wars in the Middle East. While the war in Afghanistan saw more support for its goal of capturing those allegedly responsible for the 9/11 attacks, the reasons for the war in Iraq had already been heavily questioned and debunked years before with films such as Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11,* released in 2004. Comparing this to the development surrounding Vietnam, where an initial

wave of support gradually wavered, and opposition grew more prominent, this scene shows that US citizens did not necessarily take kindly to protest music, even in the case of a band such as CSNY, whose legacy is partly built on protest music.

6. Conclusion

When comparing the songs written in protest during both the period of the Vietnam War and the period of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, it becomes evident that the contents of the songs remain largely the same. A recurrent idea of opposing the upper echelon of government and society at large can be found in almost every song, whether written in the 1960s or the 2000s. The feeling of being exposed to the decisions taken by these upper brasses, and the subsequent anger in suffering the consequences of these decisions, is as present in songs such as 'Fortunate Son' as it is in songs such as 'Dear Mr. President.' Moreover, while the crop of songs released in relation to the Vietnam War is not necessarily more outspoken than their counterparts of the 2000s, their existence within the growing anti-establishment movement allowed them to be much more appreciated than their modern counterparts. While their impact seems more long-lasting through the use in media since, their contents, especially during the latter years of the war, are as vague in their criticism as those released during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan:

> "The songs in this period (1969-1974) lacked specific references to Vietnam, they criticized [sic] war in obscure ways, questioning the very concept. The situation in Vietnam now symbolized [sic] war in general, as the songs protested the moral decay of civilization [sic] … A significant portion of these songs failed to mention any war but attacked in vague references the polarization [sic] of the era, best exemplified by "Ohio," "Peace Train" and "Imagine." The graphic atrocities of war which characterized [sic] the earlier period's lyrics became absent after 1970, as protest became vague and centered [sic] upon the need for Utopian peace. (Bindas & Houston 18)

As has been discussed, this vagueness has undoubtedly to do with the musicians not having first-hand experiences of the war they were protesting. Moreover, while often romanticised, the songs released during the Vietnam War were also an economic undertaking. Not necessarily wanted so by the musicians and artists themselves, record companies saw the potential revenue these songs could gather in an increasingly war-opposing society. As Bindas and Houston explain,

> by 1971, Country Joe McDonald, an acknowledged antiwar [sic] musician, had become disgusted with the increased trivialization [sic] and commercialization [sic] of the war, a process he had seen sprouting three years earlier. His audiences did not "care about the 'Fixin'-to-Die Rag,' " he complained, but were more excited and enthusiastic about the possibility of publicly spelling the word "fuck" in the "Fish Cheer.” (19)

This account is similar to Lynskey’s assertion of the 2000s where “the desire to speak up wasn’t there in the first place – the muscles of protest had grown flabby” (Lynskey 510). However, while both eras saw support for the wars that the Us found itself involved in, the attacks of September 11th, 2001, saw the US public essentially condone the war in Afghanistan as a retaliatory effort for the loss of life suffered in the World Trade Center attacks. The war in Iraq saw a different fate as it was supported initially, fuelled by governmental lies to gain public backing, yet public opinion shifted once these lies were revealed. However, as has been established, the protest music released during both eras is similar in its message. The music released in the 2000s did not see the same level of success in the U.S. as their Vietnam counterparts did, neither at the time nor in public memory. The most striking evidence for this can be found in the different responses to Barry McGuire’s ‘Eve of Destruction’ and Pink’s ‘Dear Mr. President’: While McGuire’s song went on to top the U.S charts, clearly showing that the song struck a chord with the public, and public opinion, Pink’s open letter to President Bush, very similar in concept to ‘Eve of Destruction,’ failed to connect with the US public and

only became a hit overseas. This is even more remarkable when considering that McGuire is largely known only for this song while Pink, at the time of her song's release, was an established pop artist with several hits under her belt. There may be several reasons for this discrepancy.

For one, "by the early 1970s most record producers, executives and multinational corporations favored [sic] disengagement from Southeast Asia and, since they controlled the popular record culture, proceeded to disseminate profitable radicalism with an antiwar [sic] message" (Bindas & Houston 21). This might not have happened similarly during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. As has been shown, the impact of the September 11th attacks cannot be underestimated and primarily resulted in protest music against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan being vocally opposed, as can be seen in the case of Steve Earle. Moreover, while initial pro-war songs were successful in both eras, the surge of protest music cannot be seen to have been as commercially successful during the 2000s as in the late 1960s and 1970s. Thus, while the contents of the protest music released during both conflicts remain similar, it is due to the surrounding social factors that the music was differently received and remembered. It has been proven that the music released during both eras mentions the same ideas of wealthy and influential versus poor and vulnerable and war being an undertaking by those in power at the expense of those who are not. While these concepts resonated heavily with the counterculture, hippie, and equal rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such a responsive audience cannot be found for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially in the US, where the wounds of 9/11 led many to condone the wars for far longer. The only record that can be said to have gotten its release right in terms of waning support for the wars in the Middle East and protesting these wars, and therefore garnering appreciation from the public,

is Green Day's *American Idiot*. In that sense, Green Day's album is the exception that proves the rule as the only record to have a lasting cultural appreciation and legacy. Apart from this example, anti-war protest music in the 2000s failed to forge a lasting connection with the American public, showing a significant shift compared to the situation during the Vietnam War. Thus, it is not the music, or more specifically, the lyrics, that changed, but its reception, leading toward a different cultural legacy.

Songwriters have constantly commented and criticised the rising tensions between the US and both the Middle and Far East, especially during the Vietnam and War on Terror eras. This comparative analysis has investigated the similarities and differences between the music of these eras. While the musical genres used to express anti-war thought and protest were expanded, the lyrical content did mostly not, and songwriters have constantly criticised the rich and powerful for their abuses of power while advocating for a more humane approach to resolving conflict. Perhaps it would do well to listen to them more as we navigate through future political decisions.

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