

SONGS OF SOCIAL PROTEST

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

edited by **AILEEN DILLANE, MARTIN J. POWER,
EOIN DEVEREUX, and AMANDA HAYNES**

PROTEST, MEDIA AND CULTURE



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Songs of Social Protest

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International Perspectives

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ROWMAN &
LITTLEFIELD
INTERNATIONAL

London • New York

Published by Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd
Unit A, Whitacre Mews, 26-34 Stannary Street, London SE11 4AB
www.rowmaninternational.com

Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd is an affiliate of Rowman & Littlefield
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706, USA
With additional offices in Boulder, New York, Toronto (Canada), and Plymouth (UK)
www.rowman.com

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: HB 978-1-7866-0125-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Dillane, Aileen. | Power, Martin J. | Devereux, Eoin. | Haynes, Amanda.
Title: Songs of social protest : international perspectives / Aileen Dillane, Martin J.
Power, Eoin Devereux, and Amanda Haynes.
Description: London ; New York : Rowman & Littlefield International, [2018] |
Series: Protest, media and culture | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018001448 (print) | LCCN 2018002293 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781786601278 (Electronic) | ISBN 9781786601254 (cloth : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Protest songs—History and criticism. | Music—Political aspects.
Classification: LCC ML3916 (ebook) | LCC ML3916 .S658 2018 (print) |
DDC 781.5/92—dc23
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018001448>

♻️™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American
National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library
Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

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Foreword

What's Going On? And What Is To Be Done?

Dave Randall

Anyone who wants to change the world must begin by answering two questions. The first was most famously posed by Marvin Gaye and the second by Lenin: *What's Going On?* and *What Is To Be Done?*

What appears to be going on is a process of political polarisation the like of which we haven't seen for many decades. The neoliberal consensus that has dominated politics for the last forty years is being challenged and rejected by millions around the world. Principled socialist candidates once dismissed as unelectable are poised to take office as thousands of predominantly young people take to the streets to demand change. But in parallel with the gains made by the left are those made by the populist and far right. Two very different visions for the future of humankind are competing for hearts and minds and the outcome of the contest will reverberate for a very long time.

So what is to be done? Well, there are many things that can and must be done to ensure that progressive ideas win out and a better world is delivered to future generations. The contributors to this collection and I share a belief that culture is one of the key battlegrounds in this fight. The everyday stories that surround us, the images we see and the music we experience significantly shape our sense of ourselves, those around us and the world we share. Music can be used to distract us from the things that matter, stir tribalistic enmity and march us off to fight unnecessary and unjust wars. Or it can invite diverse groups of people to come together in celebration and can give them hope, confidence and an expanded sense of what's possible.

Music matters. This is something that rulers have understood throughout history and across cultures. From pharaohs to feudal lords, muftis to maharajahs, republicans to royals, rulers always have a music policy. All have given patronage to some musicians and many have tried to suppress the music of others. Modern day reformists, radicals and revolutionaries would do well to

recognise its importance too. If we are to harness its power for progress, we must first delve deeper in our attempts to understand culture—how it shapes our sense of self and society; how it is contested and the integral role it plays in the fight for the future. This excellent collection is a timely contribution to this project. With voices from across cultures and disciplines, it offers a refreshingly global perspective on the subject, always underscored by a reassuringly analytical approach. The essays inform, provoke, surprise and inspire, providing a sound foundation for ongoing discussions about the political power of culture. So read on and join in. There are songs to share and a world to win.

Dave Randall, musician and author of *Sound System: The Political Power of Music* (2017).

Introduction

Stand Up, Sing Out

The Contemporary Relevance of Protest Song

Aileen Dillane, Martin J. Power,
Amanda Haynes and Eoin Devereux

Sound is an integral part of protest, and singing is a way for ordinary people, as well as amateur or professional musicians, to sonorously raise their voices in an appeal for justice. The intimate and sensuous activity of singing, in solo form or as part of a collective, has a power and persuasiveness beyond mere rhetoric. Because of music's ubiquity, its presence in all cultures, and its fundamental ownership by all human beings, it is a medium and a performance act that is essentially recognisable, familiar and translatable; therefore, it has the potential to reach across social and political divides, or, at the very least, reveal our shared humanity. Music, of course, is not intrinsically good or inherently utopian, even if, in making music—in *musicising*—people celebrate not only who they are, but also often who they hope to become (Small 1998: xi). Like any medium, music can be used for malign propaganda purposes. It can disinform, it can proselytise, it can incite, and it can exclude; singers, song texts and performance activities may, in fact, be part of the very systems that reproduce oppressive structures and behaviours (Turino 2008). But when singing is mobilised in order to counter injustice, to challenge inequality, to rise above hate and fear, to appeal against the normalisation of bigotry, racism, misogyny, homophobia and a myriad of other anti-democratic, anti-human practices, then the power of song is revealed as affective, persuasive, ethical and hopeful.

This collection of essays on the songs (and singers) of social protest presents rich, diverse, nuanced and multidisciplinary protest scholarship from experienced and established voices alongside dynamic, emerging scholars from across the globe, at a time when protest singing seems more important than ever. Engaging in social protest through song has a long and rich tradition that has currency in everyday life, and it is gaining traction within the academy,

where the intersection of music and social justice research continues to expand. This book aims to contribute to that growing field (see Friedman 2017; Illiano 2015; Lebrun 2009; Kutschke and Norton 2014; Peddie 2006, 2012; Roy 2010; Rosenthal and Flacks 2011; Spener 2016), offering scholarship that directly and unflinchingly engages with the world around us. The *study* of music may be understood as a moving of musical sound into discourse, but it should also be understood as a political act in itself because of its agentic capacities and its refusal to see music in purely aesthetic terms (Bohlman 1993, 418).

A key aim of this collection is to critically remember the origins and meaning of protest songs of the past—especially those that continue to have resonance in the present—and to explore less familiar and newer protest sounds, forms (and aesthetics) in their respective contexts. In the essays that follow, canonical songs revisited through historical approaches are placed alongside emergent refrains documented in cutting-edge ethnographies. Protest songs are analysed through philosophical excursions, socio-political and economic perspectives, and cultural and contextual interrogations and detailed musicological, textual, and performance analyses open up new and dynamic ways of engaging in protest song research.

By deliberately broadening the geographical and historical remit to include sites and epochs outside of Anglo and American popular contexts, we have endeavoured to curate research on a wide variety of song genres and performance traditions, many of which are ethnographically explored and contextualised. By inviting readers to understand and appreciate the power of song as a vehicle for social protest across cultural, social and political divides, our aim has been to make this collection truly international in scope.

The book's roots lie in the "Songs of Social Protest" conference held at the University of Limerick, Ireland, in 2015, where over eighty academics from thirty countries came together to interrogate the ways in which popular and vernacular cultures, and song in particular, can reproduce or challenge the cultural/political status quo in contemporary societies worldwide. The cases interrogated in this book therefore emerge, as do their authors, from a broad range of national, political and cultural contexts, as well as ideological positionings. The cross-cultural and multidisciplinary character of their collective contributions underscores that songs of social protest have been, and continue to be, a truly global affair.

It is rarely in one's economic interest, as a professional musician, to be exclusively dubbed a protest singer, and in places where freedom of expression is curtailed, it is often a highly risky label. And yet most protest singers find a way, sometimes concealing the very subversive nature of their message in beautifully crafted melodies and harmonies, in opaque metaphors, or in unexpected and therefore unthreatening performance contexts. Other times, the singing is loud, defiant and in unison, buoyed by the power of numbers and by

the sheer, effervescent force of the resonating human bodies, singing civil disobedience with pure, noisy exuberance. Such singing, when combined with ‘exemplary action’ transforms people into ‘moral witnesses’ (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 162) and making music helps activists to “honour a commitment they’ve already made” (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011, 123). Countless social and cultural contexts populate the wide performance spectrum delineated above, but in the end *all* songs of social protest seek to do one thing—bring our attention to an issue that needs redress, which ultimately challenges the status quo: And we live in a time where there is much to protest.

THE STATE OF THINGS: PUTTING PROTEST IN CONTEXT TODAY

Any assumptions of unidirectional development towards democratic and rights-based systems of governance have been challenged by contemporary shifts to the political right, ongoing human rights abuses and intensifying environmental conflict, regressive developments in which state actors are frequently implicated.

In 2017, in an unprecedented development, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued an early warning with respect to racial conflict in the United States of America (Malik 2017; Sidique 2017). Public confrontations between white supremacists and anti-racists (as in Charlottesville in 2017 where an anti-racist protestor was killed (Tani 2017), can be understood as contemporary manifestations of a lengthy and deep-rooted history of racism. This period is marked out within recent history however, by the equivocal response of the State to such clashes. White supremacist groups appear to have been emboldened by the election of President Trump (Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights 2017), and indeed, by his prevarication in condemning their principles and mobilisation (Kentish 2017).

Populism, and the right-wing movements which promote and benefit from it, also gained ground in Europe during the same period. In 2016, the conservative vote in the UK successfully mobilised to terminate that country’s membership of the European Union (European Parliament 2017), arguably one of the most progressive political projects in recent history, one which is credited with a hiatus in armed inter-country conflicts in Western Europe since its inception (Federation of American Scientists 2017). The UK referendum was informed by racist rhetoric, which both heightened and sought to capitalise on divisions within the populous based on racialized identity and citizenship (Chakraborty 2016).

Far right parties have been making significant gains across Europe since 2014–2015. The outcome of the 2017 German federal election prompted

public demonstrations as it emerged that the right wing anti-immigration party ‘Alternative for Germany’ (AfD) had won 13 percent of the vote (Sharkov 2017). The European Parliament, has however, included a coalition of far right parties since the middle of this decade, incorporating representatives from France, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, Italy, the UK and Germany (Rublin 2015). In October 2017, the suppression of the Catalanian independence vote illustrated the fragility of democracy, as hundreds of protesters, many of them singing, were beaten by Spanish riot police.

East of Europe, and on its southern borders, a humanitarian crisis resulting from the displacement of people on an unprecedented magnitude is ongoing. Fleeing political persecution, war and poverty, refugees continue to make their way north and west, undergoing perilous journeys which often culminate in their deaths. In 2015, the 28 EU member states agreed to accept 160,000 refugees. By July 2017, 21,000 people had been relocated (Tisdall 2017). The European Parliament (2017) describes this crisis as having “... exposed shortcomings in the Union’s asylum system”. In contrast, Amnesty International (de Bellis 2017) describes Europe’s response to this crisis as having focused on “increasing border controls and stepping up returns”.

Mobilisation for the purposes of demonstration is as necessary today as it has ever been. Moreover, this moment in time is characterised not just by single-issue protests marking shifting and temporary nodes of communal grievance. Rather, this is an era of renewal for the mass movement as a popular means of responding to structural inequalities requiring fundamental changes in the manner in which we organise our societies. This renewal speaks, we argue, not only to the gravity of the challenges now facing us, but of the failure of institutional politics to adequately address those challenges. Mass protest represents the migration of democracy outside the formal structures of the political system, and as such it is essential to a just society. Globally, recourse to protest continues to entail risk. That this mode of political participation continues to be criminalised and repressed in so many parts of the world is additional evidence of its necessity (and many of the contributors to this collection speak to these risks). The question then remains as to whether those of us, whose personal circumstances or geopolitical location provides us with greater protection from repressive responses to protest, will agitate for and on behalf of those who cannot.

PROTEST, ACTIVISM AND AGENCY

It is essential, then, that from the outset, we as editors of this collection pin our colours to the mast. For us, protest is a legitimate, even essential, aspect of modern democratic societies, “a discursive intervention, designed to

dramaturgically disrupt dominant discourses, to promote alternative frameworks of understanding and to demand their actualisation” (Power et al. 2016, 266). Social protest is a form of “political expression” that seeks to bring about meaningful social change on causes which range from “identity politics, to cultural, social, economic or political issues” (Cable 2016, 2), by applying pressure to (and in the process influencing) the existing “knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the public or the policies of an organization or institution” (McLeod 2011). It therefore follows that the manner in which protestors communicate is a key component in determining whether or not a protest is successful. Research going back several decades has shown how media coverage has attempted to undermine the legitimacy of protest movements and events by presenting the actions of protestors as violent and insurrectionary (Power et al. 2017; Gitlin 1980; see also Philo 1990; Power et al. 2016). More recently, Cottle (2008) has argued that there has been an ideological fragmentation and dilution of protest, in conjunction with a significant (positive) shift in public attitudes towards such actions. It is also the case however that the very technologies and networks created by powerful transnational capital (such as the i-Phone or Twitter) allow for protestors to circulate counter-hegemonic discourses. Devereux (2014) notes that this was in evidence in the Arab Spring (2010) and in cultural practices utilised by the ‘Occupy Movement’ originating within Wall Street, the very belly of global capitalism in 2011. Costanza-Chock (2012) evidences how protestors engaged in ‘transmedia mobilization’ in getting their message (‘We Are the 99%’) into circulation, and to help spread the Occupy Movement to at least 100 other cities around the world. Without wishing to understate the continued power of transnational capital and the global elites, Devereux (2014) argues, that one of the unintended consequences of media globalization is that technological changes and developments (which create negative consequences for many of the world’s citizens) also permit ‘ordinary people’ to be more agentic and to circulate powerful counter-hegemonic discourses. Thus the power of citizen journalism, the capacity of audience members generally and musicians/songwriters/performers in particular, has been transformed in terms of its capacity to potentially disrupt and challenge the status quo. In that context the capacity to articulate contradictory narratives has in the past and, as is clearly demonstrated in this volume, continues to be aided by the ‘reach’ of popular music (Botta 2006, 123) and therefore it is imperative that we pay close attention to this area. But we also understand the need to focus on songs and their performances as multi-modal ‘texts’ (Lyndon and McKerrell 2017) generated in performance contexts. This volume, therefore, firmly establishes the efficacy of song as a means of communicating dissent: when song combines with social protest, something very powerful is unleashed, especially when people really listen to what is being said and performed.

SONGS OF SOCIAL PROTEST

Songs of social protest are “associated with opposition, contestation, revolt and resistance” (Piotrowska 2013, 280), yet even a cursory glance at the table of contents in this volume make it starkly evident that music as social protest is too far reaching to be neatly packed into a particular genre, geographic location or time period (see Peddie 2006, p. xvii for a discussion). The polysemic nature of music means that it can take on different meanings for different people in a wide range of contexts.

Denisoff (1968) was one of the first social scientists to publish on the phenomena of protest songs in 1968. He understood such songs as a form of “magnetic” or “rhetorical” propaganda. Eyerman and Jamison (1998) were concurrently interested in how protest songs function as performance events, where a “process of exchange—between artists and audiences, between the past and the present” enabled new and alternative “societal formations” to materialise (Friedman 2013, xv). The editors of this volume appreciate song as “a discursive practice ... situated in particular social relationships and locations that are a product of complex intersections of culture, class, gender etc., in lived experience” (Ballinger 1995, 13 cited in Peddie 2006, xvi; see also Sanz Sabido 2016). As critical consumers of protest songs we participate in “a lived social experience with music”, where the songs become a productive “discursive element in our worlds” (Peddie 2006, xxiv). Songs are acts of performed solidarity and particularly effective (affective) in terms of moving the spirit (Small 1998; Turino 2008). Songs themselves may not change the world, but they certainly have the capacity to change the minds of people who can change the world.

STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND THEMES

This volume is parsed into nine main thematic sections. There were multiple ways in which the material could have been organised, including along historical, geographical or genre lines. However, we chose a thematic approach, honouring the African-American experience first, and moving from there to Anglo-American protest traditions, and then to thematic concerns that focus less on specific groups and more on ideas as a means of showing what songs of protest from different parts of the world, historical eras, and genre share in common; how fieldwork can play an important role in researching protest song; and some of the ideas and ideologies against which protesters sing.

In **Protest and the African-American Experience**, the songs featured are familiar to many. Stephens and Junda (chapter 1) remind us that singing in the form of spiritual or slave songs has been a central part of African

American protest experience from the outset and that this tradition remains unbroken, while Lieberman (chapter 2) insists that is incumbent upon us to be aware of the historical meaning of songs such as ‘Kumbaya’ whose original message has subsequently been co-opted and eroded. Bakan (chapter 3) configures Billie Holiday as an organic intellectual, nuancing the particular challenges she faced and the leadership she showed as an African-American performer inhabiting the commercial world. All of these chapters underscore how much African American experiences have changed, yet also remain the same, and they are thus particularly pertinent for grounding and contextualizing African-American (including intersectional) experiences today.

Protest Genealogies deals predominantly with songs from some of the key figures of the Anglo-American protest ballad tradition. It begins with Danaher (chapter 4) who offers an overview of the sociological literature as it pertains in particular to twentieth century protest in the U.S. and UK, though with resonances in many other parts of the world. Key singer-songwriter protagonists from Pete Seeger—who, according to Rosenthal (chapter 5) was masterful in the manner in which he invited participation in his performances—to the ‘radical’ Phil Ochs (Ashbolt, chapter 6)—who was particularly active in the 1960s—offer a fascinating insight into the politics of mid-twentieth century USA and how left-wing positionalities went hand in glove with protest singing. Ord’s (chapter 7) analysis of Ewan MacColl focuses as much on the medium as on the message in his discussion of the British singer’s radio ballads, while O’Connor (chapter 8) ends the section with a reflection on Bob Dylan, offering an insight into the impact of protest singers on a novelist pivoting between local and trans-Atlantic, Anglo-American cultural influences. These chapters also pave the way for understanding other protest songs and genres from Anglo-American and Irish contexts, as explored later in the book.

Transforming Traditions casts its generic net widely, examining the ways in which structures, styles and meanings of songs from a variety of different music traditions and epochs can be transformed and made anew depending on the context. In this section, maverick composers, performers, and cultural interventionists are revealed. Colson (chapter 9) unpacks the historical influences and aesthetic conventions in contemporary expressions of identity in Tahitian pop music, outlining a very Pacific-centred protest form. Virani (chapter 10) examines how Dalit singers in India have reclaimed and performed the sacred poetry of the ‘rebel saint’ Kabir as a voice for the subaltern, while Ní Shíocháin (chapter 11) illustrates song’s inherent power to counter hegemonic discourse, in terms of liminality and pure creativity, in a discussion of a nineteenth century, anti-colonial, Irish-language poet and singer.

This naturally leads into the next section on struggle for independence, for greater autonomy, and for resistance against fascist regimes, entitled **Freedom and Autonomy**. Unsurprisingly, Gramsci’s ‘organic intellectual’ comes

to the fore in this section, where both David (chapter 12) and Orlandi (chapter 13) underscore the roles of singers and songwriters as intellectual leaders in the twentieth century, who helped to bring about regime change in Portugal and counter fascism in Italy, respectively. Borrull's case study of Catalonia's 'New Song' movement from the 1960s, whose music continues to have resonance in the region today, is particularly pertinent, in light of the independence referendum held in October 2017. Finally, Sambaraju's assessment (chapter 15) of the role of protest song, and particular singers, in the formation of a separate Telangana State in India reminds us that songs may act as powerful, mobilising forces for change, particularly where we have uneven experiences of capitalism (foreshadowing a later section in the book that focuses on critiquing that economic system).

Politics, Participation and Activism in the Field pays attention to authors featured in this volume whose fieldwork experiences have often called for their own political views to become explicit, or who have become involved in the musical lives of the protest performers whom they study and observe (and with whom they often times end up making music). Jolaosho (chapter 16) opens the section by assessing the role of music in periods of depoliticisation in South Africa, tracing how songs move across time from one cause to another (in this case from anti-apartheid to anti-privatisation movements), and how, as a fieldworker, she confronts and assesses these political and methodological challenges. Öğüt (chapter 17) engages firsthand with feminism in Turkey, examining the production and dissemination of two protest songs from Istanbul, coming to an understanding of how art (and, by extension, fieldwork) is intrinsically political. Singh-Grewal (chapter 18) closes the section with a nuancing of the relationship between activism and escapism in the genre of Ugandan hip-hop which, she argues, creates a place for civil society (in the face of authoritarianism); and it does so not by direct confrontation but rather by circumvention.

If the previous section focuses on *how* to protest, the next section focuses on the manner in which, as audiences and witnesses to particular protest genres, we are craftily guided, and even sometimes manipulated in our responses to a 'cause', through a variety of multi-modal means, as well as through codes that we are taught or tacitly absorb. **Semiotics, Mediation, and Manipulation** begins with Neil King's detailed analysis (chapter 19) of a heavy metal music video by the band System of a Down and director Michael Moore originally protesting the Iraq war (and which was subsequently used in a variety of other protest contexts, including the denial of Armenian genocide by the U.S. government), focussing on how all of these elements come together and perform and encourage protest. Such encoding is a very careful, deliberate and noisy strategy for the feminist Russian punk band, *Pussy Riot*, according to Graper (chapter 20), whose close reading of

the band in multiple contexts suggests a subversion of hegemony not through direct political action, but rather through aesthetics and virtual virtuosity. Naiman crucially points out (chapter 21) that without the requisite cultural capital and critical apparatus, there are some codes that are in danger of being misunderstood in her case study of camp fascism in North America which, in the current political climate, is finding new resonances with the alt-right. The section concludes with a reminder by Moufarrej (chapter 22) in her nuanced case study of what she terms propaganda videos from the Free Syrian Army, which use singing children to create empathy for their cause, that regardless of the cause, not all protest ‘singers’ have the level of agency we might assume.

In **Protesting Bodies and Embodiment** both Moore and Smith reminds us that it is one thing to study a protest song abstractly but quite another to perform it and appreciate the manner in which it moves the body, through pulsating rhythms and acts of emplacement. Moore (chapter 23) in particular asserts that songs performed outside of their gender contexts lose something vital in her study of ‘Bread and Roses’, while Smith (chapter 24) returns us to an efficacious African-American song, ‘We Shall Overcome’ arguing that it is the act of communal participation and the process of entrainment that make any protest song truly efficacious.

The section entitled **Borderlands and Contested Spaces** explores, in particular, the ‘brown bodies’ of the borderlands, so often displaced and marginalised literally and figuratively. Hidalgo (chapter 25) illustrates the mechanisms by which Mancunian popular music singer Morrissey is evoked and referenced as a meme for solidarity in the face of exclusion and alienation amongst Chicano fans in LA, and why this should matter. Toomey (chapter 26) follows the protest songs of successful recording artist Ry Cooder, whose own career trajectory shifted in the face of encounters with Hispanic people affected by gentrification in LA, something which is becoming more and more common across the world, as poor bodies are pushed away to make room for the more monied ones. Giminez (chapter 27) ends the section on dislocation and exclusion with a discussion of Western Saharawi music in refugee camps in Algeria and in communities in Spain, through a detailed account of the protest music of Mariem Hassan and her associated record label, something in which Giminez is embedded as an accompanying musician and composer.

Critiquing Capitalism and the Neoliberal Tide features two chapters that directly deal with the financial collapse of this decade as it played out in two countries in particular (Ireland and Greece). Dillane, Power, Devereux and Haynes (chapter 28) examine the repertoire of a Dublin-based protest singer, Damien Dempsey, whose songs evidence the important role singer-songwriters have to play in predicting societal challenges, in critiquing government responses to crises and in offering alternative solutions. Hajimichael

(chapter 29) performs a similar analysis, this time focussing on two specific songs which, through their use of reggae, connect Greece to Jamaica, with a focus on imagining a better and alternative culture, history and society in this era of uneven global capitalism. Boland (chapter 30) ends this section by looking at the very nature of critique as part of the neoliberal agenda, and through his examination of the UK band *New Model Army* considers the limits and challenges of this kind of protest that is invariably challenged by commercial and related concerns.

The final section, **Ideology and the Performer**, returns to the theme of maverick performer, examining their respective careers as commercially viable protest singers. Power (chapter 31) pays attention to one particular song by Billy Bragg, 'Ideology', and concludes that it is potentially more efficacious now than it was at the time of its original release, in the process reminding us that songs can be reignited and gain traction depending on historical circumstances. Coulter (chapter 32) examines English punk band *The Clash*, showing how those in the music business struggle with their desire to protest effectively and outlining the challenge of not allowing 'leftish melancholia' to deter singers from active protesting. Finally Cashell (chapter 33) gives a forensic overview of the performance career of Irish singer-songwriter Christy Moore whose insistence that 'the truth must be told' has been central to his life's work, and whose influence illustrates the important social role that a truly committed protest singer can play, if they choose to do so.

This collection of essays on singers and songs of social protest is far from exhaustive. We are keenly aware that the thirty-three chapters presented here offer particular takes on very specific protest song activities, past and present, and are as varied as the authors who have penned them. Even as we brought this volume from conception to conclusion, we could easily have included dozens more contemporary examples of protest songs responding to current political moments, not to mention delve into the historical records in other places and times not covered here. If we did, the volume would probably have been endless, and still incomplete. Therefore, it is our hope that more volumes of this nature will be generated by like-minded scholars in the day, months, and years to come. It is also our hope that reading the work of these scholars, many of whom are also committed activists and protest musicians, will inspire others to follow in the footsteps of the many organic intellectuals, fearless performers and unsung heroes who populate these pages.

Part I

**PROTEST AND THE
AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

Chapter 1

Social Protest and Resistance in African American Song *Traditions in Transformation*

Robert W. Stephens and Mary Ellen Junda

Enslaved and free Africans have been the most disempowered people in the United States, but that does not mean they bore their servitude and disadvantages without complaint. From the earliest days of the new Republic, African Americans—free and enslaved—protested their subjugation. The first public act of protest occurred in 1817 when 3,000 African American men attended a meeting at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopalian (A.M.E.) Church in Philadelphia. This meeting ultimately grew into a national movement that rejected the proposals for a return to Africa movement (Garrison 1968), laying the groundwork for African American protest and resistance movements that are still occurring today.

Music—in particular song—has always been a part of these movements. Today, protest in this community is still rooted in traditions of resistance and protest that date back to slavery (Southern 1997; Levine 2007; Epstein 1977). The songs from this period, generally referred to as “spirituals” or “slave songs,” were embedded with coded meanings that contained strong elements of protest.¹ In the early and mid-twentieth century a few courageous artists abandoned the encoding of protest and, by the 1960s, the great-grandchildren of the enslaved began to sing openly about injustice (Peretti 2013). Every song in African Americans’ struggle for equality is a chronicle of their unique experience—from “Amelia’s Song,” carried from Sierra Leone to the Sea Islands of Georgia and passed orally through five generations (Stephens and Junda 2014), through spirituals and the stirring anthems of the civil rights movement.

An unbroken tradition of protest song has survived for centuries off the southeast coast of the United States maintained by the Gullah, descendants of enslaved West Africans brought to America for their rice-growing skills.² The Gullah people have resided on the Sea Islands and coastal lowlands of

South Carolina and Georgia for generations. Their isolated geographic location allowed them to retain more of their African cultural heritage than any other group of African Americans (Opala 2009).

This chapter draws a direct connection between the African American singing tradition preserved by the Gullah and the continuous use of music and song as instruments of resistance and protest from slavery through the civil rights movement. We argue that African American protest music needs to be interpreted through a broad framework that takes into consideration the racial legacy of its founding history, where “tradition and ritual are understood as processes of identity and identification, and as encoded and embodied forms of collective meaning and memory” (Eyerman 1998, 44). The social relationship of African Americans to the larger society is unique among American ethnic groups. It is one of “interdependence and domination,” reflecting “the “double consciousness” of belonging to, while simultaneously separated from, American culture (Eyerman 1998, 44).

Protest music is usually associated with a social movement and, in the United States, with the European American experience of social and political upheaval. Damodaran (2016) more or less equates protest and resistance, considering “protest music or the music of resistance [as] a distinct category within the larger genre of political music” (2). According to Dunaway (1987), political subjects elaborated in music may include “political campaigns, labor relations, suffragists, and egalitarianism” (269). Denisoff (1970) suggests that protest songs are actually a symbolic substitute for social and political engagement. Following this logic, we argue that even songs whose lyrics criticised the exploitation of the enslaved surreptitiously represent enduring impulses to resist and protest African Americans’ disempowerment. According to Denisoff (1972), the lyrics of “protest songs basically ... [attempt] to convince the listener that something is wrong and in need of alteration” (x). The listener need not necessarily be the exploiter; she could also be a fellow sufferer—and singer of the song. Denisoff also emphasises the importance of the lyrics, though he also maintains that good musical structure and a “singable” melody enhance the message of the song (Denisoff 1972).

Denisoff (1968) identifies two types of protest songs: “songs of persuasion” that garner support for a cause and “rhetorical song,” that focuses on a perceived injustice but offers no solution (230). Damodaran (2016) suggests that some protest songs also may be “descriptive of the conditions that foment discontent” and that these expressions “can be based on the individual, ... part of collectives or musical communities, or part of organized political movements” (2). Though useful, Denisoff’s and Damodaran’s descriptions fail to recognise the particular political and social landscape that continues to give rise to African American protest songs. Such a perspective would reflect a different set of problems and possibilities born in racial animus and the

human drama of America's "peculiar institution," slavery.³ The byproducts of the realities of life under slavery—music, song, protest and resistance—reflect the magnitude of the suffering of African American people. The heritage of slavery limited overt political and social advocacy for human rights, beginning with slavery itself through the Jim Crow era and eventually the civil rights movement. African American protest songs continue to articulate concerns and a sense of humanity amongst the people themselves and provide a cathartic release from abuse. These functions are not encompassed by standard definitions of protest songs, a gap in the literature we attempt to fill in this chapter.

Many of the enslaved were forced to develop and retain a resilient tenacity carved from a fractured connection to an African past that allowed them to sustain themselves. In America, as in Africa, singing has long been a daily part of work and play, prayer and protest. On southern plantations, body percussion replaced the forbidden rhythmic drive of the drums, so prevalent in Africa, accompanying two improvisatory song styles: "short musical phrases with variations in repetition; and call-and-response, in which one singer leads and is supported by a group" (Southern 1997, 14–15). These African-based performance practices also influenced how protest was conceived and represented through creative and expressive acts.

The act of conveying feelings through words, song, dance and art functions on two levels: *communicating* meaning within the group while simultaneously *transmitting* different meanings to an outside audience. Given that African Americans could not protest in a direct way, songs became a voice for the community. Song lyrics became public and hidden transcripts: sung among those who understand the code, they create solidarity and fellowship; sung in the presence of oppressors and outsiders, they become protest (Jones and Stewart 1983). Singing also served another purpose: self-directed messaging that provided "psychological refurbishing and affirmation" to assist in removing self-doubt, an impediment to self-worth (Gregg 1971, 74).

Protest songs often acknowledge both disdain for the oppressor and hope for a better future. Few slave songs, however, openly addressed the goal of freedom because it was simply too dangerous given the unequal relationship between the enslaved and slaveholders. Enslaved Africans lived in a world in which "a misplaced gesture or misspoken word can have terrible consequences" (Scott 1990, x). At the root of this experience is power, how it is negotiated and for what purpose. As Scott points out, "The relationship of discourse to power would be most sharply etched where the divergence between . . . the public transcript and the hidden transcripts was the greatest" (Scott 1990, x). Numerous African American songs provide examples of public and hidden transcripts. For example:

You mought be Carroll from Carrollton
 Arrive here night afo' Lawd make creation
 But you can't keep the World from moverin' around
 And not turn her back from the gaining ground. (Gellert 1936, 8)

Here the reference is to the Carrolls, a prominent family for whom Carrollton, Maryland, is named. Nat Turner killed some members of this family during the slave rebellion he led in 1831. The song uses both humor and sarcasm to point out that although this prestigious family is well established in the area (“arrive here night afo' Lawd make creation”), they are not powerful enough to stop the slave rebellions in Maryland, Virginia, or, ultimately, the nation. Turner's revolution is described as growing both in support and in geographic influence (“can't keep the World from moverin' around”) and Turner's name is cleverly embedded in the chorus as “not turn her”—“her” being the movement that is gaining ground (Ames 1973). Visions of freedom were always cloaked in devices like fantasy, metaphor, humor, and puns to express a point of view that would otherwise be prohibited (Levine 2007).

THE ORAL TRADITION

African American music is grounded in an oral tradition that represents a worldview that unifies groups and the relationship between the individual and the group. In this setting, music becomes a social text that reflects a collective reality created by the members of a community who bring information about how the music is created and performed. Every part of this process is context specific, occurring in a “bounded sphere of interaction” (Stone 1982, 3). Similarly, Culler (2013) describes “our social and cultural world as a series of sign systems” not of independent objects but, rather, “... symbolic structures, systems of relations [that] enable objects and actions to have meaning” (28). Culler's observation helps us to understand that African Americans' beliefs inform their behavior and the complexity of their creative process. From this perspective, music, protest and resistance have to be regarded in a manner wholly different from music informed by the western canon, where musical significance is located in “psychological constants” (Meyer 1973, 14) or “psychological laws of ‘rightness’” (Langer 1957, 240).

Functional analyses of oral performance traditions in non-western settings are common. Aadnani (2006), for example, conducted a survey that examined protest music and poetry of the Rai musical tradition of North Africa. *Nueva Canción*, a musical style associated with Latin American songwriters committed to social justice, has been the subject a number of studies, including those of Elliott (2011) and Gasparotto (2011). Likewise, the anti-apartheid

movement in South Africa has been studied by Ballantine (2012), Olwage (2008) and Schumann (2008). These studies locate engagements that express political and social positions in particular genres, but, conceptually, they fail to capture the diversity of experiences that define the deep relationships between protest, resistance and music. To address this gap, our functional analysis emphasises not the person(s) who wrote the music, their intent or motivation, but rather content and context, how music and lyrics are used historically and the social settings in which they are used (Dorson 1971).

LANGUAGE

Most west coast Africans had developed multilingual skills well before they were forced to come to America (Wood 1974). Once in the United States, those living in the Sea Islands and coastal lowlands of Georgia and South Carolina combined elements of the English language with their native tongues, creating a pidgin language. As grammatical and syntactical structures developed and passed on to subsequent generations, pidgin became Gullah, a creole language complete with a specific syntax. Given the Gullah people's isolation on the Sea Islands and their limited interaction with English-speaking whites, the Gullah language is still closely linked to its African roots, mixed with the English language and regional linguistic attributes (Dow Turner 2002; Holloway 2005; Wolfram and Clark 1971; Wood 1974). Consequently, the language is less easily understood by people outside the Gullah community and has always provided a means to communicate freely within the community without fear of retribution.

The Gullah language was considered broken English spoken by uneducated people until Lorenzo Dow Turner's (2002) research showed that it was a "full and complete language with its own systematic grammatical structures." The language is still spoken by over one hundred thousand people who strive to keep it alive (Opala 2009, 15). When contemporary Gullah speakers use this language, they assume the "role of the other" while simultaneously creating a sense of control and freedom for themselves. This idea is grounded in "symbolic interaction": how people behave towards things based on the meaning they ascribe to them (Debray 2000, 3).⁴ Margie Washington, whose ancestors were enslaved on Butler Plantation, affirms this point when she says: "I didn't know it was Gullah or didn't know it was Geechee, until I got older and went to school and the teacher began to correct us. There were so many words that we got away from, because we were told that we had to" (Stephens and Junda 2014). Washington became "bilingual": she continues to use Gullah at home and among friends in the community when she does not want to be understood by others. So, today, Gullah speakers use the language

as it was used years ago—as a defining aspect of their cultural heritage and as a means of private communication.

GEORGIA SEA ISLAND SINGERS

No one has captured and sustained the essence of Gullah and African American songs of protest and resistance better or longer than the Georgia Sea Island Singers. In 1915, Lydia Parrish, wife of renowned painter Maxwell Parrish, started spending winters on St. Simons Island, Georgia, home to many Gullah. She collected songs from the local people and cultural information to contextualize the songs. The result of that effort, her book *Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands* (Parrish 1942), is still an invaluable resource for understanding the role of music in Gullah culture. However, Parrish did more than just document the music. In 1920, she helped to form the Spiritual Singers Society of Coastal Georgia. Well-intentioned, but also controlling, she “brought the group to white folks’ attention” at the same time asserting a dominance over the group’s activities, such as determining when and where they would sing (Jones and Stewart 1983, 138).

John Davis and Joe Armstrong were the first leaders of the group. Bessie Jones joined the group in the 1930s. Although Jones was not Gullah, she had a direct connection to Africa through Jet Samson, her grandfather, who was born there in 1836. Enslaved and brought to the United States, Samson lived to be 104. Over the course of his long life he passed on to his granddaughter his extensive repertoire of slave songs, plays, and games, which he described as “talking to the white man in song” (Jones and Stewart 1983, 44). So, when Jones discusses songs like “Juba,” she is working from a knowledge base that few others had in the twentieth century. Her grandfather had firsthand experience of both musical life in Africa and the brutal realities of America’s “peculiar institution.” He shared with Jones what Banfield (2004) calls “codes for insurrection and escape,” words and songs “with meanings more than what they say on the surface” (82). Jones moved to St. Simons Island in the early 1930s with her husband, who was Gullah. She was invited to join the Spiritual Singers Society because of her passion, her understanding of the traditions, her rich repertoire, and strong singing voice. She also captured the interest of Alan Lomax, a prominent ethnomusicologist known for his field recordings of twentieth-century American folk music, who returned to St. Simons Island in 1955 to record the group and promote them nationally. For the recording and tour, Jones changed the name of the group from the Spiritual Singers Society to the Georgia Sea Island Singers (GSIS) (Jones and Stewart 1983, 138).

The GSIS have endured for almost 100 years; as members passed, others joined to replace them, helping the group to preserve the “old-time” music

traditions of their enslaved ancestors, including work songs, spirituals, ring shouts, ring plays, hand-clapping games, and children's games. Their performances include call-and-response singing, body percussion, hand-clapping, speaking in the Gullah dialect, and a demonstration of the ring shout, considered to be the oldest African American performance tradition. As they perform, members offer insight as to how enslaved people developed these traditions as a means of survival, how singing the songs strengthened the community while protesting conditions, and why these traditions need to be retained as a critical part of our shared history.⁵

"Juba" is an example of a song in which the singers assert their right to perform percussion (Epstein 1977). Drums were frequently banned for the enslaved, but "Juba" singers reclaimed the polyrhythmic character of a not-too-distant African past by striking their hands, thighs and feet to imitate the sounds of various percussion instruments. Bessie Jones affirms Denisoff's (1972) belief that "songs of persuasion can only be perceived functionally when the songs.... invoke some form of reaction or interaction" (2). Jones's discussion of "Juba" exemplifies reaction and/or interaction. The song lyrics affirm the community while protesting the deplorable conditions imposed on it by those in charge.

Jibber (Juba)

Jibber this, and jibber that

Jibber kill the alley cat

Get over double trouble, Juba (Jones and Stewart 1983, 45)

From complaining about the "jibber"—the ends of the food that were put in troughs for the enslaved people to eat—to killing the alley cat (which represents the white man), protest is both covert and direct. Frankie Quimby, current leader of the GSIS, uses "yellow cat" rather than "alley cat", but the reference to the white man is the same. The phrase that concludes this verse, "Get over double trouble, Juba" means both "get over your troubles" and "get over there" away from trouble. The song continues:

I sift your meal

You gimme me the husk

Cooked the bread

You gimme the crust

I fried the meat

You gimme the skin

And that's where my Momma's trouble begin. (Jones and Stewart 1983, 45)

Jones's version of the song is written in the first person, identifying with the enslaved who does all the work but gets only scraps of the food from

the master. Other versions of the song use “you” rather than “I” indicating a shift in roles. Whites may be doing some of their own chores, but they still shared nothing. The ability to adapt to changing contexts is a common feature of songs in the oral tradition. These songs contain wisdom of the past that is modified as people pass the songs through generations (Paredes and Bauman 1972). The last line refers to enslaved females who were worried about getting enough food for their families. This song illustrates that although enslaved people did not have a lot of food, what they had they shared with members of their family and beyond.

Juba up, Juba down
 Juba all around the town.
 Juba for Ma, Juba for Pa,
 Juba for your brother-in-law—
 You just Juba, you just Juba. (Jones and Stewart 1983, 45)

“Juba” brought a sense of self to the Gullah community through protest lyrics that represent their oppressed role and through a clapping game that included synchronized movements based on African rhythms. By assuming the roles of both the oppressor and the oppressed, the singers reinforced shared values and solidified community ties (Damodaran 2016).

“Little Sally Walker” is a ring play⁶ Jones learned from her grandfather that is a good example of a direct, but still encoded, expression of protest. Samson explained to his granddaughter that white women could easily ensure the beating, whipping or killing of a black enslaved male simply by saying that he looked or winked at her. The “Sally” in this song is a white woman, who may or may not be “sorry for all she has done”. However, Samson also shared that some white women had compassion for the enslaved and did not want them mistreated. Some might even “cry and weep” over the brutality the enslaved had to endure.

Little Sally Walker
 Sitting in a saucer
 Crying and a-weeping over all she have done.
 Oh, rise up on your feet
 Oh, wipe your cheeks.
 Oh, turn to the east,
 Oh, turn to the west
 Oh, turn to the very one that you love the best. (Jones and Hawes 1972, 108)

Some interpret “Little Sally” as representing the unhappiness of the enslaved and their desire to be free, but Jones refutes this interpretation, saying, “You a Negro ain’t done nothing to cry and weep over” (Jones and

Stewart 1983, 49). This ring play gave enslaved people the opportunity to act out the sadness that white women *should* have felt because of their actions. “Little Sally Walker” is a reminder of the hierarchal relationships between owners and enslaved people and how easily an owner could determine, often on a whim, whether an enslaved person lived or died. “Little Sally Walker” also provided a means for the enslaved to “express their fear, overtly and covertly,” a characteristic of protest music (Edmondson 2013, 902).

The GSIS sing other songs with dual meanings that would have gone undetected by those in control. “Draw Me a Bucket of Water” is a good example. This singing game appears to be a fun song about going to the well for water, but also describes the appalling conditions that “foment discontent” (Damodaran 2016, 2). Enslaved peoples’ water wells did not have covers, unlike the wells of the masters, and therefore were full of snakes and frogs that had to be removed, thus the refrain “Frog in the bucket and I can’t get ‘im out.” Drawing water from the well was a simple task for slave owners, yet one filled with uncertainty for the enslaved.

“The Buzzard Lope,” is another song that centers around a dance where men imitated a buzzard pecking at a carcass. The dance depicts how bodies were left in the fields rather than being given a decent burial. Jones said that they did the dance to keep the “white folks” from understanding lyrics that protested the horrible treatment of those who had passed (Jones and Stewart 1983).

Throw me anywhere, Lord,
 In that old field.
 Don’t care where you throw me
 In that old field.
 Since King Jesus hold me
 In that old field.
 You may beat and bang me
 In that old field.
 Since King Jesus saved me
 In that old field. (Jones and Stewart 1983, 48)

By sharing these songs born out of slavery, Bessie Jones reminds us that enslaved people raised their voices—protested—in ways that did not threaten their wellbeing. These songs adhere to Edmondson’s (2013) idea that music of protest can be used “to transform consciousness, stir emotions, inspire reflection and express fear overtly and covertly” (902). They constitute an oral diary that captures conditions in the lives of enslaved people, from the mundane to the horrific, as well as a model of protest through song that could be applied to unjust conditions in post-slavery generations.

FROM JIM CROW TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Numerous laws were enacted after the Civil War, from 1877 to the 1960s, to prevent African Americans from being fully assimilated into society. This period is known as the Jim Crow Era, a “formal, codified system of racial apartheid” that affected every aspect of daily life for African Americans (Public Broadcasting Service 2017). Sanger (1991) observes,

Because of their experiences in white America, first as slaves, later as people free only in the most literal sense of no-longer-in-actual irons, all blacks in America had received a grim legacy. Kept from decent education by Jim Crow laws, they began to believe that they could not learn. Kept from decent jobs by lack of education and discrimination, they began to believe in their inability to be productive. Kept from taking part in the “democratic” processes, they began to believe in their impotency. (28)

Sanger’s observations illustrate Lipold’s (2014) argument that social and political identities “are formed, to a greater or lesser extent, by the state” (120). A participatory democracy is, by design, one where its members are obliged to oppose the state when it breaks the rules, but this becomes complicated when one considers where people reside and how their identities are intertwined in “multivocal” and “multilocal” structures within the state (Sanger 1991). Then there is the matter of class and race: those on the lower rungs—the poor and people of color—recognized the dangers of dissent and were often discouraged about the possibilities for changing the system, while the middle class would view societal infringement on their rights as an outrage and were less fearful of expressing their feelings.

Marian Anderson (1897–1993), a highly respected classical vocalist, and Billie Holliday (1915–1959), the noted jazz singer and songwriter, both endured the pains of Jim Crow. These very different women became important figures in 1939 when both used their voices to address social issues. Anderson’s concert at the Lincoln Memorial, after the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to allow her to sing at Constitution Hall, and Holiday’s recording of “Strange Fruit” on the Commodore Records label, represent major milestones for African American women (Hobson 2008). “Strange Fruit” was composed by Abel Meeropol, a northern white Jewish man. This song protests racism by contrasting the idyllic vision of the pastoral South with the horror of the lynching of African Americans. Some consider the song to be the prelude to the civil rights movement. On one level, listeners hear the deceptive beauty of the melody but then realize the brutalities and horrors that were a common part of the Jim Crow Era. While Anderson reluctantly accepted her role as a voice for her people, Holiday described herself as a “race woman eager to use music as a political platform” (Hobson

2008, 443). In different ways, each carried the thread of protest woven into their performances to larger audiences.

Around the same time, another development is important to note. *Negro Songs of Protest*, a book of 24 African American songs was published in 1936 by the American Music League, a Popular Front affiliate of the Communist Party U.S.A. This “modest publication featured lyrics of black discontent and rebellion rarely encountered by a white readership” (Garabedian 2005, 179). A single example, the song titled “Sistren an’ Brethren” will suffice to illustrate Garabedian’s characterization of the lyrics of these “... striking compositions [as] verses of caustic irony and warning ...” (Garabedian 2005, 179).

Sistren an’ brethren
 Stop foolin’ wid pray (2x)
 When black face is lifted
 Lawd turnin’ away
 Yo’ head tain’ no apple
 Fo’ danglin’ from a tree (2x)
 Yo’ body no carcass
 For barbacuin’ on a spree
 Stand on yo’ feet
 Club gripped ‘tween yo’ hands (2x)
 Spill dere blood too
 Show ‘em yo’s is a man’s

The church responded to Jim Crow laws by becoming a major mobilizing force for African Americans. In 1953, Reverend J.T. Jemison, a prominent minister in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, initiated a boycott of the Baton Rouge Bus Company in response to the segregated seating laws, a protest that signaled the beginning of the civil rights movement and laid the groundwork for the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott (Morris 1984). Jemison’s community organizing efforts shut the company down and after a period of failed negotiations, a compromise was reached. The blueprints for these successful protest efforts were adopted by the National Baptist Congress and ultimately by Dr. Martin Luther King, who espoused the principles of non-violence.

Singing during the civil rights movement was a communal act rooted in the African American folk church (Reagon 1987). The repertoire was drawn from traditional songs taken from a variety of sources including spirituals, hymns, gospel songs and work songs. The songs were sung in the old style of lining out where the leader sings a phrase and the congregation responds in a similar fashion. Given the history of improvisation in African American tradition, activists felt empowered to modify the lyrics and melodies to create freedom songs. The church provided “the structure and guidance for calling

the community together,” “trained the singers to sing the old songs, and gave them permission to create new ones” (Reagon 1987, 108).

Civil rights activist Bernice Reagon notes that “in congregational singing you don’t sing a song—you raise it,” and, “if you cannot sing a congregational song at full power, you cannot fight in any struggle” (Seeger and Reiser 1989, 82). The relationship between the power of song and the power of the movement cannot be overestimated. Seeger and Reiser also discuss how songs were raised: “One person usually starts a song, and others gradually join in adding harmony. The melody is never twice the same, as inspiration hits different people, who lead off with different verses” (Seeger and Reiser 1989, 240). The lyrics to “This Little Light of Mine” are a good example of using *location* as a point of focus. The starting point could be “All over the state of Georgia”, then expanded geographically (“All over the southland, country, world”) or contracted (“All over Atlanta, Peachtree Street, building”), depending on the motivation of the singers and the circumstances that day (Seeger and Reiser 1989). “Everybody Says Freedom,” is improvised in a similar way. In other cases, the coded lyrics of past of religious songs were changed to advocate for freedom and justice. The song, “I’m on My Way,” where the phrase “Canaan land” was changed to “freedom land” is a case in point. Songs like these did not openly target hostile individuals, groups of people, or acts of violence as was the case with some Anglo-American protest songs.

In 1964 the civil rights movement gained momentum in the United States. The singing of “freedom songs” united people and rallied them to the cause. What made the civil rights movement so powerful is the change in focus from identifying a community’s struggle to rallying support for overturning an unjust social order. The movement also brought new efforts to standardize how freedom songs were taught, learned, and shared. In 1964, Guy and Candi Carawan, along with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Highlander Folk School, produced “Sing for Freedom”, held May 7–10 in Atlanta, Georgia. This event was “viewed as a serious function of the civil rights movement in which the music is part of the method of struggle” (Dunson 1965, 100). During this event the topical songs of the North and the freedom songs of the South were shared among southern song leaders for use at local mass meetings and demonstrations (Dunson 1965).

Guy Carawan wanted to be sure that participants (primarily high school and college students, and some elders from southern states) learned not only new songs at the “Sing” but also the more traditional songs of the past. The Georgia Sea Island Singers were invited to share the traditional songs and stories from their enslaved ancestors at this event. Yet many participants, both young and old, were opposed to what they considered to be the GSIS’s

old, outdated songs that were reminders of the days of enslavement and the demeaning times that many wanted to forget. Old songs, to many, had no place alongside the more popular freedom songs that were an open call for justice and equality (Dunson 1965). Bessie Jones, however, saw this meeting as an opportunity to demonstrate her passion for the Gullah people. She did so in full voice by defending the music of the GSIS asserting that it was important to value slave songs as expressions of the singers' awareness of their dire conditions (Dunson 1964).

Josh Dunson described the singing of anti-slavery songs by Jones and the GSIS at the event as "moving and subtle" (Seeger et al., 1989). But Jones's presence had an even greater importance when she addressed those who questioned the continued relevance of slave songs and spirituals that spoke of freedom. When Charles Sherrod posed the question, "Why sing these songs here?" Jones replied, "Your children are gonna call your music old later on, too.... You should know the bottom before you come to the top" (Seeger et al., 1989). To Jones, slave songs were "the only place where we could say what we did not like about slavery, say it for ourselves to hear," signaling that slave songs expressed protest even if its immediate objective was to reinforce a sense of community rather than foment rebellion. Some understood what she meant; others did not. Carlton Reese, director of the Birmingham Choir, for example, understood why slave songs would be sung, but he also questioned Jones about the children's game songs. Jones responded, again affirming that games, like songs, could bind a community together, "We could not read, and the master thought he could trap us with no existence, he thought we could do nothing about it, but we did, even as children, with this music. And it is our own, it is ours, it came from ourselves" (Seeger et al., 1989, 10).

At the evening concert, the GSIS were the only group to receive a standing ovation. Dunson shares that "many of the people who had come to Atlanta ashamed of their own vibrant tradition went away with a deepening sense of pride in it. A number left somewhat troubled, not convinced, but thinking" (Dunson 1964). He concludes that "the singing of freedom songs has ceased to be solely a means for strength and unity in the face of brutality and harassment. It is slowly becoming a wedge with which the treasure chest of Afro-American culture is being opened" (Dunson 1964), illustrating an increasingly nuanced understanding of the social function of resistance and protest music—and the blurry distinction between these two types of song.

Bessie Jones articulated what many in her community had learned from family and friends. They understood that "song making, after all, was central to the slaves' ability to produce a discursive grasp of slavery, despite the fact that such collective activity and communal expression, such cultural work, operated within the context of surveillance and, in many cases, perpetual repressions" (Cruz 1999, 110). While some derided Jones for continuing the

tradition, her convictions fully illustrate Cruz's idea that the meaning of the music was a well-developed strategy to "convene, cultivate, and protect a clandestine sphere" in hidden transcripts (Cruz 1999, 110). In effect, Bessie Jones was a cultural historian who transferred these deep meanings to those who would listen.

The GSIS toured the country during the 1960s and 1970s, sharing these songs from slavery. When Bessie Jones died in 1984, the mantle of leadership was passed to Doug Quimby and, after his death in 2006, to his wife, Frankie Quimby, and their family. The singing tradition they practiced continues unbroken today. By sharing their recollections of slave culture and passing on these traditions, the Georgia Sea Island Singers continue to redefine our sense of history and perspective on how enslaved people not only protested but also survived and overcame inhuman conditions. Singing these songs provided psychological solace for people who could not display their feelings of resistance openly. The musical call to action was internal to people within the community, offering support, affirmation and encouragement to defy oppression in an indirect, but openly sung, way.

CONCLUSIONS

African American music has served as a means of establishing identity. The power of this assertion arises from the claim that all black music is protest music. African Americans sing as protest against "the attempts by people to define them in negative and limiting ways" (Sanger 1991, 44). Sidran (1983) reinforces this point by stating that "through the years, music has been the major survival tactic for black Americans" (155). Each moment in their history is carried on the wings of overt and covert songs, and until one understands that transcendence comes from being rooted, one cannot move forward. The Gullah understand the importance of the roots of their African heritage when they say, "You don't know where you are going if you don't know where you come from".

Slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and segregation were sustained efforts to discriminate against African Americans and to deny them their civil rights. The responses of African Americans to these efforts included The Baton Rouge bus boycott, the March on Washington, the Mississippi Freedom Summer and Selma, events that signaled integrated efforts to correct injustice in southern states. Songs of protest and resistance also played a role in contesting discrimination and oppression.

African American songs of social protest, which span centuries of mistreatment, are especially important today where horrific events in the United States continue to bear witness that racism is still embedded in our culture.

Protest songs allow us to delve deeper into understanding how race continues to divide. Contemporary artists are able to voice their thoughts, attitudes and positions directly, thanks to the efforts of their forebears who sang their protest in coded poetry, and courageous civil rights activists who refused to have their voices stifled. These artistic expressions capture the complicated relationship between blacks and whites that continues to evolve, and help us move closer to a time when widespread respect for our common humanity becomes the rule rather than an exception.

This research was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

NOTES

1. For in-depth views on the origins, role and function of the spiritual, see Kitwana (2002); “Antebellum Rural Life,” in Allen et al. (1965); Levine (1977), especially Chapter 1.
2. Gullah are also known as Geechee in Georgia and South Carolina.
3. The term “peculiar institution” refers to the institution of slavery in the southern United States.
4. This term was coined by Herbert Blumer, drawing on the work of Herbert Mead (1969).
5. For more information see <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/georgia-sea-island-singers> <http://www.gacoast.com/navigator/quimbys.html>.
6. A ring play consists of a group in a circle energetically singing and clapping to support a figure in the center who is acting out a role until choosing another to take his/her place.

Chapter 2

“You’ll Never Hear *Kumbaya* the Same Way Again”

The Diffusion and Defusion of a Freedom Song

Robbie Lieberman

“Poor ‘Kumbaya,’” wrote journalist Eric Zorn a decade ago. “Its title has become synonymous with sappy, saccharine naivete and peace-‘n’-love, all-join-hands Pollyannaism that afflicts the starry-eyed. ... it’s a cliché that unfairly maligns a stirring and storied piece of music. ... a glorious song, really” (Zorn 2006). The song began as an African American spiritual that implores God to “come by here” and bring comfort but also justice. Like many other spirituals, it was a cry for freedom that shared some characteristics of protest songs: music that was familiar, lyrics that communicated a message (if sometimes encoded), and the invitation to participate in singing as a social act. Especially at the height of the African American freedom struggle in the 1960s, *Kumbaya* fulfilled the most common functions of protest songs: it helped create and sustain a group identity and sense of community, increased solidarity within the movement, and provided a call to action.¹

Popularised by folk musicians in the 1950s and 1960s, *Kumbaya* traveled all over the world at a time when movements for peace and justice proliferated. A few decades later commentators began to use the term “kumbaya” in a snide and cynical way. The shift began on the right, but has become widely accepted. Rather than representing a call for justice, “kumbaya” has come to mean weakness and passivity. Politicians invoke it regularly to ridicule the idea of compromise, implying that those who “hold hands and sing Kumbaya” do so as an inane substitute for taking action to solve problems. This common view of *Kumbaya* distorts its meaning and legacy and ignores its history.

In *The Art of Protest*, T.V. Reed suggests that the “ongoing, irresolvable, creative tension between [cultural] diffusion and defusion should be a key point of study for the cultural analysis of movements” (Reed 2005, 313). *Kumbaya* offers an intriguing opportunity to examine this tension, and I do so in this chapter by

explaining the song’s roots in African American tradition, its popularization by the left, and the little known yet highly significant politics of its defusion. I point to particular periods when negative uses of the term abounded in order to highlight the ongoing intent of right wing commentators to undermine movements for peace and justice. I suggest that proponents of these movements have become unwitting accomplices in this process by accepting the narrow meaning of “kumbaya.” Remarkably, the meaning of this song, originally used to give strength to disenfranchised people, has been transformed (defused) into its opposite, with that meaning now appearing as fixed and unchangeable.

My chapter concludes with the argument that we can and should challenge the defusion of *Kumbaya*, and reclaim the original meaning of the song, by learning to link past struggles and their songs to current ones. This requires honoring *Kumbaya*’s history as a freedom song—a particular kind of protest song—intended to be sung collectively, a reminder of the evils of slavery and white supremacy but also of the ongoing desire and struggle for freedom.

DIDN’T MY LORD DELIVER DANIEL?

It is difficult to overstate the importance of spirituals in the African American tradition. Slave owners forbade their slaves to read and write, but singing was another matter. While spirituals were expressions of Christian faith, making them acceptable, they were also the medium in which slaves could “speak . . . openly of the afflictions of bondage and their longings for freedom” (Levine 2006, 590). But perhaps their most important function was to bring hope. Arthur Jones explains: “In impossible situations of suffering and oppression everywhere, the spirituals have brought the message of hope, the comfort of healing, and the motivation to persist in ongoing struggle and resistance” (Jones 1993, 126).

Some songs were explicit in their call for freedom—“Let my people go”—while others were more subtle: “Didn’t my lord deliver Daniel, then why not every man?” In his well-known writing about what he called the “Sorrow Songs,” W.E.B. Du Bois claimed that “through all the sorrow . . . there breathes a hope—a faith in the ultimate justice of things (Du Bois 1997, 192). Jones takes it one step further, arguing that “Such music granted participating listeners and singers access to the *knowledge* (not simply belief) that whatever suffering they had endured, there was an overarching spirit present that would eventually set things right” (Jones 1993, 22). But “eventually” did not mean only in the next world. Spirituals were also about this world (Levine 2006, 591).

The songs had many uses and were sung in a variety of places, not just in church, and the line between religious and secular was not hard and fast. The modern civil rights movement wedded this traditional culture into the

contemporary struggle for freedom, where songs—sung in churches, streets and jails—worked to sustain the movement and give people the strength to go on even in the face of daunting obstacles. The mix of transformed songs with older ones “effectively conveyed the message that the Black struggle had a long history” (Reagon 2006, 601-2). Integral to that long history were songs that helped combine “the precedents of the past, the conditions of the present, and the promise of the future into one connected reality” as they strengthened the sense of community (Levine 2006, 590).

The Fisk Jubilee Singers introduced African American spirituals to European audiences in the late nineteenth century. Others took up the task of sharing these songs around the world in the twentieth century; for instance, spirituals were an important part of Paul Robeson’s repertoire during the height of his international singing career in the 1940s. Significantly, twenty first century criticisms of “kumbaya” echo the McCarthy-era attacks on Robeson in the mid-twentieth century for criticizing U.S. cold war policies as he sang and spoke out about peace and freedom.

Concert singers helped preserve the spirituals, but their most important expression is still found “in churches, community gatherings and worldwide movements for freedom and justice, within and without the African diaspora” (Jones 1993, 126) because the songs bring hope most effectively when people *participate* in singing them. As scholar-singer-activist Bernice Johnson Reagon tells us, “singing is running sound through your body. You cannot sing a song and not change your condition (quoted in Jones 1993, 22).”² Singing is not passive but an active part of the process of change.

COME BY HYAR

The precise origins of the song that became popularly known as *Kumbaya* are uncertain. Stephen Winick, a writer and editor at The American Folklife Center at the Smithsonian Institution, claims the song was not only a staple of the American folk revival, but also “originally a staple of the African-American folk tradition” (Winick Video n.d.).³ Arguing that it originated somewhere in the U.S. South, and that by the 1940s the spiritual “Come By Here” was widely known, Winick cites new evidence that debunks three popular myths. He contends that: 1) *Kumbaya* did not originate in Africa but was brought there by American missionaries and then traveled back to the United States; 2) Although Marvin Frey claimed to have composed *Come By Here* in the mid-1930s, his version is most likely an adaptation of the song, which had been collected and recorded in the 1920s; 3) At some point it traveled to coastal Georgia and South Carolina, and was adapted into the Gullah dialect (spoken by descendants of slaves who originally came from West Africa),

but that is not where the song began. After it entered the repertoire of popular folk singers such as Pete Seeger and Joan Baez, it traveled “to Europe, South America, Australia, and other parts of the world, where revival recordings of the song abound. . . truly a global folksong” (Winick 2010, 10).

While collections of spirituals do not all include *Kumbaya*, perhaps because of confusion about its origins, Lauri Ramey lists it among one of the most popular slave songs (Ramey 2008, xv), and it is easy to imagine African Americans singing the song in that era. Even if Winick’s new evidence—including a transcription and recording of “Come By Here” from the mid-1920s—does not allow us to date its origins in an earlier century, it does suggest that the song was a spiritual (Winick 2010, 3, 8).

Like all folk songs, there are many versions, with variations in the words, music, and tempo. Poet-activist Nikki Giovanni and Bernice Reagon each present the song as a demand for justice, adding weight to Winick’s argument. Reagon has talked about how songs she had sung (and prayers she had heard) all her life took on new meaning in the civil rights movement: “Lord you know me, you know my condition, I’m asking you to come by here and see about me” (Reagon 1980). Reagon recorded the song as “Come By Hyar,” with assertive lyrics similar to the earliest versions Winick cites. These begin with the demand “come right here,” and include a clear expression of the desire for freedom (Reagon 1965).

Giovanni includes *Kumbaya* in her book for young people, subtitled *Looking at African American History Through the Spirituals*, citing the version many children learned at summer camp. Each verse is one line repeated three times, beginning with “Someone’s singing, Lord, Kumbaya,” followed by “Oh, Lord, Kumbaya.” Then someone’s laughing, crying, praying, sleeping (Giovanni 2007, 82). Despite the less demanding lyrics, Giovanni argues that “the song is a petition to God . . . “Lord, you need to come by here. You need to come see about me. . . You need to come here because these people are not treating me right” (Giovanni 2007, 30).

The song was popularised as part of the folk revival, which had roots in the American left. The American folk revival itself emerged in tandem with the modern civil rights movement, but these also coincided with the height of the McCarthy era and a low point for the peace movement (Lieberman 2000). Peace and civil rights appeared to be very separate causes by the 1960s (Lieberman 2009), a division exploited in the later trivialization of *Kumbaya*, discussed below.

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

For all that has been written about *Kumbaya*, little has been said about the song’s association with the left. It was the mid-twentieth century U.S.

left—especially American communists who promoted peace—that set the stage for the folk revival. Both the communist and pacifist left had important relationships with the civil rights movement as well; Communists had worked as allies in earlier stages of the black freedom struggle, while pacifists helped teach the theory and practice of nonviolence to movement participants (Gilmore 2008; Mollin 2006).⁴ Not just the song's origins, but these connections are obscured in the negative uses of "kumbaya," which at first blush appear to simply argue against superficial peacemaking efforts. Even that usage distorts history, but when we illuminate the connections among past movements for peace and justice and the folk revival we can see more clearly the insidious intent of right-wing commentators who indict the American left—and by extension any call for justice and peace—by dismissing "kumbaya" as weakness.

The meaning of peace—indeed the word "peace" itself—was highly contested in the early years of the Cold War. American Communists argued for peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union, but to them peace also meant opposition to apartheid in South Africa and to the development of nuclear weapons, and support for national liberation struggles and ending racism and poverty at home. Peace and freedom were inextricable issues. In the 1980s the U.S. left similarly opposed Reagan administration policies, which included the development and deployment of nuclear weapons, intervention in Latin America, support for apartheid South Africa, and the rollback of civil rights gains that had resulted from the movements of the 1960s–1970s. This is also the era in which the dismissal of "kumbaya" began.

The left's opposition to the Cold War was expressed in song, and artists were attacked for their views along with others. For example, Henry Wallace's third party campaign for the presidency in 1948, based on a platform of peace and civil rights, was both a singing campaign and one that was subject to fierce redbaiting.⁵ Paul Robeson and hundreds of concertgoers were attacked at Peekskill the following year, and the State Department denied Robeson his passport so that he could not travel to promote peace. Pete Seeger was among those called up in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Asked repeatedly at his hearing about singing for peace groups, Seeger responded, "I have sung for pacifists and I have sung for soldiers. . . . I would be curious what you think of a song like this very great Negro spiritual: 'I'm Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield, Down by the Riverside'" (Bentley 1971, 697, 698).

Robeson's and Seeger's experiences are emblematic of anticommunist attacks perpetrated against left wing cultural workers during the McCarthy era, especially if they promoted peaceful coexistence and racial equality. In the late 1950s, supporters of these causes, Pete Seeger and Sonny Terry (an

African American musician from the South) as well as the Weavers, recorded *Kumbaya*.⁶ The song appeared in *Sing Out!* magazine along with many others about peace and the black freedom struggle. The blacklist of left-wing artists, however, derailed their commercial success, forcing them to disseminate their songs in other venues such as summer camps and college campuses.

Some analysts blame white musicians for draining *Kumbaya* of its power by taking it out of the black church. Paul Tyler, a Chicago folklorist, claims that the song “became banal at the hands of non-African-American camp counselors and church youth workers—include me in that number—who stripped it of any rhythmic integrity” (Zorn 2006). Another folklorist, Glenn Hinson, says that when white singers took up the song, it was no longer about faith (Perrotta 2015). In defending the purity of traditional music, these critics neglect the role of the folk process and its relation to social movements. Still, we can acknowledge that a Joan Baez performance or a Peter, Paul and Mary recording lack the depth of meaning the song achieved in the black freedom movement, when it was sung collectively to give people strength.

Pete Seeger insisted that audiences join in when he sang *Kumbaya* in concert and children sang it together in summer camp, so some people did learn the song as part of a collective experience. But those who learned it from a performance, record or songbook could have received a very different impression. For instance, *The Weavers Songbook*, not the only one that categorises *Kumbaya* as a lullaby, presents it as a song that came from Africa with only one word (the title) to which they added new ones: “Someone’s sleeping, Trees are sleeping, Moon is smiling” (The Weavers 1960, 156-58). While changing songs is part of the folk process, transforming a spiritual into a lullaby and shifting its origins from the U.S. to Africa surely affects the way the song is understood.⁷

At the same time, Pete Seeger and other folk revivalists, who sang the song live and on record in a variety of ways, not just as a lullaby, should get credit for helping to keep the song alive, teaching it to a popular audience during a difficult time for progressive social movements. As a simple and well-known song, *Kumbaya* was easy to incorporate into movements for peace and justice in the 1960s.

The history of the song “We Shall Overcome”—which became the anthem of the civil rights movement and traveled the world as a song for peace and justice—offers a useful corrective here to those who blame white musicians for the fate of *Kumbaya*. That history also traces the organic links between social movements and the folk revival. Beginning as a lively spiritual, “I’ll be all right” (or “I Will Overcome”) made its way from churches to a 1946 strike of tobacco workers (most of them African American women) in Charleston, South Carolina, where “We Will Overcome” became the leading picket line

song. Workers from the Charleston local taught the song to Zilphia Horton, music director at the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee, which, defying the dominant culture of the South, ran integrated workshops on labor organizing. Horton taught it to Pete Seeger, who sang it for union workers around the country. By the time Guy Carawan became music director at Highlander in 1959, he had learned the song from another folksinger, and he in turn taught it to civil rights activists (Brown et al. 1989; Reagon 2007, 606–9). The influences went both ways: Topical song writers began to address civil rights, while the civil rights movement adapted other songs from the labor movement, such as “Which Side Are You On?” (Reagon 2007, 611; Roy 2010, 1).⁸ “The Hammer Song,” written by Pete Seeger and Lee Hays as a challenge to McCarthyism, also became popular in the Southern-based movement (Reagon 2007, 615–17).

Even if we accept the folklorists’ implication that the “banal” version of *Kumbaya* sung by white musicians helped pave the way for its cynical usage, these critics fail to explain the leap from music to politics or the reasons behind it. Simply put, no matter what the process of diffusion was, the more important *defusion* of *Kumbaya*—and the damage caused by it—is about politics and not music.

SINGING THEIR FREEDOM

Because American slaves expressed in song their hope for liberation and the idea that they had a *right* to be free, it is not surprising that *Kumbaya*’s most important association is with the American civil rights movement, where it was used to powerful effect at crucial moments. Vincent Harding, a close ally of Martin Luther King Jr. (and the author of his important 1967 speech against the Vietnam War), described the civil rights movement as being all about people “singing their freedom.” He brings this point home in explaining how his experience during Mississippi Summer (a voter registration drive also known as Freedom Summer) made it impossible for him to laugh at *Kumbaya* following its defusion. In 1964, Harding was in Oxford, Ohio, at training sessions for civil rights workers who had been recruited from all over the country to help register African Americans to vote and challenge discrimination in Mississippi. When three of the first wave of activists disappeared, everyone believed they had probably been killed. Those still in Oxford met in small groups to talk about whether they would continue to take the great risks their organizing entailed. Harding later recalled, “In group after group, people were singing: “Kumbaya. Come by here my Lord. Somebody’s missing Lord. Come by here. We all need you Lord. Come by here.” This was the turning point for Harding as nearly everyone decided to stay.

[A]lmost no one went home from there. This whole group of people decided that they were going to continue on the path that they had committed themselves to and a great part of the reason why they were able to do that was because of the strength and the power and the commitment that had been gained through that experience of just singing together, Kumbaya (Tippett 2013).⁹

The following year, voting rights marchers in Selma, Alabama, led by Hosea Williams and John Lewis, were met by such force as they attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge that the day became known as Bloody Sunday. In response to the beatings and tear gas that stopped the march—and in which Lewis had his skull fractured—participants kept up a vigil of prayer and song. After viewing the brutality on television, James Reeb, a white minister from Boston, came to Selma in time to join a second attempt to march, two days later (Meyer 2015). This time the marchers, led by Martin Luther King Jr., turned back at the bridge of their own accord in order to obey a federal injunction. That night, local white assailants attacked Reeb and two other ministers in the street. Reeb, who had been clubbed in the head, died of his injuries two days later. On the day of his funeral, with the marchers’ vigil still going on, “a new march attempt was halted bringing several hundred demonstrators against a hundred or more troopers and police. The tension that followed was broken by Hosea Williams . . . who led the marchers in traditional spirituals,” including *Kumbaya*. “We need you, Lordy, won’t you come by here” (Branch 2006, chapters 7-8; Benkert 1965).¹⁰ These events drew national and international attention, and many more people came to join the march that finally completed the journey from Selma to Montgomery two weeks later.

There are powerful recordings of *Kumbaya* from the civil rights era. But the salient point here is the power that people in the movement derived from the act of singing together about freedom. Activists sang “We Shall Overcome” in the face of hostile intruders at Highlander in 1959, and the freedom riders sang movement songs when they were put in Parchman prison in Mississippi in 1961 (Brown et al. 1989; Hampton et al. 2006). There are many other examples of civil rights activists singing together in the face of attack, all of which speak to the power of song—and group singing—to drive away fear and reaffirm the determination to fight against injustice, a collective act harkening back to the double meaning of the spirituals.

The practice of holding hands and singing together, captured in photos and reporting from the time, was integral to the civil rights movement, and clearly associated with “We Shall Overcome” (Martin 2004, 34).¹¹ Cordell Reagon remembers the emotional meeting at which young activists decided to form their own organization (the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) rather than become a youth branch of the Southern Christian Leadership

Council, led by Martin Luther King Jr., Guy Carawan led them in song, but this time, when they sang “We Shall Overcome,” people stood up, crossed their arms and held hands with those next to them. “Reagon had never heard the song like that before, and from that point it became the theme song of the Movement, closing all mass meetings and raised on all the battlefields when needed” (Reagon 2006, 608–9).¹²

Such recollections highlight the insidious nature of the later frequent references to “holding hands and singing kumbaya,” which, purposefully or not, conflate *Kumbaya* and “We Shall Overcome.” In one sweep, this line disparages the significance of communal singing, indicts the idea that the act of singing together can strengthen a movement, and plainly suggests that singing is a *substitute* for action. By implication, it undermines the black freedom movement itself, distorting a history in which “holding hands and singing”—an act that crossed racial lines, as it did at Highlander—was a potent symbol of unity and strength. In the movement, singing itself was active (as Bernice Reagon and other observers point out) as well as being a call to further action. There was nothing passive about it.

Outside of the civil rights movement, the singing of freedom songs functioned less as a call to action. After Pete Seeger and Joe Hickerson (of the Folksmiths, who recorded it in 1957) helped spread *Kumbaya* to summer camps, the song appeared in YWCA, Girl Guides, and some 4-H song books by the late 1950s. By the early 1960s, when Joan Baez recorded a live performance of it, *Kumbaya* had also moved into mainstream churches and public-school music books. Patricia Averill notes that commercial songbooks that included *Kumbaya* often contained the word “hootenanny” in their titles—again suggesting a link to the left since it was Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie who popularized this term for a collective, live sharing of songs. Tom Glazer documented the song’s associations with the civil rights movement in *Songs of Peace, Freedom and Protest*, published in 1970. But, as Averill points out, this was also the time when “more conservative religious groups” began to champion the song, “redefining it as a ballad of salvation” (Averill 2014, 69).

Averill’s theory of how the term became pejorative is rather different than those who blame folksingers or marketers of pop music. “‘Kumbaya,’” she argues, “carries a negative connotation of coerced comradery [sic] traceable to those attempts by religious groups to coopt the voluntary folk process for evangelistic purposes” (Averill 2014, 70). Where Hinson suggests the song lost its faith basis as a result of the folk process, Averill claims that process was coopted in the name of religion.

Neither theory about how *Kumbaya* took on a negative meaning is very convincing (and again the distinction between religious and secular does not take us far in understanding such songs). What Averill’s argument can help us understand, however, is how the song disappeared from other settings—social

movements and even secular children’s camps. In all of this, what remains crystal clear is that the negative uses of *Kumbaya*, which began to take hold in the 1980s, coincided with the conservative resurgence in American politics and the corresponding defensive posture of social movements.

THE KUMBAYA LAW

The *Urban Dictionary* defines the Kumbaya Law as follows: “In any conversation where some of the participants hold an opinion to the left of other participants, someone with the more conservative position will compare said person’s opinion to the naiveté of “sitting around a campfire singing Kumbaya.” The *Dallas Morning News*, which set out in 2006 to trace how “Kumbaya” became the “musical metaphor for corny camaraderie,” claims that the first reference in print came from a *Washington Post* review of the 1985 comedy movie “Volunteers,” by Rita Kempley. “Tom Hanks and John Candy make war on the Peace Corps in ‘Volunteers,’ a belated lampoon of ‘60s altruism and the idealistic young Kumbayahoos who went off to save the Third World” (Weiss 2006). Kempley could not remember why she used this reference: “I guess that song was the ultimate expression of people in the ‘60s who really cared,” said Kempley. “And then everyone decided, let’s just make fun of that” (Weiss 2006).

It hardly seems a coincidence that Kempley, and then many others, mocked idealism about peace during the Reagan years. As president, Reagan referred to the Soviet Union as an “evil empire,” accused supporters of a nuclear freeze proposal of being anti-American, characterised the Vietnam War as a “noble cause,” and rolled back hard-won gains made by the civil rights movement. The anticommunism of the Reagan years echoed that of the 1950s, including its hyper-patriotism.

Similar views came to the forefront again after 9/11 with “terrorism” standing in for “communism” in calls for toughness. In late September 2001, the conservative magazine *National Review* introduced Ross Douthat’s “Kumbaya Watch,” to “keeps tabs on various instances of muddle-headed anti-Americanism on the left” (Goldberg 2001). In his column announcing “Kumbaya Watch,” Jonah Goldberg’s list of muddle-headed anti-Americans included Edward Said, Susan Sontag, Michael Moore, Barbara Kingsolver, *The Nation* magazine, and callers to National Public Radio, all of whom presumably were calling for alternatives to war.

Barack Obama’s first presidential campaign in 2008 brought forth another wave of conservative attack, and cynical uses of “kumbaya” continued to be pronounced and widespread during the eight years of his presidency. In the 2008 campaign, his critics attacked Obama for holding “kumbaya” views on

foreign policy. His attempts as president to end U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and take a new approach to the “war on terror” prompted responses such as the one on the ultra-conservative website *breitbart.com*, which proclaimed there was only one way to attain “stability, peace, and prosperity.” This was “all-out war to the point of unconditional surrender, followed by long-term military occupation But that is exactly what Obama wants to avoid. So instead, we are to sing ‘Kumbaya.’ Unbelievable” (Pollak 2015).

Whether or not Obama’s detractors were aware of the history of the song, it is difficult to imagine that use of the phrase “singing Kumbaya” to criticize the country’s first African American president was a coincidence. Certainly, the intent of those leveling accusations against Obama as a “kumbaya” president was to undermine any policy or social struggle aimed at promoting alternatives to war and occupation. One step in combating the “Kumbaya watchers,” if you will, is to educate ourselves and others about the actual meaning and significance of the song and disrupt the effect of “the Kumbaya law.”

Taken together, the attacks noted above reveal the political point of turning the song’s meaning on its head. But the damage is compounded, giving “the Kumbaya law” more power, when the targets of such attacks then accept, and repeat, the narrow usage of the term. It is hardly surprising to hear someone like Herman Cain (an African American Tea Party activist who sought the Republican presidential nomination in 2012) attack Obama by saying “Singing Kumbaya is not a foreign policy strategy.” But it is equally problematic when President Obama states that “The politics of hope is not about holding hands and singing, ‘Kumbaya,’” thereby confirming the notion that “singing Kumbaya” means being passive (Daum 2008; Sigman 2012).

The frequent casual pejorative references, adopted across the political spectrum, make the cynical use of “kumbaya” harder to combat. In its casual use, the term is often a gratuitous reference to any moment of consensus. For example, when creditors and finance ministers agreed to extend the Greek bailout program for a few more months, a *New York Times* reporter wrote, “A tough confrontation that symbolized the polarized politics and deep economic divisions of Europe had taken a Kumbaya pause” (Yardley 2015).

The historic U.S. deal with Iran to limit the latter’s ability to develop nuclear weapons, agreed upon in July 2015, was both attacked *and* defended with reference to “singing Kumbaya.” Claiming that the Obama administration “threw the national security of America under the bus,” Elise Cooper wrote, “Regarding the Iran nuclear deal, some Democrats are singing ‘Kumbaya’” (Cooper 2015). Michael Cohen defended the administration, arguing that the agreement reflected the way foreign policy should be conducted. He then added that the deal “does not mean that US and Iranian leaders will soon be joining hands and singing Kumbaya” (Cohen 2015).

A number of observers used the phrase following the murders of nine African Americans at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in June 2015. In his critique of the city’s supposed unity, the Rev. Joseph Darby of the AME Church said, “People love to paint a kumbaya picture. It ain’t kumbaya” (Johnson 2015). Rev. Darby was making the point that deep racial tensions remained, despite the apparent unity that followed the murders, but his reference to “kumbaya” hardly clarified the way local people responded, particularly those who were most affected. Many observers had difficulty understanding the forgiveness offered by family members of victims and by others who had been present during the shooting. Theologian and writer James Cone suggests that this widely misunderstood forgiveness was in fact a form of resistance for those who lacked power. “It’s victory out of defeat. It is the weak overcoming the strong. It’s ‘You can’t destroy my spirit.’” Cone went on to explain that forgiveness in this instance indicated resilience—“It is not bowing down” (Remnick 2015).

Such examples help us see how the pejorative use of “kumbaya” encompasses both the peace movement and the black freedom movement. If Kumbaya Watch and the comments on Breitbart are about calling for a tougher (i.e. more interventionist and warlike) foreign policy, the bait and switch in terms of the black freedom movement is a subtle shift from a focus on the substantive *goal* of peace with justice to a focus on nonviolent *tactics*. Non-violence itself is then distorted and misunderstood, dismissed as passive and meek rather than as active resistance to injustice. Coming full circle, Vincent Harding’s defense of *Kumbaya* for giving people strength to continue the struggle and James Cone’s explanation of forgiveness as a form of resistance help remind us that the tradition of nonviolent action (which includes singing) is about asserting “the power of the people,” and again is anything but passive.

BLACK LIBERATION THEN AND NOW

As the nonviolent tradition and diplomatic peacemaking efforts are loudly dismissed as “holding hands and singing Kumbaya,” young people learn to view the classical phase of the civil rights movement in those narrowed terms. This is why attempts to link past and present struggles for black liberation—including through songs—are so important. One emotional moment in which traditional songs were used and adapted to connect past and present struggles was when John Reeb, having spent many years avoiding the circumstances of his father’s death, returned to Selma to finish the march Reverend James Reeb never completed. As John Reeb got out of his wheelchair to walk across the bridge where voting rights marchers had been turned back with violence fifty

years earlier, a crowd followed. People carried signs representing the unfinished struggle—“Black Lives Matter,” “No justice, No peace”—and chanted, “*mostly a re-mixed version of the song Kumbaya.*” Someone’s marching, my Lord, come by here . . .” (Meyer 2015. Emphasis mine.)

The film *Selma* also commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the march while providing meaningful examples of connecting past and present struggles through music. Both the film’s credits and its award-winning song, “Glory” pay tribute to a fuller history of the black freedom movement than the popular one that revolves around a sanitized version of Martin Luther King as a “passive dreamer” (Hampson 2015).¹³ In doing so, this music challenges the negative meaning of *Kumbaya*, acknowledging the importance of traditional songs. Denise Sullivan writes that “the most moving piece of music of all” in the film plays during the final credits: A medley of “This Little Light of Mine/Which Side Are You On?/Freedom Now Chant and Come By Here (Kumbaya)” sung by civil rights workers . . . is a revelation. These songs were built to travel the distance from slavery and incarceration to freedom, and that’s why you can still hear them being sung today (Sullivan 2015). Pointing to ways in which young people are carrying on the struggle by organizing to end police violence, she suggested that even fifty years after Selma “the song and the question remain the same: Which Side Are You On?” (Sullivan 2015).

Knowing the history of the songs matters. But the songs need not always stay the same. One way to rescue *Kumbaya*—as an empowering cry for justice—from its fate is to carry on the movement’s legacy using contemporary musical forms as Common does in the rap verses he wrote for “Glory.” Common says he was very conscious of the process of connecting past and present, indeed that this was his inspiration for writing the song: “To learn more about [Dr. King] and the people of Selma and the people around the country that came and contributed—just everyday people—it just was like, ‘I’m writing this for those people,’” Common says. “That, connected to what happened in ‘65 to what’s happening in 2014 to 2015... I wanted a voice for those people, too (Common 2015).

Common, who plays James Bevel in *Selma*, one of the people who pressed Martin Luther King Jr. hardest to speak out against the Vietnam War, was well aware of the controversies surrounding King in his own time, which intensified as he focused on what he called the “triple evils” of poverty, militarism, and racism. “Dr. King wasn’t extremely popular before he died, and so for us to talk about things that may not be popular with everybody, it is part of carrying on with his spirit” (Hammond 2015).

Common and John Legend knew they wanted to pay tribute to past heroes while reflecting the moment they lived in, and viewing the film only reinforced their desire to address current issues. Common had been reading about

the reversal of voting rights, which made the events portrayed in the movie seem present. "And with situations like when I saw what happened with Mike Brown and Eric Garner, it was like I knew what we had filmed and I felt this is of the *now*. It's necessary to speak about it and show that, yes, we've come a long way but we have a long way to go" (Hammond 2015). One cannot miss the connections between the civil rights movement then and Black Lives Matter today in lines such as, "That's why Rosa sat on the bus/That's why we walk through Ferguson with our hands up."¹⁴

TAKING BACK "THE REAL KUMBAYA"

Kumbaya is still sung with reverence and spirit around the world, and the "Kumbaya law" seems less applicable outside the United States.¹⁵ 2012 marked the 20th anniversary of the Kumbaya Foundation in Canada, a festival founded to bring people together for an evening of music and words focused on supporting the global battle against HIV/AIDS.

In the United States, several writers have tried to rescue the word from its ubiquitous negative uses and reclaim the song's original meaning. Michael Sigman criticizes the cynical and sarcastic uses of the term across the political spectrum and calls for taking back "the real Kumbaya" (Sigman 2012). Katy Waldman suggests "Perhaps we could use a little more 'Kumbaya' in our political lives" (Waldman 2016). Michael Ross writes: 'At this moment in history when we may need it most, "Kumbaya," a folk song that started its life as a quiet prayer and became a spiritual rallying cry for millions during some of this nation's grimmest days, has morphed into something that couldn't have been imagined during your Boy or Girl Scout days' (Ross 2008).

In highlighting the strengths of the song, however, these writers fail to make clear exactly what they mean in calling for "a little more Kumbaya." Several use a campfire metaphor that falls short of addressing the kinds of pressing political issues raised in recent years by such groups as Occupy, Not in Our Name, Iraq Veterans against War and Black Lives Matter.

The salient question is not "How do we rediscover the trail and get back to the campfire?" even if we interpret that query generously as being about building community and restoring a sense of hope (Perrotta 2015).¹⁷ Instead, we might ask how we reclaim the power of *Kumbaya* to bring people together, to sing collectively and in harmony as a means of crying out for justice and affording the strength to continue the struggle. The origins of the song matter. In order to "take back Kumbaya," we have to go beyond talking about its enduring legacy and bemoaning the cynical state of politics and culture in our own time and spell out the connections between past and present struggles for justice and peace. In other words, the project of reclaiming the

original meaning of *Kumbaya* is not just about setting the historical record straight or returning to the optimism of the sixties. More important is connecting “the real kumbaya” to ongoing struggles for peace, freedom, justice, and confronting who gets to determine the meaning of songs, especially protest songs, as they are diffused.¹⁷

Some efforts are being made to connect past and present in this way, but they are not yet numerous. We need new protest songs in a style and language that people (especially young people) can relate to and build identity from, but this does not require making fun of and taking meaning away from the old ones. The combination of the moving medley of spirituals in the credits in *Selma* and the rap song “Glory” speaks to this eloquently:

Saw the face of Jim Crow under a bald eagle
 The biggest weapon is to stay peaceful
 We sing, our music is the cuts that we bleed through
 Somewhere in the dream we had an epiphany
 Now we right the wrongs in history
 No one can win the war individually
 It takes the wisdom of the elders and young people’s energy
 Welcome to the story we call victory
 Comin’ of the Lord, my eyes have seen the glory

As part of “the wisdom of the elders,” *Kumbaya* deserves respect. Communal singing has served to fortify people in social movements, driving away fear and giving them strength to challenge those in power nonviolently. *Kumbaya* has been used as a cry for freedom as well as a plea for peaceful alternatives to military intervention. Subjecting it to ridicule diminishes a proud history of struggle for peace and justice.

NOTES

1. Bloodgood and Deane (2005, 5–7). Cited with author’s permission, granted 31 May 2017. See also the work of Serge Denisoff (1972; 1983), and Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1998).

2. See also Reagon (2006, 603).

3. Winick, Stephen D. *Kumbaya*. Video. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, Accessed July 08, 2016. <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200198050/>.

4. These are referenced as good starting points for the large literature addressing Communists’ and pacifists’ connections to the black freedom movement.

5. Redbaiting refers to accusing someone of being a communist or affiliated with communism, and it has been used as a successful strategy to undermine politicians, writers and artists, among others.

6. These musicians would have been aware of the song’s connections to the African American tradition, though it is not clear whether they saw it as a protest or simply a global folk song.

7. Other songbooks placed *Kumbaya*’s roots in Africa or called it a lullaby, even when its history was told somewhat more accurately. See for example, James F. Leisy introduction to “Kum Ba Ya” in the 1964 songbook he edited, *Hootenanny Tonight!* Greenwich, CT: Fawcett. While the Weavers also recorded it as a lullaby, Pete Seeger later sang the song with different lyrics and acknowledged the confusion about its origins.

8. The left had long promoted African American music and the cause of black freedom. Note the 1938 Spirituals to Swing concert sponsored by *New Masses*, which included a number of African American performers who became well known as well as a rendition of “I’m on My Way,” sung a few decades later in the civil rights movement.

9. After hearing Krista Tippett’s interview with Harding, Trent Gilliss wrote a blog post, “You’ll Never Hear Kumbaya the Same Way Again,” from which I borrowed the title of this chapter. Accessed February 20, 2015. <http://www.onbeing.org/blog/youll-never-hear-kumbaya-same-way-again/3860>.

10. The description of Williams leading marchers in song comes from the introduction to *Freedom Songs: Selma, Alabama* (Benkert 1965).

11. Examples of photos may be found at: <http://www.goodnet.org/articles/10-inspiring-photos-unity-from-civil-rights-movement>; <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/569283209128662669/>.

12. The meeting Cordell Reagon describes was held in April 1960. He claims this was just after the freedom riders were freed from Parchman Prison in Mississippi, but that event took place a year later.

13. Hampson’s *USA Today* article quotes activist Brittany Packnett: “King’s willingness to confront, coerce and consequently enrage opponents has been downplayed, and King often made to seem like a passive dreamer ‘singing Kumbaya’.”

14. In popular memory, the civil rights movement began in 1955 when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparking the bus boycott. Reference to Ferguson is about the protests there in 2014 after police shot and killed a young African American man, Michael Brown, even though he reportedly had his hands up in surrender.

15. See, for example, the gospel choir in Soweto or the a cappella group singing Kumbaya in Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaW-3h9G3dE>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPyQR2YSEc4>.

16. Perrotta also quotes Michael Ross’s similar comment, “without the personal compass we lost on the trail years ago ... we can’t find that campfire anymore.”

17. In addition to some of the references cited, such as Eyerman and Jamison, and Rosenthal and Flacks, useful discussions about how the meaning of songs gets determined appear in the work of Simon Frith and Stuart Hall, among others.

Chapter 3

Billie Holiday's Popular Front Songs of Protest

Jonathon Bakan

This chapter is about “Strange Fruit” and “God Bless the Child,” two explicitly political songs recorded by African American jazz singer Billie Holiday between 1939 and 1941.¹ It examines Holiday’s relationship to these songs and also to the anti-segregationist, anti-fascist and pro-labor Popular Front movement of the late 1930s.² The chapter is in two parts. It first addresses the history of “Strange Fruit,” its role as a protest song, and its adoption into Holiday’s repertoire. I examine its significance as a political expression of the Popular Front movement and its personal significance for Holiday as a professional singer. After recording “Strange Fruit,” Holiday was able to command a new level of artistic freedom and creative independence from the racist, sexist and highly commercialized demands of the American popular music industry. This newly acquired professional freedom was manifested in the second song discussed in this chapter, “God Bless the Child” (Holiday 2001). “God Bless the Child” was especially significant as a highly political song, which was also Holiday’s first recorded non-blues song of her own composition. The second half of the chapter takes a more theoretical turn, conceptualizing Holiday’s relationship to the Popular Front as that of a Gramscian “organic intellectual” to her class. While a Gramscian conceptual framework has only rarely been applied to the study of jazz history,³ its application to questions of race and gender (as well as to class) has more precedent (see Hall 1996; Ferguson 2008, 47, 49). Gramsci used the category of “organic intellectuals” to describe groups of thinkers and skilled cultural practitioners, socially embedded within subaltern groups and classes, who foster “homogeneity, self-awareness, and organization” within those groups (Gramsci 1997, 181; see also 5), and furthermore serve to articulate and promote the perspective of those subaltern groups in broader social discourse. In this regard, I argue that Holiday was linked, first of all, to the newly

concentrating urban African American communities of the early twentieth century. As a black urban woman from a working class background (Clarke 1994, 7–21),⁴ she sought success in the field of black vernacular music, a section of the entertainment industry that offered rare opportunities for economic and professional advancement among working class blacks and immigrants of the early twentieth century (Bakan 2004, 132–35). I further argue that when the same African American communities (especially Harlem) in which Holiday developed her craft emerged as leaders in the broader, multi-ethnic working class movement that was the Popular Front, so too was Holiday's *intellectual work as a musician* brought, largely by the power of that movement itself, to the center of popular discourse, and indeed to a position of (contested) cultural leadership.

During the Depression years jazz music—then referred to as “swing”—came to dominate American popular music in live performance, recording and radio (DeVeaux and Giddens 2009, 171). Harlem, the primary geographical birthplace of big band swing, simultaneously emerged as a major center of grassroots social activism, and a key locus for what came to be known as the Popular Front movement, arguably the largest and most powerful working class and left wing movement in American history (Naison 1983, xvii–xviii; Naison 1993, 45–47; Denning 1996, 3–4).

“Strange Fruit” exemplifies the intersections of jazz and the Popular Front political milieu. Its darkly ironic lyrics portray a southern lynching as a “pastoral scene of the gallant South,” the victim’s “Black body swinging in the summer breeze” as a “Strange fruit hanging from the poplar tree” (Holiday 1991). This sort of explicitly charged imagery was a major departure from ordinary popular song of the 1930s. As bass player John Williams recalled, “the words were unheard of for a song, especially at that time” (Nicholson 1995, 114). But “Strange Fruit” was no standard product of the American popular music industry. Its graphic lyrics instead reflect the song’s linkages to left wing political discourses of the 1930s.

“STRANGE FRUIT,” CAFÉ SOCIETY AND THE LEFT

When “Strange Fruit” was recorded, the Popular Front movement was near its peak in size and social influence. The Popular Front was “a radical historical bloc uniting industrial unionists, communists, independent socialists, community activists, and émigré anti-fascists around laborist social democracy, anti-fascism, and anti-lynching” (Denning 1996, 4). While the movement involved a wide range of labor and leftist organizations, the largest and most influential of these was the American Communist Party, which by 1938 had around 85,000 members (Naison 1993, 45; See also Klehr 240, 307). Since the early

1930s, the Communist Party had played a leading role in popular anti-lynching campaigns, and “Strange Fruit” originated in that context (see, for example, Naison 1985, 42). It was written by Communist Party member Abel Meeropol, and first published as a poem in a teachers’ union publication in 1937. Before Holiday adopted it into her repertoire, “Strange Fruit” had already been performed by the Teachers’ Union Chorus and other singers at a range of labor and left-wing benefits, rallies and cabarets (Margolick 2000, 28–29).

It was not until 1939 that Billie Holiday, while working an extended engagement at a recently opened Greenwich Village nightclub called Café Society, began singing “Strange Fruit.” The club itself is significant to this story. Café Society would emerge, not only as an important pillar of New York’s jazz infrastructure,⁵ but also as a major Popular Front cultural institution. Owned, operated, and staffed by activists in and around the movement (Bakan 2004, 170–75), Café Society was the first major nightclub in Manhattan to operate under a strict policy of complete racial desegregation (Clarke 1994, 156). Indeed, the club had been consciously established as a sort of counter-hegemonic cultural outpost, a place where conservative notions of class, race, and culture were the subject of overt critique and satire. Club owner Barney Josephson later recalled:

I wanted a club where blacks and whites worked together behind the footlights and sat together out front, a club whose *stated advertised* policy would be just that.

And—above all—I wanted a political cabaret. When I had started thinking in terms of a cabaret here, one of the important reasons I wanted to open one, which I kept secret, was to have a political cabaret such as I had seen in Europe. That was my true purpose ... I wanted a club that would be a showcase for our uniquely American music [jazz]. But it wasn’t that I wanted only jazz. I wanted to make a statement, to make a social and political commentary (Josephson and Trilling-Josephson 2009, 9; emphasis in original).

As New York’s first fully integrated major nightclub, Café Society represented an important beachhead in the battle for social equality. Its policy of complete intolerance of racial segregation made Café Society perhaps the only nightclub in Manhattan where, for example, a mixed-race party could safely enjoy an evening’s entertainment, assured that the club’s management would protect them from harassment (Lawrenson 1978, 89; “Letters”, *New York* 1978, 9; Hammond 1977, 261–62).

Many of those involved in the running of Café Society had personal links to the left-wing movement. The club owner’s brother Leon Josephson, who served as Café Society’s legal advisor, was a prominent American Communist, and a lawyer for the communist legal organization, the ILD (International Labor Defense). The club owner himself, Barney Josephson, later admitted to

the FBI that he too had been a member of the Communist Party, but only for several months in 1937 (Stowe 1998, 1397). Several others who worked at the club also had personal involvements with the left wing movement (Bakan 2004, 170–75).⁶ Perhaps more importantly, Café Society became a popular social gathering spot for leftists of all stripes, trade unionists, Communist Party members, and others. Crucially, it emerged as the nightclub of choice for many of New York's leading African American literary and artistic intelligentsia (Buckley 1986, 144–45).

"HIGH ART" FROM BELOW

The labor-oriented political outlook of Café Society management was evident in the generally favorable working conditions enjoyed by the performers at the club. In stark contrast to other nightclubs and performance venues, Café Society's management insisted on treating its African American performers with a high level of professional respect. In the words of Café Society publicist Ivan Black, it was there that "Jazz [would] be presented for the first time with dignity and respect" (Nicholson 1995, 111). This respectful attitude was evident in Holiday's nightly presentations of "Strange Fruit." Before Holiday began the song, waitstaff quieted club patrons to ensure complete silence. Then the lights were extinguished, save for a single small spotlight illuminating Holiday's face. As Holiday finished the song's final line, "Here is a strange and bitter crop," the single spotlight was cut, leaving the audience in darkness and silence. To enhance its impact, and at Barney Josephson's insistence, "Strange Fruit" was always performed as the final song in Holiday's sets (Nicholson 1995, 13).

This highly formalized presentation clearly signaled that "Strange Fruit" was intended as a serious statement, as a kind of art song, rather than simple entertainment. This was a significant departure from Holiday's previous performance practice, and one that gave added political meaning to her nightly performances of "Strange Fruit." While jazz is today widely regarded as "America's Classical Music," it did not have that kind of elevated status before World War II. As Scott DeVaux has noted, before the late 1930s, jazz music was "associated in the public mind with the dance hall, saloon, and the vaudeville theater" (DeVaux 1989, 6). During Holiday's tenure at the club, overall music programming at Café Society emphasized the idea that "swing" had emerged as America's own indigenous "Art" music, and that the leading role in developing the music had been played by African-American musicians, who, *as a group*, were acknowledged as the leading practitioners in the field. This mirrored sentiments expressed explicitly elsewhere in communist-sponsored fora and press (Naison 1983, 211; Bakan

2004, 222–27; Bakan 2009, 45), and would have resonated with significance, not only among the white leftists in the audience at Café Society, but also among the black intelligentsia who frequented the club. Indeed, it echoed a notion already articulated years earlier by leading black intellectuals, that “black music was America’s only distinctive contribution to American and world musical culture” (Floyd 1990, 3–4; see also Melnick 1999, 148; Ogren 1989, 119). In this discursive context, the presentation of “Strange Fruit” as a sophisticated *artistic* statement had a decidedly subversive aspect, positing African-American musicians as de facto leaders within American cultural life, even as they (and other members of their home communities) were denied the most basic rights of citizenship.

But it was not just its formalized presentation in live performance that marked “Strange Fruit” as a serious work of art. In addition to the staging described above, there were also musical signs, sonic indicators that marked the song as a sophisticated artistic statement, as something more than mere entertainment. Holiday’s “Strange Fruit” thus opens with an introduction played by Frankie Newton and the Café Society orchestra. The first sound we hear is a Bb minor chord (Holiday 1991). This chord, sustained without rhythmic pulse, sets a somber tone. The listener is immediately made aware that this is no happy, lighthearted song. Newton’s trumpet answers the chord’s downbeat with an arching melodic line. Then the second chord is played. This chord, a C+7 over a Gb root, is somewhat dissonant sounding, and has polytonal implications. Newton constructs a descending line over the chord using a whole-tone scale. The relative sophistication of these musical materials signals a high level of *learnedness* on the part of the performers, and serves to dismiss any notion that the song should be read as either “folk” music or simple entertainment.

Holiday’s innovative vocal concept also displays a highly developed degree of artistic sophistication.⁷ Her singing is marked by subtly nuanced manipulations of the dynamic and timbral quality of her voice in ways that serve to emphasize and illustrate the song’s words. Just one of many examples of this kind of interpretive shading can be found in the second stanza, where Holiday sings the words “The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth.” Here Holiday lets the sound of the words “bulging eyes” bulge, by letting the volume increase slightly during the “uh” sound in “bulging,” and by giving an open throated and long “I” sound to the word “eyes.” When Holiday sings the word “twisted” the timbre of her voice shifts rapidly, so rapidly, in fact, that one hardly notices it. In this nearly subliminal manner the lynched man’s twisted face is reflected in the twisted shape of Holiday’s vocal inflections.⁸

Another, perhaps even more subtle expression of Holiday’s artistic skill can be found in her relaxed yet precisely placed rhythmic inflections, or *phrasing*. For example, in “Strange Fruit,” the opening words “Southern trees

bear strange fruit” contain a wealth of subtle rhythmic inflection. The words “Southern trees” are phrased as an off-the-beat, three-against-two rhythmic figure. The figure is articulated with just a hint of accented emphasis. The placement of the text in rhythmic opposition to the rest of the band makes the vocal line seem to hang over the music with a finely tuned balance. One gets the feeling that the vocal line is at once seamlessly integrated into the orchestra while simultaneously displaying a rarefied independence of it.⁹ The opening words are followed by the text: “bear a strange fruit.” Here some of the rhythmic tension created by the placement of the previous words seems to be released. The words “bear a strange” seem to have their own independent pulse, superimposed over the ongoing pulse flow of the band. It inspires a soothing sensation, a momentary sway, like the rocking of a boat. The sensation seems to answer and relieve the rhythmic tension created by the placement of the previous text.¹⁰

The sophistication of “Strange Fruit”—in both structure and performance—and its highly formalized and serious presentation stood in contradiction to the notion, implicit (if not explicit) and ubiquitous throughout popular culture of the 1930s, that African American music and music-making could only be valued as a kind of *low* entertainment, that musics based in the African American vernacular were necessarily less sophisticated, its performers less educated, etc., than trained European or Euro-American (i.e. white) musicians.

“STRANGE FRUIT” FOR BILLIE HOLIDAY

“Strange Fruit” resonated strongly with Popular Front audiences and was actively promoted in the left wing press (Margolick 2000, 56–57, 61). As David Margolick notes, “When it first came out, ‘Strange Fruit’ created its own set of activists, carrying around their copies of the [record]” (Margolick 2000, 56). It also generated a good deal of critical controversy in the mainstream press.¹¹ *Time* magazine ran a review that included a photo of Holiday (“Strange Record,” *Time* June 12, 1939, 66). The song became a minor “hit,” reaching the sixteenth position on the record charts of the day (Whitburn 1986, 216). For the left wing movement, it took on the status of a political anthem (see, for example, Margolick 2000, 61–64).

The song also engendered a major change in Holiday’s professional status. While “Strange Fruit” was neither Holiday’s first, nor greatest chart-topper, the consensus among various commentators is that the song’s controversial success marked a crucial turning point, launching her to national prominence for the first time in her career (Chilton 1975, 69; Schuller 1989, 543; Clarke 1994, 163; James 1984, 34–35; Brackett 2000, 49). While Holiday had

certainly had some professional success by 1938, and was highly respected by her musician colleagues, popular recognition had to that point largely eluded her (Clarke 1994, 149, 155–56; Chilton 1975, 73–74).

The resonance of Holiday's performances among the Popular Front milieu not only helped to build, inspire, and solidify a growing social justice movement, it also launched Holiday to stardom. This may lead some to question the nature of her relationship to the song. Holiday stated that "Strange Fruit" "became my personal protest" and "I dug it right off" (Holiday and Dufty 1976, 84). Nonetheless, it has been suggested that she may have initially been reluctant to sing "Strange Fruit," or did not initially understand the song's political content.¹² In this regard, Angela Davis has argued that it is unlikely that Holiday would have performed "Strange Fruit" opportunistically, as the very act of performing anything so controversial would have entailed significant professional risk (see Davis, 1999, 182–83).

In any case, charges of self-interest miss the point. Like *most* participants in the Popular Front, Holiday's relationship to the movement would have involved multiple, overlapping and even contradictory dynamics, both political and personal. She had no obvious formal affiliations to the organized left, and may indeed have had considerable disagreements with the white left (see Bakan 2004, 254). But as a self-described "race woman" (Davis 1999, 162) she would also have found herself in general alignment with the anti-racist politics of the broader Popular Front movement, and with the specific sentiments expressed in "Strange Fruit." Below, I argue that Holiday can be understood as an "organic intellectual" with deep-rooted connections to the urban, black and overwhelmingly working class populations among whom she grew up. It was these communities that provided the material conditions of her working career, as well as the vernacular traditions—the musical sounds and styles—within which she worked and which she helped to develop. I propose that it was Holiday's *organic links* to the subaltern communities within the Popular Front that positioned her to invest "Strange Fruit" with such power. Holiday identified with the denizens of her own urban community, "the corner hoodlum, the streetwalker, the laborer, the rooming-house ladies and landlords, the people who lived off the twenty-five and thirty-dollars-a-week they were paying in those days" (quoted in Davis 1999, 163). As she put it, "It was their applause and help that kept me inspired" (Ibid.).

Nonetheless, "Strange Fruit" did offer Holiday popular recognition and other material benefits. Perhaps most significantly, in the wake of its success, Holiday was able to exercise a much greater level of creative *control* over her work than she had ever before been able to command. Earlier in her career, for example, Holiday had faced severe restrictions on her choice of song material. Working in the trenches of the popular music industry she had little choice but to perform the material—banal as it often was—that she was given

by song publishers (see Ingham 2000, 9; Davis 1999, 166). Holiday had also repeatedly found herself constrained by the racist and sexist demands of the highly commercialized industry. Her various biographies tell of multiple confrontations with club owners, managers, music publishers, booking agents, etc., who were unwilling or unable to appreciate either her innovative singing, or her resistance and non-conformity to their expectations with regard to race and gender.¹³ But things changed with the success of “Strange Fruit” (James 1984, 34–35). The song not only propelled Holiday to national prominence, its success also allowed her to exert a much greater range of artistic control over her work than ever before. Significantly, after making “Strange Fruit” a part of her repertoire, Holiday, almost for the first time in her career, began to contribute to the composition of her own songs, rather than relying solely on pre-composed popular song material.¹⁴

GOD BLESS THE CHILD

“God Bless the Child” is the first non-blues song composed and recorded by Holiday.¹⁵ It was written with the assistance of composer/lyricist Arthur Herzog and recorded in May 1941. Holiday at that point had finished her engagement at Café Society, but was still closely involved with the Popular Front milieu.¹⁶ Like “Strange Fruit,” the lyrics to “God Bless the Child” make it among the most political of her songs. And here there can be no doubt that the words and sentiments are Holiday’s own. The text articulates the seemingly intractable economic injustices of American society: “Them that’s got shall get, them that’s not shall lose. So the Bible says, and it’s still the news.” As cultural historian Michael Denning writes, “God Bless the Child” “combines the working class realism of the bridge—‘Money, you got lots of friends, Crowding round your door/ But when it’s done and spending ends, They don’t come no more’—with a utopian assertion...: ‘God bless the child that’s got his own’” (Denning 1996, 346–47).

But this formulation, “God bless the child that’s got his own,” is ambiguous. Why would one ask God to “bless the child that’s got his own” rather than the child with nothing? That is, it appears as if the song is invoking God’s blessing upon those who need help the least, who are not dependent upon others for economic security, who’ve “got their own.” Holiday’s collaborator on the song, Arthur Herzog, also appears to have been unclear about the phrase’s meaning. In his words,

We turned to conversation about her mother... [who] wanted money from Billie, and how Billie didn’t want to give it to her, didn’t have it, and in a moment of exasperation she said, “God bless the child.” And I said, “Billie, what does

that mean?" She said, "You know. That's what we used to say—your mother's got money, your father's got money, your sister's got money, your cousin's got money, but if you haven't got it yourself, God bless the child that's got his own." (Quoted in Clarke 1994, 191)

According to the published sheet music, the song is entitled "God Bless' the Child," *not* "God Bless the Child." It further states that the song is "a swing-spiritual based on the authentic proverb, 'God blessed the child that's got his own'" (Holiday 1972, 4). In other words, according to the published music, the title lyric is *not* an invocation for God to "bless the child that's got his own," but is rather a simple observation that one is fortunate, or blessed by God, if one is not dependent on the charity of others.

In her autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues*, Holiday recounts the remarkable story of meeting for the first time her second "step-mother" (Holiday and Dufty 1976, 67)—a wealthy white woman with two children fathered by Holiday's own father—at her father's funeral:

She showed up at Pop's coffin with two kids—my half brother and sister, who were white too. All this was news to me. ... It turned out she was very wealthy, had met Pop when he worked at Roseland, and they had these two kids which she was raising as white.

Seeing my half sister and brother reminded me how crazy this country is. There was the Roseland management, the place where I used to hang out in the downstairs hall and wait for Pop Anybody who worked there and so much as looked at a white girl within sight of the management would lose his job in a minute. If they had caught Pop having a drink with a white bitch the management would have flipped.

But this was all for show, or it was for nothing. If they were trying to keep Negroes from sleeping with white girls, it sure worked in reverse. All the cops in the precinct couldn't have stopped if they tried [sic]. And here were the two kids to prove it.

She told me she was bringing them up white. I told her she could do as she damn well thought best, and if they could pass, let them. But I still thought she was wrong not to tell them the truth. They would catch on sometime—if they hadn't already, looking at their mother's face as she looked at Pop's body in that funeral parlor. Who did she think she was kidding? (Holiday and Dufty 1976, 67)

I argue that Holiday expresses here an *ambivalence* towards racial and economic privilege that seems to echo the mixed sentiments in "God Bless the Child." She expresses dissatisfaction with the injustices of racial prejudice: "Anybody who worked there and so much as looked at a white girl within sight of the management would lose his job in a minute. If they had caught Pop having a drink with a white bitch the management would have flipped."

But there is also a note of resignation, and a sense that any strategies one can find to negotiate one's way around such injustices are legitimate: "She told me she was bringing them up white. I told her she could do as she damn well thought best, and if they could pass, let them." There is also a note of resentment, not so much that her new-found siblings will be able to "pass" and live the lifestyle of their wealthy mother—but that this "white bitch" would not tell her children the truth about their African American heritage.

Like Holiday's autobiographical anecdote, "God Bless the Child" both condemns the injustices of economic inequality, and expresses resignation that such inequalities are deeply entrenched. On the other hand, the lyric expresses sympathy, even admiration, for those who can shield themselves from poverty without relying on the transient beneficence of others. It expresses a note of resentment that friendships are only as deep as one's pockets. "Money, you got lots of friends, crowding 'round the door. When you're gone and spending ends, they don't come no more." Even the bonds of familial relations are subject to the limits of pecuniary interest. "Rich relations give, crust of bread and such, You can help yourself, but don't take too much." The song ends with a final note of resignation "But God bless the child that's got his own!" (Holiday 1972, 4–6).

RACE, CLASS, AND THE MUSICIAN AS ORGANIC INTELLECTUAL

"Strange Fruit" and "God Bless the Child" marked the beginning of a new phase in Holiday's career. Her performance style, choice of repertoire and career path, were all profoundly affected by her relationship to Café Society and the social movement it represented. "Strange Fruit" was a product of that movement, already circulating in the left wing cultural milieu before Holiday adopted it as her own. "God Bless the Child" was also pointedly political in its content. But unlike "Strange Fruit," which was conceived by others, "God Bless the Child" was a product of her own inspiration.¹⁷

How, then, should we understand the multiple intersections of politics, commerce, and social context implicated in Billie Holiday's songs of protest? In the remainder of this chapter, I argue that Holiday's relationship to the Popular Front movement can be understood by invoking the notion of "organic intellectuals," Antonio Gramsci's term for special groups of thinkers and skilled cultural practitioners embedded within subaltern groups and classes, who serve to articulate and develop the perspective of those subaltern groups in broader social discourse.

In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci suggests that throughout history, all major intellectual traditions should be understood as having emerged along with,

and as part of, the development of every fundamental class formation (1997, 5). But Gramsci also notes that not all intellectual groupings command equal status within society. He therefore distinguishes between those “traditional intellectuals” that function within existing and legitimated institutional settings (lawyers, academics, etc.), and those he calls “organic intellectuals.” These “organic intellectuals” are the generally non-legitimated intellectual groupings associated with subaltern classes. But whether they are socially legitimated “traditional” intellectuals or non-legitimated, subaltern “organic” intellectuals, their crucial, historic role is the same—to give their respective social classes “homogeneity and an awareness of [their] own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (Gramsci 1997, 5).

For Gramsci, the traditions of thought and technical practices that all major intellectual groupings or traditions develop and expand are, at a fundamental, or “organic,” level, rooted in the experiences of the social classes with which they are associated. He writes, “It can be observed that the ‘organic’ intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part ‘specialisations’ of partial aspects of the primitive [or day-to-day] activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence” (Gramsci 2000, 6). In other words, Gramsci understands “intellectuals” to simply be *specialists* who refine and raise the technical level of specific “primitive,” or everyday activities already engaged in by the members of an emergent social class, while the various social and economic activities of the emergent class constitute the “organic” medium from which a stratum of “intellectuals” can emerge.

These “organic intellectuals” contribute to the forging of social identity, providing the cultural and intellectual means through which subaltern groups can develop a shared consciousness of their position within society. They also perform an essential ideological role for any social class that is struggling to achieve a position of class rule, or *hegemony*, over society. In this regard, their special historical function is precisely to achieve ideological *leadership* over all of society through a process of engaging with existing and established intellectual traditions (Gramsci 2000, 6–7, 10). In this view, as an emergent class contests power in the sphere of economic production, it also advances, through its “organic intellectuals,” its own ideological stances, worldviews, cultural attitudes, methods of communication, social organization, etc. As an emergent class becomes a more dominant presence within the economic and social spheres, its own class-based ideological stances are also brought into a broader social arena where their appropriateness to the social moment is contested, not only with regard to the specific classes whose experience is expressed by these stances, but for all of society.

Billie Holiday’s relationship, first to her own urban black community, and, by extension, to the broader Popular Front audiences, seems to exemplify, in

the musical sphere, Gramsci's notion of the "organic intellectual." This relationship entailed several interrelated dynamics: The "organic" structural links between jazz musicians and the black urban working class; the special role of African American vernacular musicians as ideological leaders within their communities; the extension of that role into the larger working class movement during the Popular Front period; and finally, the reciprocally beneficial relationship between the social movement and Holiday during a period of social crisis.

The "organic," or material and historic, rootedness of jazz music in the black American working class is not difficult to demonstrate. The history of jazz in the first half of the twentieth century is closely connected to the emergence of large urban, working class communities, and especially the emergence of large, predominantly African American working-class communities. The development of these urban communities provided both the early market and musicians necessary for the emergence of what we now know as the jazz tradition. In other words, the emergence of jazz as an important pillar of the American culture industry was not simply co-incidental, but "organically" related to the ongoing development of the urban working class, especially its black sections.¹⁸ Within that industry, jazz and other vernacular-based musicians were also emerging as symbolic representatives of their communities. As Eric Porter has noted, their music "served as a vehicle for community building and cultural identification" (Porter 2002, 7).

Holiday used a range of musical devices that were derived from the expressive repertoire of black American music¹⁹— inflections of timbre, phrasing and rhythm, etc.—all of which marked her music as a product of subaltern, black working-class culture. In this regard, Holiday exemplified Gramsci's description of organic intellectuals as specialists whose historic role is to develop and refine subaltern cultural practices and thereby foster within their community, "homogeneity and an awareness of [their] own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields." (Gramsci 1997, 5). Of course, Holiday was not the first African American musician to professionally develop black vernacular music, and through that act, to reflect and affirm the collective self-identity of black Americans. Ralph Ellison, for example, remembered of Duke Ellington that, "Ellington had taken the traditional instruments of Negro music and extended their range, enriched their tonal possibilities.... [W]e affirmed the voice of jazz and the blues... because they spoke to a large extent of what we felt of the life we lived most intimately..." (Ellison 2001, 81). Indeed, since at least the 1920s, black musicians had already been established as self-reflective markers of communal identity, and were often described as symbols of professional achievement and race pride (see for example Porter 2002, 7; Hansen 1960, 497–98). When black communities found themselves at the center of a growing, multi-ethnic left wing and labor movement, such musicians also came to be viewed, by

both white and black observers, as not only as synecdochically representative of black urban society, but also as representative of the much broader movement in which those same communities—especially Harlem—were playing a prominent role. By the late 1930s, Harlem had emerged as a key center of left wing activity, with local activists playing a leading role both there and in the broader social movement (see Naison 1983, 115–219). And in this environment, African American musicians came to occupy a similarly leading position in the culture of the Popular Front movement (Naison 1983, 211; see also 224 n75; Bakan 2009, 43).

When Harlem's black community erupted in the 1930s with rent strikes, labor stoppages, demonstrations, and riots, Holiday and other jazz musicians became implicated in various ways in the growing movement (see Bakan 2009). At the same time, participants in the Popular Front movement, especially black and white working-class youth, were adopting "swing" as their own mode of cultural expression. As Michael Denning has noted, "Swing was recognizably their own music" (Denning 1996, 330). Gordon Gullickson, a co-editor of *Record Changer* told *Down Beat* magazine in 1944, "Jazz is the music of the American proletariat. If Negroes have been more prominent in its development, it is because more American Negroes are proletarian" (*Down Beat* 1944).

By the time Café Society opened in the late 1930s, jazz music, often performed by leading musicians, was already being featured frequently at left wing benefit concerts, dances, social functions and educational fora (Bakan 2009, 43–45).

Like other black musicians of her generation, Holiday functioned as an "organic intellectual" of the African American working class, and through them, the multi-ethnic working class communities of the Popular Front. Conceptualizing Holiday's position in this way underscores both the "organic" connections that tied the singer's career path to the social movement, and the important contribution made by her music to the discourses of the Popular Front.

CONCLUSION

For Antonio Gramsci, some periods of social instability are constituted of elements so deeply rooted in long-term "organic" contradictions that they can throw whole ideological structures into turmoil and more-or-less intractable instability, creating historical moments of crisis and possibility (Gramsci 1997, 178). When this sort of extended crisis occurs it can cause structures of social hegemony that have previously maintained the civic and ideological order to weaken or rupture (*Ibid.*, 210). The crisis of hegemony that occurred during the Depression years allowed and encouraged a large left-wing

political and cultural movement to develop in the United States. By the late 1930s that movement had developed to the point where it could actually establish its own high-profile performance venues like Café Society. Within those venues, it appears the strictures of musical hegemony that dominated the popular music industry were also weakened.

When Holiday sang “Strange Fruit” she identified her voice with the aspirations of a broad, multi-layered counter-hegemonic movement, while that movement provided a large and responsive audience for her music. This relationship allowed Holiday to emerge from Café Society as “a star” (Holiday and Dufty 1976, 64), but in the act of establishing herself with and through the cultural milieu of the Popular Front movement, Holiday was also able to assert the “Artistic” legitimacy of her music. No longer compelled to coax aesthetic meaning from the commercially oriented songs assigned by music publishers, she was empowered to choose repertoire on the basis of her own aesthetic criteria. And now, too, she was able to begin composing (or contributing to the composition of) songs of her own, even as she received a level of national recognition that had previously eluded her.

Holiday, like other jazz musicians of her era, expressed and helped develop creative and aesthetic practices that were rooted in an urbanizing black American culture—practices now identified with ‘the jazz tradition’. Like other jazz musicians, she occupied a position of important cultural significance within her community, helping to forge a sense of collective identity. Holiday can thus be understood as an “organic intellectual” of the African American working class. From this perspective her propulsion to national fame after “Strange Fruit” takes on special significance. Indeed, Holiday’s enhanced status can be understood as an assertion of *cultural leadership*, or an assertion of the subaltern cultural and ideological power—what Gramsci called “directive [*dirigente*] ... capacity” (Gramsci 1997, 5)—that both accompanied and contributed to the assertion of social and economic power by the left-wing movement of the 1930s. Just as black and immigrant workers in industrial unions and other organizations of the Popular Front were beginning to assert their social and economic authority within society, so Holiday, as their “organic intellectual,” was able to use the power of their movement to assert the cultural and ideological authority of her music, which in many ways was also theirs.

NOTES

1. Some material for this chapter is drawn from my dissertation, “Café Society: A Locus for the Intersection of Jazz and Politics during the Popular Front Era” (Bakan 2004). I am indebted to the anonymous readers, and to Aileen Dillane, for their collective comments and feedback.

2. The “Popular Front” was a broad-based anti-fascist movement initiated by the Communist International in 1935 (Naison 1983, 169). In this chapter the term refers to the North American context only.

3. Bakan 2004; Porter 2002, 357, note 1; Solis 2004, 316.

4. In my usage, class is understood as being inscribed not only in the “purely” economic sphere, but also in and through lived histories and divisions of race, gender, ethnicity and geography. In describing Holiday as an “organic intellectual” of the American urban working class of the 1930s, I am positing race and gender not as *separable* from class, but as fundamental aspects of working class experience that in their totality, and in the context of capitalist economic relations, constitute the realities of “working-class” life. In this view, the experience of class is lived concretely through the categories of race and gender just as surely as it is through the sale of one’s labor. As Ferguson and McNally have noted in another context, “An adequate theorization of the total social reproduction of the capital-labour relation thus requires a multi-dimensional analysis which, while acknowledging the decisive role of waged-work and other monetized practices, situates these within a nexus of practices through which working-class life is produced and reproduced.” (Ferguson and McNally 2014, 2).

5. Balliett 1971, 251; Balliett 1977, 66.

6. Before her engagement at Café Society, Holiday herself had no obvious political involvements.

7. As Collier and Kernfeld write, “Holiday is often considered the foremost female singer in jazz history” (Collier and Kernfeld 2002, 264). Such superlative descriptions of Holiday’s singing are common. See for example, Davis (1996, 218) and Ingham (2000, 1).

8. See Doretta Lonett Whalen for a discussion of this aspect of Holiday’s vocal approach. (Whalen 1999, 253, 257–58).

9. For more on Holiday’s phrasing, see Whalen 1999, 245; Huang and Huang 1996, 181.

10. Huang and Huang call this “dual-track time” (Huang and Huang 1996, 182).

11. For descriptions of some of the critical controversies surrounding “Strange Fruit” see Margolick (2000, 65–80).

12. Farah Jasmine Griffin has rightly noted that the latter suggestion is both groundless and offensive (Katz et al. 2002). For a brief, if somewhat uncritical, overview of the controversies around Holiday’s initial response to “Strange Fruit,” see Margolick (2000, 34–39). For a related discussion on the interpretation of sources see Bakan (2004, 20–22).

13. It should be noted, too, that notwithstanding the progressive ideals of Café Society management and the relatively congenial working conditions it offered its employees, the venue was itself not free of these dynamics (Bakan 2004, 251–53). The issue of how black performers were presented (and received) with regard to both race and gender at Café Society is complex. There were competing, sometimes conflicting, sometimes overlapping, perspectives and interests from performers and management, with various power dynamics at play (see Bakan 2004, 247–53, 147, note 140).

14. "Billies' Blues," recorded July 10, 1936 (Holiday 2001) is the sole the exception I have found.

15. Note however that most or all of the tunes attributed to Holiday were composed in collaboration with others. Holiday had no formal musical training, and could neither read music nor commit her own ideas to paper without the assistance of others (Whalen 1999, 25, 220, 251, 254; Denning 1996, 346).

16. During the same month that she recorded "God Bless the Child," Holiday sang "Strange Fruit" at a large May Day rally (*Daily Worker*, May 1, 1941; *Daily Worker*, May 2, 1941).

17. Angela Davis has noted that unlike "the overwhelming majority" of Holiday's other songs, "God Bless the Child" and "Strange Fruit" "contain no explicit allusions to love or sexuality" (Davis 1999, 162). Davis insists, however, that Holiday's other love songs, though less explicitly political than "Strange Fruit" or "God Bless the Child," nonetheless "raised questions that encourage awareness of the political character of sexuality." (Davis 1999, 179; see also Bakan 2004, 300–14).

18. For more on this topic see Bakan (2004, 120–36); see also Finklestein (1975), Hobsbawm (Newton 1975), and Baraka (Jones (Baraka) 1963).

19. See Bakan (2004, 291–92).

Part II

PROTEST GENEALOGIES

Chapter 4

Songs of Social Protest, Then and Now

William F. Danaher

In this chapter, I summarize how *sociologists* in particular have studied songs of social protest and outline some of the theoretical ideas reflected in them. This will aid readers in thinking about ways to critically analyse historical and ethnographic studies and should ideally offer a pathway into understanding some of the various approaches taken in this volume. I also aim to illustrate some of the different ways protest song can be configured and understood from a sociological viewpoint. While this chapter focuses mostly on the United States, the theoretical influence of early non-U.S. sociologists is apparent and global examples are employed throughout. I outline how many songs of protest began as oral, folk traditions but became increasingly based in popular music with the advent of modern technology. Social movements developed a repertoire of traditional protest songs that mirrored this pattern. In what follows, I pose the following questions: How have sociologists studied music across time? What is a protest song? How have social movements used protest songs? Is popular music considered protest music? I will address these questions and also suggest areas of study that might be fruitful for future study. Finally, this chapter also looks at how protest music can empower people to express dissent and, in many cases, to take action against what they see as unfair conditions, by citing specific case studies.

SOCIOLOGY AND MUSIC

Sociologists have long been interested in the study of music, if not always songs of protest in particular. Some classical theorists addressed music and its social importance (Denisoff 1971). For instance, Max Weber (1958) was concerned with music as a way of understanding culture, focusing on the

rationalization of western music through notation. Georg Simmel, on the other hand, was looking at the social meaning of music (Etzkorn 1964). The Chicago School, the center of U.S. occupational and small group studies in the 1930s, however, seems to have paid scant attention to music (Dowd 2007). During World War II, Theodor Adorno (1941), an important figure in the Frankfurt School, argued classical music enriched modern societies, while popular music paved the way for fascism. In the United States, ideas about music's role in society were percolating with Talcott Parsons focus on music as an integrative force (Denisoff 1971).

In contrast, David Riesman (1950) viewed popular music as protest, weighing the effects of media on youth. In the US, the burgeoning micro-oriented theories allowed the blooming of different theoretical orientations to the study of music and song. For instance, the ideas of Mead, Cooley, Homans and Hughes applied a micro theoretical slant to American Sociology taken up by such scholars as Howard Becker (1973).¹ Becker discusses jazz musicians' deviant lifestyles, while Hughes' (1971) investigates the performance of popular music as dirty work, work frowned upon by society. As society changed, micro forms of protest in genres such as blues and jazz (Baraka 1963; Danaher and Blackwelder 1993; Denisoff 1972) gradually gave way to more explicit protest music evidenced in 1950s rock and roll, the 1960s folk revival (Garofalo 1992), 1970s popular rock and punk, and contemporary rap (Kizer 1983). Notwithstanding these compelling, albeit sporadic works, sociologists have, in the main, given little attention to music historically. In more recent times, however, attention has increased (see Roy and Dowd 2010).

SONGS AND PROTEST

Songs are musical forms, which, along with lyrics, can inspire emotion and embolden people to protest against unjust conditions or participate in social movements. Religious music has been used to protest conditions of poverty in Nicaragua (Perez 2014) and racial inequality in the United States (Pattillo-McCoy 1998). Marshall music featuring horns and drums has emboldened people to march against injustice or go to war (McNeil 1995, Kendon 1990). Protest music is often viewed as folk music because of where it originates; much of it comes from the disenfranchised sending the message that social distinctions should be eradicated and that "we" are as important as "them" (Greenway 1953; Lomax, Guthrie, and Seeger 1967; Rosenthal and Flacks 2012; Pratt 1990). In the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. protest music was associated with popular youth culture (Denisoff 1971). In the United States, sociological analyses of songs of protest have ranged from those studying specific social

movements, such as civil rights, to less organized attempts at social change, that would not necessarily be considered social movements, such as 1960s youth movements for peace, as these tended to rely more on popular music as an expression of their discontent (Garofalo 1992).

Academics have debated what constitutes songs of protest. Folklorist John Greenway (1953) presents one debate around the folksong as protest song. A folksong used as a protest song must be authentic (e.g. played by *real* people), speak to a larger group, and supersede the author/composer. Greenway obviously had in mind that a protest song would be more authentic if it were used to stamp out repression. Protest songs are used for specific purposes, such as rhetoric to persuade (Kizer 1983) or as figurative weapons to attack oppressors (Lieberman 1989). Greenway (1953) notes that workers' unions changed lyrics to popular songs to express grievances, as people would be familiar with the tune and could focus on the lyrics. In many cases, these songs are forgotten by future generations because of changing popular tastes and time-specific use. Songs of protest are sometimes recycled but specific songs often only work in a particular time and place (see Danaher 2010). In Charleston, South Carolina, for instance, during the 1969 Hospital Workers Strike, the *News and Courier* reported that two neighborhood youngsters sang the song "Who's Making Love to Your Old Lady" to police officers patrolling their neighborhood (Danaher 2008). The song was not known as a protest song but was used as such because it fit the context and sentiment of those involved in the strike. A co-author and I previously interviewed an 83 year old musician about a strike that had occurred 70 years earlier (Roscigno and Danaher 2004). We asked him about one of the songs used in the strike but he didn't remember it. We then played him the song and he did remember it but had not heard it in years. The key point is that songs not originally considered to be protest songs can be used as such. Conversely, these songs might ultimately be remembered more as popular songs than as protest songs. For this reason, as I demonstrate below, sociologists have expanded their definition of what constitutes a song of protest precisely because people draw upon music that resonates with their social life.

Denisoff and Peterson (1972, 7–8) published a classic volume on the sociological study of music where they argued that music both reflects and shapes culture. They came up with five ways to view music and its social significance 1) the context of creation 2) the musical package 3) the context of time 4) the context of performance and 5) the context of culture. This schema reflects how music is a product of its time and place. This is consistent with the definition espoused by Greenway (1953) nearly twenty years earlier (see also Swidler 1986). Denisoff (1972) offers a definition of the folksong as protest song focusing on the participation of others in the performance and the use of terms such as "we" and "us", signifying group unity. Denisoff differentiates

protest music from propaganda music and argues that most propaganda music is not protest music, since propaganda music might be used to support the status quo or sell products, while protest music would do neither. Denisoff (1983) sees the roots of the protest song in religious songs but argues that religion has more often been centered on propaganda rather than protest. The use of religious music by secular groups for propaganda has spilled over into various worker movements and even Marxist movements, thus establishing protest music, formerly propaganda music, as radical in nature.

CHARISMATIC LEADERS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF FOLK SONGS

Folk songs, and to a lesser extent religious songs, have been seen by sociologists as the source of the protest song. In spite of folk songs being at the root of many protest songs, groups of people are often unable to make the leap from folk songs to protest songs (McLaurin and Peterson 1992). It often takes a charismatic leader to articulate and perform this transformation. In one study, Friedland (1964) employs Max Weber's concept of charisma and protest music to study modern African leadership in Tanganyika. Friedland finds that the native people of Tanganyika are "unable to formulate a point of view but know what they want to hear" (23). Protest music penned by a charismatic leader proved powerful for its effects on both the native people and their colonial overseers in this context.

In another example, U.S. workers in the late 1920s gathered at rallies to support changes in the working conditions at textile mills in Gastonia, NC. While they knew what their problems were, workers had difficulty articulating them. Ella Mae Wiggins, a fellow millworker and songwriter, was able to articulate the grievances of the workers by crafting songs about their plight, since she worked in the mills and lost children to the conditions of poverty and deprivation endemic to southern U.S. mill villages. The mill workers had migrated to the mills from the Southern Piedmont and Appalachian regions and Ella Mae employed music from these cultures that resonated with them (Roscigno and Danaher 2001; 2004). Songs about deprivation, family problems, and poor working conditions in the mills sung to popular tunes enabled the workers to form cohesive complaints, find culprits and pose solutions. Significantly, Ella Mae Wiggins' songs were seen as so threatening by the mill owners that they hired private security guards who, whether goaded on by the owners or not, shot Ella Mae dead (Roscigno and Danaher 2004).

In both of the situations described above, protest music was seen as dangerous by powerful elites because it was able to express sentiments of the people and led to action. The charismatic message of singer-songwriters is able to

channel particular moments in time and affect social change through performance and, often, through group participation. However, the protest song goes beyond the special gifts of the singer-songwriters and lends itself to establishing a collective identity that can be used to challenge the power structure and perhaps even change it. It is to this collective identity and social movements that the next section turns.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Sociologists have studied the protest song mostly as part of social movements (Bernstein 2005; Goodwin, Jasper and Polletta 2008; Gamson 1995; Taylor and Whittier 1995). Protest songs aid in the formation of a collective identity, the banding together of individuals to seek common outcomes and social change (Bernstein 2005; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Frith (1996) argues that music acts as an immediate catalyst for collective identity. Scholars bear this out by studying various social movements, such as student movements that used folk and popular music in the U.S. (Denisoff 1972), popular music in Serbia (Steinberg 2004), and corridos and popular music in Mexico (Marsh 2010). Songs are also important elements of social movements because they enable movements to disseminate messages far and wide, frame important issues, provide solutions to problems, use existing cultural forms to relate to protestors, and help adherents express their emotions (Taylor 2000; Jasper 1998; Collins 1990). Social movements might attempt to change the conditions of a particular group, such as workers, or a whole group, such as people of color or women. I will address these points below.

Social movement theories have focused on collective identity from a macro perspective. For instance, radio technology helped disseminate messages across wide geographical spaces leading to the emergence of a perceived, shared identity in the textile strike of the 1930s U.S. southern Piedmont, one of the largest strikes in U.S. history with nearly half a million workers participating (Roscigno and Danaher 2004). Radio was a new medium at this time and was dominated locally by corporate interests, so local stations concentrated on playing music for local audiences. This made radio a vehicle for the dissemination of music and appealing to the masses. Many of these listeners were textile workers and many of the songs on the radio told of the hardships of mill life. Significantly, radio stations were able to reach a broad swath of the population concentrated in the same areas where textile mills operated. Also, musicians (who were nearly always current or former mill workers) traveled from mill town to mill town, playing live on the radio in the mornings and live at local gatherings in the evening, which helped to create solidarity across the regions.

Social Movement theorists also look at how songs can be used to develop collective identity from a more micro perspective by focusing on how song lyrics frame pertinent issues (W. Gamson 1995; Snow and Benford 1992). Erving Goffman (1981) argues that we picture the world through various frames in order to make sense of what we see. Members of a society can agree on these shared frames but this can change when particular groups feel oppressed. Frames focus on how members of the group interpret the messages of songs. Social discourse theories analyse how people use language to socially construct alternative frames that define how one sees the world (Steinberg 2004). Alternative frames can lead social movement adherents to develop an oppositional consciousness and oppose the status quo (Mansbridge 2001). Polletta and Amenta (2008) note that simple frustration or empathy can lead to a push for social change in the face of constrained opportunities and this can lead to the formation of alternative frames. Protest songs frame social problems as being real and in need of change. Thus if protest songs are to be affective in the battle to change the status quo, they need to create alternative frames.

Protest songs can also provide solutions to the problems workers face. The song, "It's Dark as a Dungeon" (Travis 1946) for example expresses the problems faced by coal miners when they are working underground, likening the mine to a prison (Greenway 1953). In this song, it seems death may be the only solution to the horrible life suffered by miners. Yet, coal miners in the U.S. changed their working conditions through unionization. Across worker movements, songs, such as "Union Maid" (Guthrie 1960), have been used by workers to advocate changing working conditions (Roscigno and Danaher 2001). Unlike the coal miners, the southern textile workers did not receive union recognition and were unable to change their working conditions themselves.

As illustrated above, a significant amount of sociological research in this area has focused on the use of songs to protest conditions of work. In spite of the fact that many protest songs are lost across time, some songs, such as "Union Maid", "We Shall Overcome", and "Bread and Roses", have become iconic and have subsequently fueled many worker strikes (Greenway 1953). Workers often use preexisting culture as a way to create songs that address grievances (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). For instance, workers in the 1929 textile strike in Gastonia, North Carolina, were encouraged by outside union organizers to use songs from the union songbook. However, the textile workers politely declined because they preferred the songs familiar to them. They revised lyrics of popular "hillbilly" melodies penned by local union workers reflecting the musical roots in mill culture (Roscigno and Danaher 2004). By using preexisting culture, workers expressed themselves in songs that resonated with those around them. Roscigno, Danaher and Summers-Effler

(2002) found in an analysis of these songs that expressions of worker grievances were an important element. For instance, the song “Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues” told of the problems of overbearing bosses, identifying the culprits responsible for poor working conditions and giving workers a focus for their anger.

While worker movements have been important in attempting to change conditions in workplaces, other social movements have looked to change society more broadly to end group discrimination. The civil rights movement famously used religious songs as a salve for the world’s problems (Roy 2010; Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Morris 1984; Reed 2005; Barnes 2005; Pomerance 1988; McAdam 1988). Songs such as “We Shall Overcome” were important in tying protestors together, since the song was familiar and the repetitive chorus held a message of hope (Denisoff 1972). Hospital workers in Charleston, South Carolina, also used songs of the civil rights movement to good effect (Dent 1998). The hospital workers, African American and nearly all women, allied with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to address grievances at work. While on the picket lines they often sang the song “We shall not be moved” (Dent 1998). While the workers never received union recognition because of right-to-work laws, they were able to improve their conditions at work. This example demonstrates how context is important. Songs can bring people together but this togetherness does not always bring the expected change in the social system.

Still, context, and in the micro sense, space and its use, can be important in analyzing the effects of music. This is in part because music is performed and interpreted differently in different spaces. Music has the power to change a space. For instance, a civil rights workshop at the Highlander School in the southern Appalachian Mountains was invaded by locals with what seemed like ill intent. The workshop participants were frightened and for a matter of seconds all was tense and quiet. Then, suddenly, one of the participants began to sing “We Shall Overcome”. One by one the others joined in and the intruders, taken aback by the power of the music, exited the building (Dent 1998). Space then, is defined by how we use it, not a reified concept that has an effect beyond human action (Gans 2002). The degree of freedom within and around the space can help determine actions and reactions and how these actions will be interpreted. In another context, the song may not have been as powerful. I return to this idea below in the discussion of popular music.

In another attempt to change discrimination in U.S. society, the women’s movement used both traditional and original songs to protest (Danaher 2012; Love 2002; Mohammed 1991). From the early days of the U.S. women’s movement, which began in the 1850s (Backhouse and Flaherty 1992), women wrote songs expressing their frustrations. Feminist icon Betty Friedan (1976) recognized the power of song to win equal rights across the U.S. and beyond.

For instance, the Canadian women's movement during the 1970s used traditional protest songs, such as "Bread and Roses," to demand equality for women (Danaher 2012). What was important in the women's movement and the civil rights movement was that protest songs were used in an organized context where social movement adherents were striving for societal change (Staggenborg and Lang 2007). Movement leaders had specific directions for participants in social protests, including how to march, what chants to use, and songs with lyrics altered to fit their goals (Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Danaher 2010). This phenomenon is not particular to western nations. For instance, Swahili-speaking Muslim women used protest songs to change their place in society during the 1990s (Mwai 1998). Social movements are organized attempts to change institutional arrangements in society. But what about more general societal changes that are not specifically tied to social movements? Can songs not tied to particular social movements have a hand in societal change or are they simply being sung while social change occurs separately? It is to these questions that we now turn.

POPULAR MUSIC AS PROTEST MUSIC

While much research has addressed the use of folk or other music of disenfranchised groups in social movements, more recent research investigates how popular music has been used to protest and to quell protest (Danaher 2010). Early scholars studying protest music argued that the writer needed to be anonymous but academics reluctantly accepted that authors and performers played an important role (Greenway 1953). Woody Guthrie (1972) provides an example of the singer-songwriter-protestor. While many schoolchildren grew up singing "This Land is Your Land", they didn't use all the verses nor were they aware of the song's radical nature. As Denisoff and Peterson (1972) remind us, the context in which the protest song is employed is important in determining how it will be interpreted, often making innocuous songs seem radical. Popular songs listened to by millions on the radio can take on a new meaning when used in a different context (Small 1998). For instance, disco was popular dance music but could be seen as protest music when played in drag clubs for lip synching (Kaminski and Taylor 2008; Rupp and Taylor 2003). We may think of R&B as being the music of dancers or lovers but R&B songs often had sexist themes that degraded women in a backlash against the women's movement (Ward 1999). Rock music could be thought of as simple means of escape through the purely physical pleasure of hearing loud and aggressive music, however, many rock songs can be conceived of as songs of protest (Weinstein 2006; Michie 2013); Jimi Hendrix's playing of "The Star Spangled Banner" at Woodstock provides an example.

While rock music is often associated with youth counterculture, others have used rock music to present alternative frames. Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young became one such voice of the youth movement with songs like “Ohio” (Clegg 2013). Wilcox, Jelen and Goldberg (2000) found in their investigation of the Christian Right movement that it is an alternative form of rock that objected to the sex, drugs and rock and roll ethos that often defined mainstream rock. Rock music is popular music but songs often protest social problems in society such as child abuse in the 1980s in the song, “My Name is Luka” (Garofalo 1992).

Pop artists and their music can become associated with social movements, such as the women’s movement. The Helen Reddy song, “I Am Woman”, was seen by many as an anthem espousing equal rights for women (Garofalo and Wakman 2014; Arrow 2007). Reger (2007) saw pop artists and their music as important in the women’s movement but not in providing leaders for the movement, while Mohammed (1991) found that popular music was a reflection of a backlash against women. Walton (2013) found that women in popular music have been influential in crafting gender identities that fly in the face of stereotypical sexual images that fuel popular music, even in the face of a music industry that often waters down the message of those opposing the status quo. It is often the alternative framing in messages of pop songs that leads youth to reject stereotypes and the resulting discrimination. As white youth in the 1950s U.S. rebelled against their parents’ values, they turned to the radio to listen to the rock and roll of black artists in spite of discrimination being the law of the land (Kloosterman and Quispel 1990). Later, hip-hop and rap became the popular music of youth and a means to get society’s attention by pointing out social problems of black poverty in the inner city U.S. (Clay 2006; Watkins 2005; Trapp 2005) and as a means to establish allies to fight social problems across cultures in the U.S. (Lipsitz 1994) and even worldwide (Aidi 2014). Rap music was viewed as especially important in protesting the problems of being young and black in America (see Rose 1989, 1991). Trapp (2005) sees youth expressing their disenchantment via rap and punk music and this discontent resonates beyond the origins of the music in the U.S. and Britain, as seen in their usage in Bandung, Indonesia (Pickles 2007) and Sierra Leone (Shepler 2010). Funk music has also been seen as music of protest, because it unmasked the problems of a multi-racial society to a larger audience (Morant 2011).

If popular songs were played at protest events then they might be deemed acceptable as songs of protest. Greenway (1953) noted that much protest music was simply folk music with the words changed. But the burgeoning youth culture mentioned above often had other concerns other than working conditions, such as the Vietnam War of the 1960s. During this period, Denisoff (1971) noted that protest music and popular music were becoming

increasingly intertwined via the youth counterculture and anti-war movement. The popular protest singers of the 1960s, such as Peter, Paul and Mary, were becoming popular music stars; their music played on AM radio. They were playing songs like Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind" which was widely recognized as a protest song by a writer of protest music. When FM radio was underground, Denisoff notes, folk songs as protest songs were more prevalent. Songs criticizing the system, such as "Eve of Destruction", were coming under attack by conservative critics and often banned from the airways. But FM radio catered to the youth counterculture and broadcast the new popular rock that often criticized the social system. I remember when I was a teenager listening to the radio, Charlotte, North Carolina's WRNA signed off every night with Jimi Hendrix playing "The Star Spangled Banner".

Popular songs can become important as protest songs, especially when they are performed in front of large audiences or when they sell to a large disenchanted group, like anti-war baby boomers (Clegg 2013). While Bob Dylan may have been associated with protest in the 1960s, he was adamant that he was in league with no movement (Denisoff 1972). This is still often the case as popular artists can feel they have no official stake in a push for social change but might, nonetheless, have a bone to pick with those in power. Garofalo and Wakman (2014) outline how protest music was pushed off the radio and marginalized to the Internet during the War in Iraq, while Swedenburg (2012) notes the usefulness of the Internet in disseminating songs in the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Popular music that protests social conditions can be more subject to criticism given different contexts. Following Denisoff's (1972) argument, one could argue that country music during the Iraq war often turned into music of pro-government propaganda (Rossman 2004).

Blues and jazz were popular during the 1920s through the 1960s in the United States but also have a place in the history of protest music. Delta Blues musicians employed covert messages in their song lyrics to protest the racially segregated system and often send covert messages to subvert white power (Danaher and Blackwelder 1993; Cary 1990; Baraka 1963). Blues Queens of the 1920s are known for their million selling records but their music was also filled with lyrics protesting social conditions (Davis 1998; Danaher 2005). African American women also used the jazz format to protest social conditions (Hobson 2008), such as the Billie Holiday song "Strange Fruit" about the lynching of a black man.

The power of music is not lost on those who hold power. White power movements use songs to attract and retain followers (Corte and Edwards 2008; Eyerman 2002; Futrell, Simi and Gottschalk 2006; Adams and Roscigno 2005). New religious movements and mega-churches, reacting to a more secular society, have used rock music to attract adherents (see Wilcox, Jelen and Goldberg 2000). Governments use national anthems and popular

music to build support for their causes (Street 2003). As noted above, country music was used as a means for conservatives and the government in the U.S. to exert their influence. This made artists who bucked this trend open to criticism and even censure. For instance, when during U.S. involvement in the Iraq War Dixie Chicks lead singer Natalie Maines said publically that she was ashamed to be from the same state as then U.S. president George W. Bush, a veritable firestorm commenced. A battle of songs and words ensued which ended with the breakup of the Dixie Chicks amid criticism from conservative country musicians such as Toby Keith (Rossman 2004) and a renewed popularity of the song “Proud to be an American” by Lee Greenwood that went on to be listed recently by conservative Fox News as one of the “9 Songs That Make Us Proud to be Americans” (Fox News 2014). The Dixie Chicks, and especially Maines, were roundly criticized, their music was banned from radio stations, especially those approximate to military installations, and their promising musical career as a group was cut short.

CONCLUSION

While there have been debates over what constitutes a song of protest, there is no question that people use them to air problems. Protest songs frame issues, express grievances, identify culprits, and pose solutions to problems, while helping groups to develop and maintain collective identity (Taylor and Whittier 1995). Sociology has contributed to our understanding of the protest song in two important ways: through illuminating its use in social movements and its role in societal transformation. First, social movements researchers have been primarily concerned with how songs help establish collective identity. This can occur when songs appeal to adherents’ emotions, pose alternative ways (frames) to understand one’s situation and lead to an oppositional consciousness. More specifically, sociologists have been concerned with social movement culture, culture that arises out of social movements but originates from a culture that adherents can understand. Protest songs, thus, are songs that resonate with social movement adherents and often reflect a certain cultural logic. Sometimes the creation of protest songs is simply a matter of changing the lyrics of well-known songs into lyrics expressing dissatisfaction with the status quo, as in traditional worker movements or the U.S. civil rights movement. At other times, social movements have a stock set of songs with which to address problems and encourage adherents to embrace these songs. Sociologists have found that what constitutes a protest song can vary by the context in which the song is used. Traditional folk songs, spirituals or popular songs can all be used by social movements to create a sense of solidarity among their members and gain sympathy from nonmembers.

Second, protest songs have been studied by sociologists and others to determine their role in societal change. Songs of protest may be popular songs disseminated via technological means, such as the radio or the Internet. While these songs may be corporate products, or at least coopted by corporations for profit (Garofalo and Wakman 2014), they can still have an effect on large groups of people who share grievances and help lead to recognition of social problems and pose solutions. For instance, the 1960s and 70s LP covers of popular albums protested the status quo shocking the sensibilities of the larger public and feeding the desire of youth for something rebellious (Oaks 2005). The larger and the smaller context is important when evaluating the importance and effects of songs of protest.

Society is inherently unequal. Whether this inequality is natural or forced is a matter of debate (Kerbo 2012). However, there are those who will contest inequalities and express their objections to what they see as an unfair system. Many people write letters to the editor, complain to their friends and family, and move to different places in reaction to what they see as an unfair system. Others put their grievances into songs. Songs speak to the heart, to emotions, in a way that other forms of complaint simply don't. Songs appeal to emotion by building on socially acceptable forms of expression within a certain musical framework (Weber 1958; Turino 2008). Because of this process, music is able to provoke action based on shared sentiments. Songs can tell stories that speak to the problems of everyone but feel as though they are addressing the individual. Whether it is folk music used to appeal to educated college students or mill workers or pop music originally intended for entertainment, songs of social protest come into being. They can emerge within social movements, at protest events or through association with an historical context or social issue. Songs of protest are powerful and can lead to social change in many instances, therefore the study of songs of protest remains an important and ongoing endeavor within academia and beyond.

NOTE

1. Sociology began as a discipline focusing on society as a whole or macro processes. It was only later that sociologists began investigating micro processes in earnest.

Chapter 5

Pete Seeger and the Politics of Participation

Rob Rosenthal

The power of music to aid political struggles is often celebrated, but this power is typically assumed rather than actually demonstrated. It's rare for both musicians and academics to grapple with the questions behind those assumptions: How does music play a role in political struggles? How does it matter?¹

It is striking that this question is still often answered—in both popular discussions and academic treatments—primarily or solely by reference to the lyrics of a song (Mondak 1988; Anderson, Carnagey and Eubanks 2003; Lee 2011; Frith 1996; Henwood 2017). In 1941, Woody Guthrie wanted to get workers to join the industrial unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (the CIO), so he wrote a song with the chorus, “Oh you can’t scare me, I’m sticking to the union, I’m sticking to the union ‘til the day I die.” And, according to this approach, audience members heard those words and some therefore went out and joined the union. Is it really that simple?

In this chapter I examine the performance style of Pete Seeger as an example of how meaning is conveyed, understood and constructed from far more than just the lyrics of a song. Music is not a *thing*, as Christopher Small (1998) has argued, but a *process* (which is why he spoke about “musicking” rather than music). The meanings created in that process include—but extend beyond—lyrics, beyond melody, into performance, context, and reception as well.

I often make this point to my students by asking them to name the most important feminist anthem. Invariably, though it is 50 years old now, they name Aretha Franklin singing *Respect*. They're pretty surprised to read the lyrics:

What you want, baby I got it
What you need, you know I got it
All I'm asking is for a little respect when you come home

I ain't gonna do you wrong while you're gone
 I ain't gonna do you wrong, cause I'm a woman
 All I'm asking for is a little respect when you come home

I'm about to give you all my money
 And all I'm asking in return honey
 is to give me my props when you get home

Ooo your kiss is sweeter than honey
 And guess what—so here's my money
 All I want you to do for me is to give it to me when you get home
 Whip it to me when you get home

R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Find out what it means to me
 R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Take care—TCB!
 Sock it to me.
 (I get tired, keep on trying
 You're running out of fuel and I ain't lying
 Start when you get home
 Or you might walk in and find I'm not alone). (Franklin 1967)

In its original version, written and sung by Otis Redding, the lyrics seem to lay out the sexual gender politics of the time: the male will support the female financially, but the female needs to be sexually faithful in return. In Aretha's adaptation, sung from a woman's point of view with some key lines added ("Whip it to me"; "sock it to me"), the lyrics seem pretty clearly to be about getting good sex²—perhaps one aspect of feminism but not the meaning, I dare say, that most people have in mind when they declare *Respect* a great feminist anthem. Are they therefore wrong to say it's a great feminist anthem? Of course not. It just means that our notion that it's a great feminist anthem comes from more than the lyrics alone. Maybe it's the sound of Aretha's voice. Maybe it was the time when it came out, or the way it's been used by feminists. Maybe it's that one word, "respect."

In previous work (see Rosenthal 2001; Rosenthal and Flacks 2011) I have endorsed and utilized a constructionist approach to meaning, i.e., an appreciation of the ways in which the meaning of a piece of music is not simply a reflection of some innate properties but constructed by each person from a myriad of factors, coming (intentionally or unintentionally) from the performer, and/or located within the audience, and/or arising from the setting in which the two come together. Flacks and I have called each of these factors "pointers"—that is, each may point towards a meaning, and the individual's constructed meaning(s) arises from the interaction of these many, many pointers.

If I'm a feminist attending a Womyn's concert in which *Respect* is played, I'm very likely to see it as an anthem of empowerment. If I'm agnostic about feminism and hear *Respect* in a club, the meaning I attach to the performance may be more about the joy of dancing. If I hear *Respect* in that club with my musician buddy who keeps pointing out the bass line, the bass line may become the meaning.

THE ROAD TO A CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

Seventy-five years ago, Theodor Adorno ([1941] 1990) argued that the politics of a piece of music had to be understood in its conditions of production and distribution, rather than simply by what it proclaimed in its lyrics (if there were any). Adorno's blanket dismissal of the progressive political possibilities in popular music (and, many argue, his lack of knowledge about jazz in particular) have been amply discussed many times (see Nye 1988; Witkin 2000; and in Adorno's defence on some of these charges, Paddison 1982; Hamilton 1991; Thompson 2010), but the kernel of his argument remains essential: the meaning of a piece of music cannot be reduced to simply what it "says" in the lyrics or the intentions of its creator.

While Adorno and his colleagues in the Frankfurt School were interested in the structures and processes of production and distribution controlled by a culture industry, Stuart Hall and others in the Birmingham School, beginning in the 1970s, emphasized the processes of reception and reconstruction carried out by audiences (Hall 1980, 1981; Hebdige 1979, 1988; Willis 1977, 1978). Interactionist theorists in the 1950s and 60s—including Howard Becker (1963) and David Riesman (Riesman et al. 1950)—had already (at least implicitly) challenged the Frankfurt School assumption of universal passivity resulting from popular music fandom, arguing that attention needed to be paid to how individual consumers used the products they received; some, Riesman argued, were active listeners who rejected the practice of using music as merely background noise for socializing. But the Birmingham School and other postmodernists took this notion of meaning construction much further, viewing consumers as co-participants—even dominant participants—in the creation of meaning, reassembling what they found in popular (and by implication all) culture into products and narratives of their own. The artist's intent was virtually irrelevant; even the production and distribution structures of the industry, which in Adorno's view framed (and thus defanged) all radical content, were seen as largely trumped by the active deconstruction, reconstruction and appropriation of the elements of popular culture by consumers.

The Birmingham School, too, has its critics, particularly those who feel it substantially underestimated the power of the framing and filtering effects of the popular music industry (e.g., Thornton 1995; Negus 1996). Again, however, I don't wish to adjudicate here between the Birmingham School and its critics, but rather, as with Adorno, to note the former's contribution, in widening our notions of what a piece of music "means" and how that meaning is constructed. Christopher Small (1998) epitomizes this constructionist approach when he insists that we look at musicking as a process rather than music as an object.

RETHINKING "POLITICAL MUSIC"

If musical meaning in general is constructed by each individual through a complex dialectic involving many factors and participants (composers, artists, settings, audiences, etc.), it follows that music may "be" political—that is, have political meaning to some people—in many different ways. In the film *We Wanted to Do Something* (2015), Iris Bork-Goldfield presents the story of her father and other young people who resisted the government of the German Democratic Republic in the early 1950s. As her father describes those days of extreme danger, an enormous smile comes over his face as he recalls the music that sustained them in their struggles: American jazz on the radio—"that Negro music," as one of their parents called it—and in Berlin, a German group, The Spree City Stompers, at a nightclub called the Badewanne. There were no lyrics, there was no overt political content of any kind, but there was a feeling of freedom they recognized as central to their own struggle, a connection to the West, enemy of their enemy. That was their "movement music."

Or consider *We Shall Overcome*, the anthem of the U.S. Civil Rights movement. Certainly the lyrics have a political message, but the way in which it was sung in movement gatherings—everyone singing, arms crossed, holding each other's hands, swaying in time together—conveyed to the movement participants political meanings as well: solidarity, loyalty, a physical sign of joint struggle and reciprocal responsibilities. When 100,000 people sang *We Shall Overcome* in that fashion in the rally which ended the historic 1963 March on Washington, "at that moment, they all believed they could overcome" (Hampton 1986, 53).

Or consider, again, *Respect*. Aretha Franklin's regal bearing, her background in the civil rights movement through her father, the Reverend C.L. Franklin, the frequent use of the song at civil rights and later feminist meetings—all of these established *Respect* as politically meaningful for some people at some times. Over three decades after its release, *Ebony* magazine described it as "a personal and collective anthem not only for Aretha Franklin

but for everybody living in the shadows, for abused and undervalued Sisters as well as undervalued Brothers, for women and men of all races who wanted, needed, had to have that respect" (Norment 1998, 90).

Musicking may serve a variety of functions for movements—creating solidarity, educating the uneducated, motivating those already committed (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011). *How* these are accomplished is extremely complex, highly variable by context, audience member, movement needs and many other factors. A proper appreciation of this begins, however, with moving beyond the simplistic equation of political meaning with the semantic meaning of the lyrics to case-by-case studies of how musicking's meaning is created and constructed in actual practice.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AS DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

For Pete Seeger, the most important political and social meaning of a piece of music was usually found in its performance, and in particular the degree to which audiences participated in the performance. Seeger's political thrust was always towards maximizing democracy, and facilitating the ability of all members of a society to participate in all aspects of social life, from how the economy was run to how art was created and shared. Democratic music, therefore, wasn't simply singing *about* democracy, but singing *democratically*. Socialist music wasn't simply singing about socialism, but singing socialistically. "There may be as much social understanding in the singing of 'Clementine' as in the singing of 'Solidarity'—depending on the economic unity of those who sing," he wrote in a piece called "Union Songs Must Be Fun" (2012 [1946], 85). The performer/audience split was a problem to be overcome,³ as elite control of the economy or political life was a problem to be overcome; participation of all was the goal in all spheres. "It all boils down to what I would most like to do as a musician... Put songs on people's lips instead of just in their ears" (Seeger and Blood 1993, 16).

At times Seeger presented this as a conviction he came to embrace over time. In the late 1990s, for example, he told an interviewer:

Even singing a sentimental old song can actually be a very political thing if people are singing together. It might be "You Are My Sunshine." Because black and white people are singing that together, getting a little harmony together, it became a very important thing... [But] when it first came out I was rather contemptuous of it—one more attempt of the ruling class to give us nice, pretty songs and forget about problems we should be facing up to. Well, now I see that it's not just the words of the song, but the singing of the song, which is even more important. (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011, 243)

But participation is more accurately seen as an approach he'd always embraced in one way or another, as he acknowledged in 2005 in the midst of negotiations with filmmaker Jim Brown regarding the making of what came to be *Pete Seeger: The Power of Song*:

Maybe you don't know why I'd like to put words of a half dozen or more songs on the screen [during the movie] so people can sing along if they want. I feel it's the most important part of my work as a musician. I've never sung *anywhere* without giving the listeners a chance to join in. As a kid, a teenager, a lefty, as a man touring the USA and 45 countries, as an oldster. Actually, if I had my way, the title of the movie would be *Participation*, subtitled *The Life of Pete Seeger, Family and Friends*. (Seeger 2012, 257)

It's likely that this approach, like much of Seeger's philosophy of music-making, was inherited and adapted from the work of his father, Charles Seeger, a musicologist and earlier pioneer of ethnomusicology. At one point, Charles saw his mission as bringing classical music to the rural masses; that effort led him to conclude that the masses themselves already possessed a formidable musical tradition, the folk music of the people:⁴

Music can be *made for* these majorities through written techniques. But it still can be *made by* them only through oral techniques. That a majority will long remain content exclusively with music *made for* it is now to be doubted. Present indications, at least in the United States, are that it has not. The resurgence of orally learned singing and instrument playing here has even been implemented with industrial products that originally were considered to be militating against this practice." (Seeger [1953] 1977, 331. Original emphases)

One of Seeger's favorite and most often repeated bits of wisdom from his father was this: "Judge the musicality of a nation not by the presence of virtuosos, but by the general level of people who like to make music" (Berman and Goldman 1992; reprinted in Seeger 2012, 335).⁵

Encouraging audience participation was integral to the younger Seeger's early work with the Almanac Singers, a group formed in the early 1940s with political purpose in mind, particularly the growth of the union movement. In their now-legendary 1941 tour in support of the organizing drives of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO)—the radical alternative to the American Federation of Labor (AFL)—Seeger and his singing comrades discovered their "power to get thousands of workers ...up and singing, 'Oh you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union, ...sticking to the union 'till the day I die'" (Klein 1980, 199). Singing together was quite consciously seen as a metaphor for joining together in unions and other progressive organizations; a way of trying out solidarity in the safety of a cultural event before making

that extremely dangerous step of joining a union at a time when doing so had potentially catastrophic personal consequences (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011).⁶

Audience participation survived in a considerably weakened form in The Weavers, Seeger's polished and pop-oriented hit group of the early 1950s, whose live repertoire included occasional sing-alongs like "On Top of Old Smokey" or "When the Saints Go Marching In," but whose audience, many of whom were new to "folk music," were more interested in hearing the group's Top 10 hits, like "Wimoweh" (Seeger 2012). By the mid-1950s, however, red-baiting and Seeger's own sense of mission had led to his leaving The (now re-formed) Weavers, and in his new career as a solo performer, he once again stressed narrowing the artist/audience divide. He saw—and presented—himself as a song leader rather than a star, and he honed an ability to induce audiences around the globe to join him in that vision, overcoming cultural and language barriers with his infectious insistence that everyone join in. Audiences in the Soviet Union were shy, he wrote back to Woody Guthrie in 1964: "The idea of singing along with me is a completely new idea to them, and I have slow going at first. But later they really break out. And I have learned just a few of their songs, so we can meet each other at least part way" (Seeger 2012 [1964]:213). In Tel Aviv he led 26,000 people singing the chorus to the Cuban song *Guantanamera* (Seeger 2012, 177); in New Zealand he induced his audience of Samoan agricultural students to join him on *Wimoweh* (from South Africa) and *Tzena, Tzena, Tzena* (from Israel) (Seeger 2012, 191).

Seeger picked songs to play in concert in part by how easily an audience could learn them; he adopted and adapted the psalm-singing and gospel traditions of "lining out" to all manner of songs, speaking the words one line ahead of his audience so they could sing along; he experimented with visual techniques, projecting words on a screen or hanging words on a banner, so audiences could join in. He urged those promoting his concerts to "use democratically semicircular seating. When everyone joins in on a chorus, there is a mutual life from seeing each other" (Seeger [1957] 2012, 254). As a result of this approach, Seeger concerts *felt* very different than a conventional star-on-the-stage concert: "I remember the first time I heard Pete Seeger get a crowd to sing," one labor activist told an interviewer; "to hear my voice with a whole auditorium was just so exciting" (quoted in Rosenthal and Flacks 2011, 161).

Did this participation then translate into political consciousness and political action, as Seeger hoped it would? Given the array of factors involved in each individual's political development, it's very difficult to claim definitive empirical proof of this or provide estimates of how frequently it occurs, but investigations in many fields strongly suggest participation often has dramatic results. The effects of political participation on political beliefs (though far

less often studied than the effects of beliefs on participation) have been found to be significant in a number of studies (e.g., Finkel 1985; Jones 1976; Gibson et al. 2000; Gastil 2007; Kallhoff 2011; MacDonald 2014; Fung 2015); studies of greater participation in workplace decision making consistently demonstrate changed views about the workplace, including a greater sense of responsibility for collective success (Dyson and Foster 1982; Harneker 2007; Artz and Kim 2011). The most compelling evidence, perhaps, is found in the voluminous literature on experiential education, in which participation is consistently found to be a highly effective form of pedagogy across a wide range of fields (Kidron 1977; Campbell 1999; Spiezo et al. 2005; Kolb and Kolb 2005; Eyler and Giles 2007).⁷

Anecdotal and participatory evidence specifically regarding musical participation in social movements also supports Seeger's faith. Sanger, for example, reporting on activists in the civil rights movement, described collective singing as a transformative experience which "changed them, created strong positive emotion, banished fear and hatred, and charged them with a previously unexperienced sense of spirituality" (1997, 191). This sense of transformation was a frequent theme of activists I interviewed for *Playing for Change* (Rosenthal and Flacks 2012). Sonny, for example, described his recruitment into the (left-wing) Henry Wallace presidential campaign: "the hootenannies [i.e., singalongs] held by the campaign, the campfires..., and the clear message that the two old parties were beyond hope marked a turning point in my passage to adult life" (2012, 168).⁸

THEORIZING AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Seeger also began to spend much more time writing *about* what had come to be called folk music, theorizing important issues, albeit in the folksy voice he used in performance, most regularly in his Johnny Appleseed (later just Appleseed) column in the pages of the folk magazine, *Sing Out!* In 1956 he wrote:

The revival of audience singing is an integral part of the whole revival of interest in folksongs in America. Consider the matter historically. It is only within the comparatively recent history of the human race that such emphasis has been put upon professional solo singers... The revival of interest in all folk music, which proceeds this year of '56 on an unprecedented scale, is simply part and parcel of a gigantic countertrend in American life. (The main trend is, of course, mass production and mass media.) The Sunday painters, the do-it-yourselfers, the taking up of sports like sailing, skin-diving, skiing, are all evidence of 160 million Americans wanting to do something more creative with their time than switch the TV set on and off. And this is perhaps one of the very best things that ever happened in our country... Ultimately, rank-and-file participation in music

goes hand in hand with creativity on other planes—arts, sciences, and yes, even politics. (Seeger 1956, excerpted in Seeger 2012, 253–4)

This last phrase is particularly interesting. First, note how gingerly Seeger approaches the question of politics here. It's 1956, the height of McCarthyism and the Red Scare hysteria in the United States. A year earlier Seeger had refused to name names to the House Un-American Activities Committee;⁹ a year later he would be indicted for contempt of Congress for his refusal. In that atmosphere, Seeger doesn't proclaim participation as a tool of the revolution, as he might have years earlier, but he's too righteous and committed a political person to avoid the obvious parallel. He claims the right to political participation for all, regardless of their ideas, as he proclaims the right of musical participation for all, regardless of level of ability.

The reference to politics is significant in another way as well. In Seeger's early years of wedding music to politics, the emphasis was in large part on participation as a *tactic*. That is, if you wanted to get people to actually consider joining a union in 1941—when making that decision was at least livelihood-threatening, sometimes even life-threatening—singing *at* them wasn't as likely to be successful as singing *with* them. Pete, Woody Guthrie and the other Almanac Singers saw in their daily cultural work that singing together was a smaller, safer model of standing together, joining together. It helped, certainly, to hear those words—*You can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union*—come out of your own mouth, but it was profoundly more moving to do so surrounded by hundreds or thousands of other people also considering this difficult, dangerous decision. The end product they were hoping for was that some great number of those people would indeed vote to establish a union at their workplace.

In later years Seeger became somewhat less concerned with this kind of recruitment. Partly because of his disenchantment with the path of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, he came to distrust large-scale political organizations. He didn't completely abandon a vision that they might be necessary, but increasingly he placed his trust in “good little things happening. Little organizations. Little political groups, little religious groups, little scientific groups, little cultural groups” (Seeger [2009] 2012, 340). How people related to each other in these groups, and how they reached out to others from these groups, became a form of politics that was increasingly important to him. Participation, to a large extent, became the *end* rather than a *tactic* to achieve an end: participation was itself the exercise of democracy, not merely an organizing tool for recruitment to radical organizations that would bring about democracy.

Clearly, these two views of participation aren't mutually exclusive, and both can be found at most times throughout his work. But as Seeger's

political activity moved away from predominantly seeking to build larger political institutions (the CIO, the Communist Party, etc.), his emphasis moved from participation as tactic to participation as essence.

ADORNO REDUX

Seeger's emphasis on participation returns us to Adorno. "Those who ask for a song of social significance ask for it through a medium which deprives it of social significance," Adorno claimed. "The use of inexorable popular musical media is repressive per se" ([1941] 1990, 312). The history of the use of popular and folk music in political struggles around the world has revealed the weakness in that argument; later theorists have appreciated much more clearly how popular and folk music can be used as important weapons in resistance and revolutionary movements (e.g., Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Street 1986; Garofalo 1992; Rose 1994; Denselow 1989; Roy 2010; Pratt 1990; Rosenthal and Flacks 2011). Yet for all the justified criticisms that may be made of Adorno's writings in this field, his basic point was profound and valuable: there is a politics to music-making that cannot be reduced to what artists think they're expressing (in their lyrics or otherwise) but emerges through the processes by which music is produced, circulated, and appropriated.

Meaning, including political meaning, is constructed, not discovered. Artists "say" things through their lyrics, their dress and appearance, their stage patter, through the type of music they present and the instruments they use to present it (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011, chapters 2–5; Walser 1993; Qureshi 2000; Taffet 1997; Rose 1994). Audience members bring their own agendas—their ideas, their level of focus, their areas of interest. Factors between the two also frame meaning—where we hear the music, how it's framed by those producing the event, how the music is described by professional observers like critics; and on and on. Meaning is stitched together by each participant, in ways that are idiosyncratic, but also in patterns that sometimes link many participants in shared understandings (Negus 1996; Frith 1996; Christenson and Roberts 1998; Hall 1980): *Respect* "means" feminism, *Street Fighting Man* "means" overthrowing the capitalist system¹⁰ and *Alright* "means" Black lives matter.

Seeger was fortunate in that many of these factors tended to point in the same direction in his performances. He and his comrades sang the words *You can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union* during a time of political upheaval and the emergence of the industrial unions, in a participatory style, with audiences who were interested in joining a union, often in union or socialist halls. But meanings don't necessarily link up so easily. What do we make,

for example, of the Southern California suburban skinhead subculture of the 1990s that displayed the most democratic practices—audience members were as much a part of the show as the band through moshing and stage diving—but whose lyrics and other declarations expressed a neo-fascist culture of extreme racism and sexism (Simi 2006; Simi and Brents 2008)?

Seeger, ever optimistic, had faith that participation itself was the most powerful of the many factors in the great mosaic that makes up meaning for each individual. People who sang together would be more likely to struggle together, regardless of what they were singing. People who engaged in democratic performance practices, minimizing the elitism of the artist/audience split, would, sooner or later, be pulled towards democratic practices in other aspects of their lives.

Performance practices alone, no matter how participatory, can't guarantee the transmission of any particular political idea—but what can? As Lee Hays, who sang with Seeger in both the Almanac Singers and Weavers, once said: “Good singing won't do, good praying won't do, good preaching won't do, but if you get all of them together with a little organizing behind [them], you get a way of life and a way to do it” (Lowenfels 1941, 7; quoted in Reuss 1971, 217). In the complex mix that goes into the construction of political meaning and the creation of a political movement, Pete Seeger never believed that it was only participation that mattered. But he did believe that participation always mattered.

NOTES

1. For examples of those seeking to understand *how* political music makes a difference, see Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Roy 2010; Chang 2005; Rosenthal and Flacks 2011; Frith 1996; Pratt 1990; Street 1986; Rose 1994; Garofalo 2006.

2. As her producer, Jerry Wexler, wrote in his autobiography, “For Otis, ‘Respect’ had the traditional connotation,” but in Aretha’s version, “respect also involved sexual attention of the highest order. What else could ‘sock it to me’ mean?” (Wexler and Ritz 1993, 213).

3. For instance, he responded this way to an article on the folk music revival by the noted critic Nat Hentoff: “I feel you concentrated too exclusively on well-known professional performers of folk songs, in order to analyze the folk song revival. Whereas the long-run significance to the musical life of this country is in the huge numbers of people not just listening to this music, but trying to make it themselves” (Seeger [1963] 2012, 284). Twenty-five years later he wrote to friends: “...really what I wanted to do was to try and get rank-and-file people singing again, whether parents singing to children or workers singing on the job or friends harmonizing in a car as they drive down the highway. But the prevalence of loudspeakers has defeated me...” (Seeger [1986] 2012, 290).

4. Charles arrived at this not through any philosophical tradition, apparently, but through firsthand experience, beginning with a family trip in 1921, hauling a home-made trailer in which the family would present classical music in rural towns. “Camped out in the woods of the MacKenzie family, local farmers, they played some Bach and Handel one evening at the farmer’s house. Afterward the MacKenzie family reciprocated, unlimbered banjos and fiddles, and Seeger realized that ‘the people’ already had some pretty good music” (Seeger [1979] 2012, 43). Charles Seeger’s interest in folk music was further enhanced by the Popular Front approach of the Communist Party in the 1930s (Seeger 2012, 44).

5. Most of his early mentors and musical comrades shared this sentiment and approach, including Josh White, Woody Guthrie and Lee Hays. See, for example, Seeger 2012, chapters 3 and 14.

6. For more on the Almanacs and this history, see Seeger 2012; Rosenthal and Flacks 2011; Denning 1997; Reuss and Reuss 2000; Lieberman 1995; Willens 1988; Hawes 2008; Cohen 2002.

7. Hence the service-learning motto: “I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.”

8. For an extended discussion of the role of participation in various movements, see Rosenthal and Flacks (2012, chapters 11–12).

9. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was one of the principal federal government committees charged with investigating “subversion”.

10. This despite lyrics which appear to chronicle the *lack* of street fighting while valorizing singing in a rock and roll band as an alternative.

Chapter 6

The Radicalisation of Phil Ochs, the Radicalisation of the Sixties

Anthony Ashbolt

In this chapter, I argue that singer-songwriter and activist Phil Ochs (1940–1976) not only represented, but also shaped the politics of radicalism in the 1960s United States, particularly in the years up to 1968. Issues of civil rights, war and peace, free speech, student power, cultural rebellion, women’s and gay liberation, shook American society to the core in the 1960s. To use the words of two former Sixties’ radicals and distinguished historians, it was a decade of “civil war” (Isserman and Kazin 2000) and during that time, for many activists like Ochs, a radical commitment both grew and deepened, particularly as the American War in Vietnam intensified. I argue that Ochs was one of the most important of the young, politically committed singer-songwriters of the 1960s and yet comparatively few commentators have highlighted his significant contribution (obvious exceptions include Eliot 1978; Schumacher 1996, 1998; Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 128-30; Kemp 1998; Browser 2010). My aim is in part to rectify this and to illustrate the dialectical relationship between Ochs and the movement. As Ochs became more radical, so did the movement, shifting quickly from reform to resistance and then to revolution as strategies for social change. Yet Ochs did more than chart this course. He helped forge it. Thus this chapter examines Ochs as a key singer-songwriter of the 1960s through songs of his that spoke to, and about, the politics of social upheaval that the civil rights, student new left, antiwar and counter-culture movements were involved with.

To be radical does mean, initially, going to the root of a problem or an issue. I would argue that as activists dug deeper in the 1960s, uncovering the real extent of the capitalist system’s corruption of American society, they increasingly sought to transform thoroughly or overthrow the system. Artists and cultural producers can help propel such change. Songs, as Pete Seeger once observed, might not be able to change the world but they have

a remarkable capacity to contribute significantly to processes of social and political transformation (Dunaway 2008, 426–7). Moreover, and this is my argument concerning the songs of Phil Ochs, they can articulate and shape ways of thinking that are about to take form and develop a presence. In this way, they serve, if only partially, as seeds of transformation. In the 1960s they helped to point away from reform to resistance and then to revolution. So it was that Ochs sang in a militant way about civil rights before the movement itself was radicalized and spawned black power. He sang about empire before the critique of imperialism was developed fully in the peace movement. Finally, revolution was on his mind before the student movement entered its revolutionary phase.

THE BIRTH OF A RADICAL

Phil Ochs was not a “red diaper baby”, a term coined by the American left for one born into a radical, more particularly, communist, family. His introduction to radical music and politics came at Ohio State University in the late 1950s through a close friend schooled in both the music of fellow American singer-songwriter Woody Guthrie and the celebrated group The Weavers, and the writings of Karl Marx and those in the American revolutionary tradition like Thomas Paine (Eliot 1978, 28-37). The foundations of the radical Phil Ochs had been laid but by no means developed when he joined the Greenwich Village folk music scene in 1960s New York. That scene was a vital part of the new folk revival of the 1960s, the origins of which lay in the tradition of music (including country and blues) grounded in the struggles of working people, blacks, the isolated and the poor. Helping lay the foundations of an original folk music revival were the efforts of a varied crew: individuals like musicologist Alan Lomax who collected recordings throughout the country (particularly from the late 1930s to the 1960s) and was also based for a time in England; organisations such as the Highlander Folk School (and its key figures Cynthia and Myles Horton) that trained activists and cultural workers; the trade union movement and early civil rights movement; and one political party, the Communist Party (CPUSA); and, of course, musicians and songwriters like Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie, Huddie Ledbetter, Pete Seeger and The Weavers (Szwed 2010; Lieberman 1989; Weissman 2010; Bluestein 1994; Horton 1990; Cantwell 1996; Cohen 2002).

The newer generation of singers and singer-songwriters who moved to convivial enclaves like Greenwich Village, North Beach in San Francisco or Harvard Square in Cambridge, drew on this tradition and also added, if only eventually, their own distinctive styles of writing, singing and performance. Some, of course, were more explicitly political than others and Phil Ochs,

Dave van Ronk (known as the Mayor of MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village), Joan Baez, Tom Paxton, Bob Dylan in his early years, Peter Yarrow, Paul Stookey and Mary Travers (Peter, Paul and Mary) were amongst those in the vanguard of “protest singing” (Browser 2010; Van Ronk 2005; Archibald 2012; Baez 1989; Wharton 2009).

REFORM, RESISTANCE, REVOLUTION

The combination of protest movements, from civil rights and anti-war organisations, to the new left and counterculture, to women’s and gay liberation, to ecological activism, was known as the ‘Movement’, even if the term “new left” was sometimes used coterminously (Goodman 1970; Anderson 1995; Teodori 1970, Bloom and Breines 2003; Gitlin 1987). Ochs’ growing radicalisation in the 1960s both mirrors and presages changes in the ‘Movement’ itself. Ochs was, in a very real sense, a Movement singer but he did not simply reflect the direction of Movement politics. Rather, he laid new groundwork for thinking about American politics and radical opposition to it. There was, for instance, the Phil Ochs who was a founding member of the Yippies, that group of radicals who sought to use counterculture as a medium for a type of surrealist politics (Hoffman 1968, Rubin 1970, Anderson 1995, 217–22). It is easy to forget or ignore this side of Ochs because he seemed, on the surface at least, to have some very traditional radical concerns grounded in struggles of racial and, most particularly, economic justice. He thus appeared to fit the mould of a Joe Hill or a Woody Guthrie or a Pete Seeger, three prominent figures in the folk music tradition far more celebrated for their political singing-songwriting (Weissman 2005, 171–204; Dunaway 2008; Winkler 2011). Like those performers, Ochs always saw himself as singing for the workers, so his foundation membership of a revolutionary youth organization might represent an apparent departure from classic left-wing principles and policies. Indeed, his songwriting barely reflects a Yippie sensibility by the late 1960s, as disillusionment with the world of politics propels a move inwards. Yet Ochs did go to Chicago in 1968, alongside his Yippie comrades Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, to express his disenchantment with the system, his disgust with American empire and his absolute disillusionment with a liberal politics through which he had once sought inspiration. Indeed, as Jerry Rubin pointed out, he was the only folk singer to join the Chicago protest just as MC5 was the only rock band (Rubin 1970, 168). Ochs emerged from Chicago less a hardened revolutionary, as some did, and more a dispirited radical. He was not alone in finding a personal and political abyss, as many radicals who went through those years succumbed to confusion, doubts and sheer exhaustion. While never abandoning his commitment to radical and

then revolutionary change, he was to undergo moments of both personal and political despair in later years, culminating in his tragic suicide in 1976.

From reform to resistance to revolution: these were the phases of Sixties protest politics in America. The dates are rather fluid, with crossovers and continuity rather than definite moments but 1960 to 1965 can be seen as the years of reform rooted in liberal left humanism and civil rights. These were the years when the ideology of liberalism still had some influence in the American new left. 1966 and 1967 can be seen as the years characterised by resistance (to the American War in Vietnam specifically, but also to the edifice of state power, including the power of the draft or conscription) and black power. The final phase, the revolutionary moment, captured the spirit of 1968 and 1969 and can be seen on the streets, in the pamphlets and underground newspapers, in the armed communes, and in the ideology of liberation generally. Liberation, of course, connoted the absolute transcendence of liberalism. Ochs' 1966 song 'Love Me, I'm a Liberal' is a burial note to the ideology of liberalism that does hint at a turn towards revolution. It is an acerbically funny critique of the liberal pretense of speaking for progressive causes while all along remaining essentially supportive of the state apparatus of repression.

RADICAL REFORM AND CIVIL RIGHTS

The first phase of Movement reform politics (from 1960 to 1965), highlighted by the civil rights movement and Students for a Democratic Society, can be seen in the folk music songs of that period. The most notable theme song of that period was 'We Shall Overcome', arising initially out of the gospel tradition and then used by the trade union movement. The song was popularised by Pete Seeger, particularly following his performance of it at the Newport Folk Festival in 1963, and remains a clarion call to solidarity (Dunaway 2008, 280). Phil Ochs' 'Here's to the State of Mississippi' (1964) however, penned after the assassinations of three civil rights workers in 1964 Mississippi, marks a transition that also saw the civil rights movement itself soon move in different directions. There was a new militancy expressed, a harbinger of things to come, a rejection of classical political negotiation and embracing of open resistance. Ochs' song was not a call for 'black power' but it dovetailed neatly with the rise in a sentiment that embraced rebellion and the assertion of black priorities (Charmichael and Hamilton 1968; Kelley 2002). For some in the civil rights movement it was just too radical, too dismissive in calling white American southerners in Mississippi racists when actually it was all about state power, and the power of one state over the lives of blacks and those who joined them in resistance. It was also about the power of racist

cultural hegemony that ensured general white support for the practices of segregation, daily oppression, denial of civil and voting rights and lynching.

Linked to the civil rights movement but with a distinct identity itself was the struggle on behalf of the poor. This was articulated early on by the organization founded in 1960 Students for Democratic Society (SDS) in documents like ‘The Port Huron Statement’ (1962) and through its community engagement programmes surrounding the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP) from 1963 to 1966 (Sale 1973; Bloom and Breines 2003, 50–61; Breines 1982). The focus of ERAP was the poor and unemployed. Indeed, SDS during the early phase of the Movement, in contrast to classical Marxist parties, reasoned that the most abrasive contact that people had with the ruling elites was less at the point of production than outside it in the community (Gitlin 1970, 137). Any movement that sought to sponsor community activism could no longer be bound by geography (the south) or race, but would have to be “an interracial movement of the poor.” (Hayden and Wittman 1966, 175–214; Lynd 1970, 255–8). While it did not accompany such strategic reasoning in any formal sense, Phil Ochs’ song ‘There but for Fortune’, made famous by Joan Baez in 1967, did speak to the concerns of the students in SDS. It addressed directly the plight of the poor and dispossessed and highlighted the fact that their life chances were only different from those with more privileged backgrounds because of social and historical circumstance.

It was hardly the only song at that time (or before, or since, for that matter) that raised such concerns about poverty and misfortune with eloquence but it did so also with great passion, poignancy and, to quote Joan Baez, ‘compassion’ (Baez 1989, 436). It spoke for the outcast, the downtrodden and the marginalised whom SDS saw as a radical constituency. SDS had overestimated the strategic power of the poor (Harrington 1966, 22) and in doing so they were turning away from a traditional ally, the union movement, even though organisationally SDS had grown out of the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID). This was a step too far for Ochs who still saw the unions as a key link in the chain of opposition, and the working class as the crucial agent of change. Nonetheless, he did express doubts about the weakness of certain unions and their complicity with American imperialism in his songs ‘Links On the Chain’ (1965) and ‘I Ain’t Marching Anymore’ (1965). Ochs was not, to put it plainly, simply reproducing the ideological world that Joe Hill, Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger had moved in. I argue that his sensibilities were more attuned to the American new left, particularly student radicalism, which is hardly surprising given that he was shaped by the 1960s. Just as for Dylan, the times were changing, so too, for Ochs—in the song ‘What’s that I Hear’ (1964)—the promise of freedom was based upon traditional ways of doing things collapsing. He thus took up the clarion call of SDS’s founding document, *The Port Huron Statement*, which had argued in

one section for a new set of values that embraced creativity and participatory democracy and overcame the limitations of exhausted ideologies (Bloom and Breines 2003, 53–56).

Ochs' ideological leanings in the early period of the Movement places him close to the left-liberal humanist tradition espoused by SDS, a tradition that can even be described as Kennedy liberalism. Yet, as reflected in 'Automation Song', he was attuned to the dynamics of a capitalist system that threw workers on the scrapheap as new technologies were embraced to enhance profit (Ochs 1964). He also reflected the critique of totalitarian Communism advanced by SDS and others in the new left in his song 'Knock on the Door' (1964) that examines the perennial politics of repression in which the simple sound of door-knocking, whether in ancient Rome or Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, can take away your right to a good life or any life at all. Nonetheless, he was acutely sensitive to the hypocrisy in American politics that posited Spain as part of the "free world" but Cuba as outside it ('Ballad of William Worthy'). The burgeoning critique of American foreign policy in 'One More Parade', 'Talking Vietnam', 'Ballad of William Worthy', 'Talking Cuban Crisis' (1964), alongside the recognition that rebellion was fomenting at home in 'I Ain't Marching Anymore', 'In the Heat of the Summer' and 'Draft Dodger Rag' (1965), began to signal a move from the politics of reform to the politics of resistance. This is a shift we can see in the Movement itself only a little later. Ochs, indeed, as previously stated, anticipated such changes at least as much as he reflected them.

STUDENT POWER AND RESISTANCE

One song which picked up on, rather than forecasted, what had already happened is 'I'm Going to Say it Now' (1966). It is a declaration of student power flowing from the struggles surrounding the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at the Berkeley campus of the University of California in 1964 (Ashbolt 2013, 39–64). The title itself is a statement in support of free speech and the song rails against the authoritarian tendencies of university administrations, even alluding to book-burning. This might seem like overstatement but it captured the sensibility of campus protestors that their learning environment was more restricted than claimed and that genuine free speech was denied in all sorts of ways, not just through (as at Berkeley) the banning of political organizing on campus. The issue of free speech sat neatly within American constitutional definitions of liberty and the struggle for it is situated squarely (as it were) in the reform phase of the Movement. Nonetheless, the battle in Berkeley, as it evolved, saw the gradual radicalization of the FSM leadership that in the first place had been compelled to negotiate with groups across the political

spectrum including Youth for Goldwater. The local civil rights movement had initiated the free speech campaign and its leadership quickly assumed overall leadership of the struggle for free speech. At the height of the FSM, Mario Savio made a famous speech in which he talked of the need to fight against the machine, of the need to put your body “upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you’ve got to make it stop” (Savio 1964). There is a sense in which Ochs’ song ‘I’m Going to Say it Now’ is, even if not directly, a tribute to Savio. Moreover, it (like Savio’s speech) did signal a transition to a more radical politics of commitment, one that paved the way neatly for the phase of the Movement characterised by resistance.

‘I Ain’t Marching Any More’, which was to become the real theme song of the anti-war movement, was released in 1965, a year before the politics of resistance became the defining strategy of SDS (at an SDS convention in Berkeley at the end of 1966) and two years before the organization Resistance was established (Calvert 1967, 1; Lynd 1970, 309–14; Ferber and Lynd 1971). Vietnam teach-ins operated through the spring of 1965 on campuses throughout America (with the largest and most famous at Berkeley in May, at which Ochs sang) and while designed initially for debate became, in effect, anti-war meetings. And for the radical wing of the anti-war movement, the American War was no longer debatable, no longer the subject of forums governed by the reasoned articulation of varying viewpoints. The time had come when, as Noam Chomsky put it, “By entering into the area of argument, of technical feasibility and tactics, of footnotes and citations, by accepting the legitimacy of debate on certain issues, one has already lost one’s humanity.” (Chomsky 1969, 11–12). A shift from teach-ins to protest occurred, highlighted by the attempt to stop the troop trains in Berkeley in August 1965 (Ashbolt 2013, 65). From there, the move towards resisting the machinery of government was not great but the very term “resistance” only came into the vocabulary of the new left, particularly SDS, in late 1966 and early 1967. The burning of draft cards had been a strategy for many years but this became ritualised as a more general strategy of resistance at that time. This was, indeed, resistance not just to the draft but also to the governmental structure as a whole. The chorus of ‘I Ain’t Marching, Anymore’ stressed the generational aspect of this—the young being sent to war by the old—but Ochs was not only questioning the efficacy of war and the sacrifice of young lives but the efficacy of empire itself. Two early verses mention the wholesale grabbing of land from the Indians and the stealing of California from the Mexicans. The horror of nuclear warfare is also referenced in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Yet the unstated presence in the song is, of course, Vietnam. Note also that it is not ‘I Ain’t Marching This Time’. The “Anymore” is a specific demand for resistance to empire, a policy soon to be adopted by the Movement itself.

GOODBYE TO ALL THAT LIBERALISM

By late 1966 the Movement had embraced the politics of resistance, specifically resistance to the draft, and was increasingly abandoning the politics of liberalism. The shift away from liberalism is captured most eloquently and humorously in Ochs' song 'Love Me I'm a Liberal' (1966). This, in a sense, was his farewell not only to liberalism but also to a folk music culture he believed was not challenging the system adequately. Thus there is a caustic observation about liberals being drawn into the collective singing at Pete Seeger concerts. Liberalism, Ochs suggested, shielded a politics of capitulation that sustained racial division and empire. The song captures brilliantly the pretense of a cold war liberalism as it sheds tears for Medgar Evers and John F. Kennedy but cheers on the assassination of Malcolm X; the hypocrisy of a civil rights liberalism that objects to the busing of children, that will donate money but put not bodies on the line; the timidity of Democratic party liberalism that wants a politician like Humphrey but also demands that communists be thrown out of the union movement. The final two verses drive home this powerfully funny song, with Ochs voicing his concerns with passion and satire. The protagonist pleads that he was once filled with socialist dreams but has matured politically and become an informant. Links between liberalism and McCarthyism had hardly ever been drawn in such a neat fashion.

The Movement itself had been going through a process of abandoning cold war liberalism. Beginning with C. Wright Mills' argument that liberal ideas were "increasingly divorced from any historic agencies by which they might be realized", the American new left was on a long march away from the ideology of liberalism (Mills 1963, 30–31). The SDS document 'America and the New Era', adapted by the SDS convention of June 1963, also reflected a perspective that stressed the limitations of liberalism. The rhetoric and political base of liberalism had, it argued, been captured "by the corporate liberalism of the New Frontiersmen" and was thus no longer a worthy component of a genuine radical politics (SDS 1970, 179). Then SDS President Paul Potter during a famous speech at the march on Washington in April 1965 asked what kind of a system it was that "justifies the United States or any other country seizing the destinies of the Vietnamese people and using them callously for its own purpose?" He suggested that "We must name that system. We must name it, describe it, analyze it and change it" (Potter 1970, 246–8). In another influential speech later that year (November 27) Carl Oglesby, the President of SDS, did name the system and it was "corporate liberalism" (Oglesby 1966, 312–21). The very term corporate liberalism reflected the new left's, specifically SDS's, reluctance to embrace a direct critique of capitalism. Nonetheless, the critique of corporate liberalism or cold war

liberalism put the new left on a road that would lead, almost inevitably, to a more revolutionary politics and one influenced heavily by Marxism. Ochs perhaps perceived the ironic twists and turns early when his protagonist in 'Love Me, I'm a Liberal' despairs at the increasing chatter about revolution.

THE RINGING OF REVOLUTION

Ochs was himself becoming a revolutionary and by 1968 the 'Ringing of Revolution', to use the title of his 1966 song, could be heard throughout America and elsewhere in the world (Kurlansky 2004; Fraser 1988; Kaiser 1988). The year 1968 was itself pivotal, shaping radical futures in America with promises and betrayals, assassinations and riots, the emergence of women's liberation on the streets and the growth of a more politicized counterculture. At the Democratic Convention in Chicago in August the concerns of the radical wing of the anti-war movement were crystallised. Chicago was simultaneously the expression of a radical refusal and the rejection of that refusal in the streets and in the Democratic Convention Hall (Farber 1988). There was a police riot orchestrated by Chicago Mayor Daley. As the batons crashed on their heads and bodies, the protestors chanted "The Whole World is Watching, The Whole World is Watching". This was simultaneously a statement of outrage, a plea for help and a recognition that only international condemnation could focus real attention on the diminution of civil liberties at home while America's imperial war in Vietnam raged. Ultimately, it reflected a resigned acceptance that the Chicago police had crushed the spirit of defiance effectively. There was shock and anger internationally amongst those in solidarity with the protestors but that could not lessen the ultimate sense that genuine hope had been defeated in Chicago. This is symbolized perfectly in the album cover of Ochs' *Rehearsals for Retirement* (1969). It featured a gravestone listing his birth in El Paso, Texas, 1940 and his death in Chicago, Illinois, 1968. He said of this album that it would "be a comment on the spiritual decline of America" (cited in Kemp 1997, 17). While he was a founding member of the Yippies at the very end of 1967, the battle of Chicago signalled a personal and political crisis. Ochs was not alone and others turned to march down the revolutionary road, convinced that their armed commune was the vanguard of the revolution. Ochs retained a critical distance from this strategic positioning, partly because the Yippies' revolutionary dreams were leavened with a satirical take on American politics and society. In one of his most pungent commentaries on the soullessness and alienation of America, 'Outside of a Small Circle of Friends', from the album *Pleasures of the Harbor* (1967), Ochs' barbs were directed at both the establishment and the counterculture. The song initially touches on the infamous

1964 murder of Kitty Genovese in New York that was witnessed by a number of people who refused to be involved. The problem was, according to Ochs' "remembering" of the incident, that those who could see the brutal violence were a few friends engrossed in a game of Monopoly and convinced it was of no real interest to those outside of their circle. The delicious yet painful irony of the song is captured in the music hall style of presentation, a factor, alongside its potent message, in its sing-along popularity. A dialectic weaves through the song, putting possibilities up against reality only to reinforce the status quo and the helplessness of those on the margins. There is a sense of bitterness here that was to be fuelled dramatically by the events in Chicago the following year. So even if the Black Panthers and the poor were to rebel, everything is locked up securely by the system because it has the power of the police. And in one of the most memorable verses he throws a caustic barb at the counterculture by suggesting that the circle of friends is now too busy smoking pot and too disinterested in protest politics to organize a demonstration against the arrest and jailing of one of Ochs' friends for possession of marijuana.

That friend was John Sinclair, a leader of the revolutionary group the White Panthers in Detroit (Minister of Information) and manager of the band that was arguably a precursor of American punk, MC5 (Sinclair 1972). Ochs understood (given he was about to help form the Yippies) the traps of apolitical rebellion, the failure at times to connect cultural dissent and political protest. As he noted in a later interview, the song stood the test of time, its topicality hardly reducing its overall significance. There is, he observed, "some essential truth locked up in that song" (Ochs 1997). Arguably, this is the case with all of Ochs' topical songs as they transcend the specific issue being addressed and possess universal signs and meanings. To put it another way, Ochs' poetic imagination lifted topical songs out of the time and place seemingly being sung about. Another song of interest from *Pleasures of the Harbor* is 'Crucifixion' (1967). While specifically about the assassination of President Kennedy, it also spoke to the shattering of dreams, triumph of hate and killing of imagination. It may seem paradoxical that this powerful critic of American empire, whose song 'Cops of the World' (1966) could still be a theme song of the antiwar movement today, was still in 1967 recalling fondly a president who was himself a handmaiden of imperial power. An earlier song, 'That Was the President' (1965) also celebrated the memory of JFK. Yet, as Christopher Lasch once observed, throughout the 1960s there was "a reciprocal relationship between Kennedy liberalism and the new left" (Lasch 1974, 125). Even as late as 1968, Carl Oglesby declared that he wanted the Movement to establish "a meaningful relationship with bewildered Kennedy liberals" (cited in Weissman 1974, 39). And there is a sense in which Ochs still retained a liberal idealism which Kennedy embraced, albeit furtively,

and that idealism was only shattered by events in Chicago. Thus 'When I'm Gone' (1966), a song that he penned well before Chicago, is a beautiful hymn to life rather than death. While there is a mourning for all that will be lost when he dies, the refrain stresses the necessity, even if acknowledged in hesitating fashion, of doing the things that need to be done while still alive. This song has a flavour of optimism compared to the resigned disillusionment of *Rehearsals for Retirement* (1969). In the bitterly ironic 'William Butler Yeats Visits Lincoln Park and Escapes Unscathed' from that album, the protagonist is captivated by the flame in the eyes of a girl he sees but that flame is quickly extinguished as dark descends upon Lincoln Park. The song draws upon a certain melancholy in the Irish folk tradition and reinforces a sense that Chicago (where Lincoln Park was one of the battlegrounds) more than hinted at gloom and doom.

Indeed, while Ochs anticipated the turn towards revolution and at one level embraced it, he was no longer swept along by the revolutionary fever that engulfed Movement politics from 1968 to 1970. The armed revolution espoused by the revolutionary youth movement in SDS, one wing of which was to become the Weatherman faction and later Weather Underground, or the stolid Marxist-Leninist politics of the other major faction of SDS, Progressive Labor (PL), were not for Ochs. Those who wanted to form a revolutionary youth movement were inspired by the Columbia student rebellion in early 1968 and, of course, the uprising in France in May and June of that year. It is notable that while the Free Speech Movement had motivated Ochs to write a song in defence of student rights, the turn towards revolutionary ideology sponsored no such song writing. Instead, we have the almost dispirited resignation of the album *Rehearsals for Retirement*. Even its title song bemoans the disappearance of a once secure and familiar world, except for the beggar who does recall him. This is probably a potent reference to 'There but for Fortune' and overall the song and the album signal a shift in temperament and disposition. Chicago, however, had not killed Ochs' poetry or even his spirit of resistance. It had destroyed an optimistic faith fuelled by Kennedy liberalism, a faith taken away not only by Chicago but also by the earlier assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy (for whom Ochs had played 'Crucifixion' during a plane flight in 1967). This political optimism would undergo a revival of sorts with him being inspired by the Chilean socialist experiment and its cultural warriors, especially Victor Jara, whom Ochs had met and struck up a friendship with. The crushing of that experiment by the Chilean military with the assistance of American imperial power, particularly corporations and the CIA, did not dim entirely a simultaneous sense of defiance and optimism. Ochs organised a benefit concert for Chile and even coaxed his old friend Dylan to join him. And when the American war in Vietnam was over finally in 1975, he helped stage

a rally in New York's Central Park and was joined by, amongst others, Joan Baez with whom he sang 'There But for Fortune'. Here was a reminder that through it all, and the early 70s was marked by his serious personal decline, Ochs remained a spokesperson for the poor and downtrodden. And he also still saw himself (like Victor Jara) as a "songwriter for the working class" (Kemp 1998, 51); not some mythologized working class about to pick up the gun, as in the revolutionary ideology of sections of the Movement in the late 1960s, but a working class that reflected both the visions and limitations of the American dream. To some in the Movement and to many observers, the working class was simply complicit in the war effort abroad and authoritarianism at home. Ochs understood, just as sociologist Penny Lewis (2013) has argued more recently, that the class dynamics in American society were more complex than that and the working class was not simply a servant of dominant interests.

While some of his fans despaired when he sang in concert, with great gusto, Merle Haggard's 'Okie from Muskogee' in 1970 (1974), Ochs did so not only because he had a mischievous sense of humour but also out of genuine affection for country music and for the musical tastes of the working class (Kemp 1998, 51). Thus his wearing of a gold lamé suit at the same concert, and singing of other country and rock 'n roll classics, was not a rejection of radical politics but a homage to American popular culture, particularly that embodied by the figure of Elvis Presley. Combine that with the classic shot of him (during a photo shoot for the album from the concert) in that suit, armed with a guitar and machine gun while defending a semi-clad blonde woman crouched in front, and you have him conjoining two heroes—Elvis and Che Guevara. Heroes of very different revolutions, the Presley and Guevara homage pointed to an Ochs who, far from being simply conflicted, saw hope as well as failure in the American dream and one who simultaneously drew inspiration from the Cuban revolution.

CONCLUSION

The radicalisation of Phil Ochs both parallels and precurses the radicalisation of the Movement. Ochs articulated a liberal humanist critique of the American social order just as other members of the Movement at large did. More tellingly, Ochs developed a more radical critique of systemic racism before the Movement as a whole did and this is directly evidenced in his songs. Ochs sang against liberalism (even while still furtively embracing Kennedy liberalism) just as the Movement began shifting gear. He sang his opposition to empire and for resistance before the Movement had developed a more radical position on the American war in Vietnam. He heard the sounds of revolution

early, yet that phase of the Movement actually, for him, suggested decline and despair. Thus we have the haunting music and prophetic words of 'No More Songs' (1970) which almost announced the end of a certain type of Sixties radicalism and a certain style of songwriting that had accompanied its development. This was a very different type of protest song to those that Ochs had produced throughout the Sixties. I would argue that perhaps, he almost seems to be suggesting, there is no longer the space for the type of political commentary and intervention through song that had been so necessary in the 1960s. Yet his doubts or even despair reflected through such intensely personal songs should not overshadow the immense contribution he made to the culture of Sixties radicalism. He was a radical spirit whose own political transformations helped energise the Movement and point it towards more profound social change.

Chapter 7

Ewan MacColl's Radio Ballads as Songs of Social Protest

Matthew Ord

The Radio Ballads, a series of eight experimental features broadcast on the BBC Home Service between 1958 and 1964, occupy a unique position in the history of protest song in Britain. Devised and written by dramatist and songwriter Ewan MacColl in collaboration with musician Peggy Seeger and radio producer Charles Parker, the programmes mobilised the relatively new technology of tape to produce impressionistic works of art built around the voices of ordinary people describing their own lives in their own words. The accession of songs from the programmes, such as 'Go, Move, Shift' (1964) 'Shoals of Herring' (1960) and 'Freeborn Man' (1964) into the standard repertoire of the Anglo-American folk revival speaks to their ability to transcend their original context, while perhaps obscuring their specific cultural moment. A product of a pre-Beatles, pre-Dylan era in British popular culture, the programmes antedated the 'high sixties' of 'student demonstrations, anti-Vietnam protest, the women's movement, May 1968 in Paris, Woodstock and the later Isle of Wight, *International Times* and *OZ*' (McKay 1996, 3). Nevertheless, in a period dominated by the rhetoric of classless affluence (Osgerby 1998; Savage 2005) the Radio Ballads made an impassioned case for the value of working-class culture, offering a rebuke to both establishment attitudes and 'New Left positions' which saw that culture as at best 'fragmentary and meagre' (Harker 2009, 345; Williams 1958). In the process, they helped launch the British folk revival, one of the most influential cultural-political movements of the twentieth century (Boyes 1993). Fred McCormick, a young working-class revivalist at the time, recalled that the programmes,

shocked me into realising that I, as an overall-wearing member of the working-class, had a history and a culture and an identity [...] they made me realise that

the job I did, that the life I led, that my very existence as a member of the human race, were things possessed of intrinsic value [...] That is not something any schoolbook ever taught me. (McCormick 1999)

Weinstein (2006, 3) defines 'the protest in protest songs' as 'an opposition to a policy, an action against the people in power that is grounded in a sense of injustice.' In this sense, the songs of the Radio Ballads were songs of protest, articulating opposition to cultural and social inequality through the creative re-appropriation of a threatened and unfairly denigrated peoples' culture. However, they also challenge established understandings of protest song; rather than shots fired from the cultural margins, they emerged from the heart of the mainstream media, the BBC. This is a key aspect of their significance: their insistence on using the real voices of working-class people was unprecedented in British radio, and their blurring of the professional roles of writer and editor ran counter to establishment notions of class as realised in the rigid working practices of the BBC (Pettitt 2000; Cox 2008). Their production as well as their content was an attempt to re-imagine the relationship between working people and the mass media.

Form and compositional process were central to the programmes' strategy. In keeping with their roots in modernist theatre, the Radio Ballads articulated their protest not solely through lyrics but through the experimental use of recorded sound. Although political songs, as Weinstein (2006, 4) notes, are often defined in terms of lyrical content, 'many make their impact in tandem with their sonic elements, the emotionality of the music, the strength and confidence of the vocals, or their simplicity and repetitive phrases which allow the audience to sing along'. Similarly, Drott (2015, 173) notes that 'certain musics may [...] convey a sense of "resistance" at a sonic or stylistic level, though music's semiotic indeterminacy renders such significations elusive, liable to divergent interpretations'. The Radio Ballads, I suggest, go further than this, conveying their message through the meaningful juxtaposition of lyrical, musical and sonic elements in a way that not only links back to earlier experiments with montage, but looks forward to the innovative studio techniques of the 1960s and 1970s.

This chapter also explores the notion, implied by the series' title, of the programmes themselves as songs, considering how their reimagining of the traditional ballad form framed a critique of contemporary culture based in a sense of the inherent songfulness of working-class speech. The folk concept—and the conflation of the working-class with 'the folk'—is a crucial element of the programmes' political message. By building songs out of the materials of everyday speech, MacColl attempted to produce a contemporary

folk idiom that was organically related to working-class life and language. The process whereby the songs were derived, or refined, out of the actual verbal testimony of working-class informants, was crucial to their artistic and political validity. The programmes sought to create new understandings in listeners through the presentation and juxtaposition of real voices. More than this, the programmes themselves were structured like traditional songs, their flow of sound images consciously intended to invoke the ballad of tradition, re-imagined as a form that was both ultra-modern and quintessentially working-class.

As a complete survey of the programmes is outside the scope of this essay, I focus on three: *The Ballad of John Axon* (1958),¹ *Singing the Fishing* (1960)² and *On the Edge* (1963)³ which between them exemplify two recurring themes of the series; the centrality of labour culture in working-class identity, and the poverty of mass mediated popular culture as a means of emotional expression. These case studies are used to trace the programmes' place within British traditions of protest song, as founding documents of the British folk revival and a bridge between interwar modernism and the counterculture of the later 1960s.

EWAN MACCOLL: FROM DRAMATIST TO SONGWRITER

Unquestionably one of the leading British political song writers of the twentieth century, MacColl is remarkable for having played a leading role in both the workers' theatre movement of the 1930s and the post-war British folk revival. In a career which spanned the Depression of the 1930s and the industrial struggles of the Thatcher years, he wrote songs for political street theatre, radio features, satirical reviews and countless recordings both as a solo performer and with his musical partner Peggy Seeger. Although he emerged in the 1930s as a dramatist drawing on a modernist tradition from Brecht to Eisenstein, the defining influence he exerted upon the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s has meant that he is remembered today primarily as a performer of political songs and traditional ballads (Verrier 2004; Harker 2007; Vacca 2014). The Radio Ballads were a defining point in his creative development and remain arguably his most enduring legacy.

Protest song was a part of MacColl's life from an early age. Born James Miller in Salford, Greater Manchester in 1915 he joined the Young Communist League around 1929 and quickly became deeply involved in the cultural life of the movement (Harker 2007). Early songs and sketches were

published in factory newspapers or performed as part of agitprop performances (Seeger 2001, 7). Many of these early efforts were hastily written responses to specific events; 'The Manchester Rambler', for example, was composed in 1932 in the context of the Mass Trespass of Kinder Scout.⁴ In the early days, he recalled in a 1987 interview, 'the political activity was more to the fore. The song-writing was incidental' (MacColl quoted in Moore and Vacca 2014, 20).

MacColl's life in theatre began in earnest with an agitprop group, The Red Megaphones in 1934, the same year he gained his first experience as a radio actor and scriptwriter at the features department at BBC North in Manchester. In 1935 he began an intense collaboration with the actor and writer Joan Littlewood and many songs from this period were written for theatrical performances. MacColl and Littlewood's work was characterised by a modernist obsession with form, and in productions such as *Last Edition* (1940) they experimented with techniques derived from cinema in an attempt to create 'a theatre [...] capable of reflecting the constantly changing twentieth century scene' (MacColl 1965).

By the early 1950s, however, MacColl had become disillusioned with the workers' theatre movement, feeling that his contemporaries 'were taking too much of their impetus, their dynamic quality from literature and not from life' (MacColl 1965, n.p.). After 1950 his interest increasingly turned to traditional song, rediscovering the ballad repertoire of his parents, both Scottish migrants. He soon began to establish a reputation as an expert performer of traditional song, recording several albums for the revivalist label Topic in the early years of the decade. Rather than a retreat from modernism, MacColl saw this turn to folk culture as a fresh approach to the problem of poetics he had tried to solve with Littlewood; 'Dramatic writers' he argued, 'must of necessity attempt to close the enormous gap which exists between our literary and oral traditions' (MacColl quoted in Seeger 2001, 8):

I already had an idea that the way through was—I didn't think in the terms of folk—but the way through was in the kind of language that everybody spoke but crystallised to an enormous extent. Sieved, refined, so that only the most pertinent part of the language of the streets became the poetry of the theatre and so on. (MacColl 1965 n.p.)

MacColl's interest in vernacular song had clear antecedents in the literary Scots tradition of Hugh MacDiarmid and the Lallans school; his adoption of the Gaelic pseudonym Ewan MacColl indicates a conscious identification not only with the modernism of the Scottish literary renaissance but with the premodern Scots poets (such as Dunbar, Henryson and Douglas) that had

inspired them. It was the ballad's form that appealed to MacColl as a writer—'fast-moving, economical, anti-naturalistic [...] with its parataxis, medley of voices and unexplained shifts in points of view' the ballad afforded 'an especially effective lens through which contemporary society might be focused and defamiliarized' (Harker 2009, 342).

Contemporary work in ballad studies may have helped to crystallise MacColl's notions about the artistic value and inherent modernity of the ballad. Gerould (1957, 89) pointed to the ballad's cinematic succession of strong images which 'burst out in a series of flashes, each very sharp and each revealing one further step in the action [...] all directed on what is essential to our imaginative and emotional grasp of a quite simple situation'. Hodgart (1950) also compared the narrative techniques used in the ballad to film techniques such as close-ups, wide shots and sudden changes in viewpoint. The border ballad 'Sir Patrick Spence', he argued, articulated character and narrative through a tightly organised series of 'shots':

Sir Patrick's character is revealed by the two shots of the fourth stanza. In the next three stanzas [...] one vivid image of a natural portent is enough to create a sense of doom. The disaster is barely pictured at all; instead we get an ironic comment on the behaviour of the noble lords as the ship founders and a rapid and highly imaginative shot of their hats bobbing about on the water. (Hodgart 1950, 30)

The soviet montage theory evoked by Gerould and Hodgart would have been familiar territory to MacColl. In his theatre days, he had sought to develop a drama which could compete with film in its speed and flexibility (MacColl 1965, n.p.). The ballad seemed to offer the basis of such a form readymade. With the folk clubs (including MacColl's own 'Ballads and Blues') drawing large and enthusiastic audiences for traditional song, MacColl felt that the ballad had the potential to develop into a truly popular form—a feat which the Avant Garde theatre of the 1930s had failed to accomplish.

THE RADIO BALLAD CONCEPT

In 1957 MacColl's prominent position within the folk revival caused BBC producer Charles Parker to invite him to collaborate on a new project which would combine newly composed folk song with recent developments in radio. Parker became fascinated by the narrative possibilities of radio after hearing Norman Corwin's *The Lonesome Train* (1944), a 'folk cantata' which used song, music and layered sound to create an impressionistic account of Abraham Lincoln's funeral train (Cox 2008). The new

availability of portable tape recorders in Britain presented possibilities for similar experiments at the BBC. Phillip Donnellan, Parker's contemporary at BBC Midland recalled that, 'With the coming of the tape recorder, we were more and more structuring radio programmes in a filmic form. [...] because we were using very similar plastic materials, cutting them together and, whether we knew it or not, started to handle things in the form of a montage' (Donnellan, quoted in Pettitt 2000, 354). The Radio Ballads would come to exemplify this approach, and their cutting together of 'actuality' (interview and sound material captured in the field), music and sound made them among the most technically demanding—and expensive—radio features of the post-war era.

At the heart of Parker's project was the story of railwayman John Axon, a driver who sacrificed his own life for his colleagues after his engine malfunctioned, an act of everyday heroism for which he was posthumously awarded the George Cross in 1957. Axon's story appealed to Parker and MacColl despite very different social and political backgrounds. Parker, an ex-naval officer, was a Tory and a member of the Church of England; MacColl was a lifelong communist who spent the war years reading Scottish modernist poetry and hiding from the military police (Harker 2007). Both, however, shared an idealistic sense of the dignity and value of labour and concerns about its diminishing role in Britain's social and cultural life. *The Ballad of John Axon* (1958) was conceived by Parker as an elegy for a golden age of stability in British working-class life encapsulated in the figure of the railwayman. The programme would tell a heroic tale of duty and self-sacrifice, with Axon symbolising a public service ethos now threatened by newer working practices and a culture of individualism. For MacColl, Axon was a worker-hero on the Soviet model. The programme was thus a protest against the decline of traditional values in the face of rapid modernization in which social conservatism and radical politics were strangely intermingled.

Harker (2009) argues that 'John Axon' should be understood within the context of contemporary debates about the loss of an older working-class culture that were linked to an ideological drift to the right amongst working-class people and the dominance of Americanised popular culture in British society. Concern for the loss of the 'old ways' was widespread: in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), academic Richard Hoggart warned that the nation was 'moving towards the creation of a mass culture [...] that the remnants of what was at least in parts an urban culture "of the people" are being destroyed; and that the new mass culture is in some important ways less healthy than the often crude culture it is replacing' (Hoggart 1957, 24). Hoggart (1957) suggested, however, that working-class language still contained 'remnants of a more muscular tradition' and a pre-industrial world view:

[I]f we listen to working-class people at work and at home we are likely to be struck first, not so much by the evidence of fifty years of popular papers and cinema, as by the slight effect these things have had upon common speech [...] the tradition is not altogether dead. It is harked back to, leaned upon as a fixed and still largely trustworthy reference to a world now difficult to understand. (Hoggart 1957, 27–29).

Like many of their contemporaries, MacColl and Parker took such ideas seriously. Rather than following Hoggart in interpreting the forms of working-class speech as a linguistic residue, however, they came to view it as a living entity, identifying craft industries and the communities that surrounded them as bastions of an authentic working-class worldview. MacColl and Parker saw this culture, paradoxically, as both inherently conservative and potentially radical. Working-class language provided not only a crucial link to the knowledge and values of the past but the basis of a new poetic repertoire capable of dealing with ‘the twentieth century in whatever guise it appeared’ (MacColl 1990, 316).

JOHN AXON AND THE POETRY OF EVERYDAY SPEECH

Production of the first programme began with the gathering of taped actuality material; interviews and sounds recorded at Axon’s workplace, Edgley locomotive shed in Lancashire. ‘Our original idea’, Seeger recalled, ‘was to record “informants” [...] for information only and then give their words to professional BBC speakers. However, the people we recorded were so articulate and spoke with such eloquence and truth that we decided to use the actual recordings instead’ (Seeger 2001, 18). The tapes, MacColl later wrote, revealed ‘a remarkable way of life, a picture in words charged with the special kind of vitality and excitement which derives from involvement in a work-process’ (MacColl 1990, 313).

The process helped to clarify MacColl’s earlier sense of the radical potential of vernacular speech. Seeger (2001, 18) remarks that the programmes ‘crystallised and made workable a theory which Ewan held all his creative life: that the language of everyday speech and the language of the traditional songs are symbiotic in nature, that they are two sides of the same coin’. During their listening, the team came to believe that everyday speech, like the ballad, was characterised by the succession of strong concrete images derived from direct experience. As Parker described it:

If you go into the nearest pub on a Saturday night and hear the story of Saturday’s match, people don’t tell the narrative in a linked line, like a short story

spoken. They create a vigorous image, then they create another vigorous image right up against it and they clash ... between those two little images is a 'spark gap' for you as the listener to jump in and fill in, so that you participate in the creative experience. (Parker 1975, quoted in Cox 2008, 165)

This supposed resemblance between the actuality gathered through field recordings and the traditional form of the ballad justified the latter's use in the creative representation of modern life. The ballad was re-imagined as a thoroughly contemporary form.

Of equal importance was a sense of the radical potential of new media technologies. Magnetic tape, a technology which greatly facilitated the capture, editing and recombination of recorded material, allowed for the re-application of various modernist compositional principles MacColl had developed in his days in the theatre. The ease of playback encouraged a detailed analysis of recorded speech and MacColl began to employ a vocabulary which, as Cox (2008) notes, consciously adapted that of the choreographer Rudolph Laban to map the actuality as a pattern of movements, gestures and 'efforts' (Cox 2008, 168–69); this repertoire of sounds and verbal images supplied by the actuality material was then used to construct the programmes' songs.

Vacca (2014) argues that montage was central to MacColl's compositional process. As noted already, the ideas of Soviet film makers and theorists exerted a profound influence on MacColl and he recalled consciously using the term 'montage' by the time production began on the second programme *Song of a Road* in 1959 (MacColl 1990; Harker 2007; Vacca 2014). Vacca (2014, 175) has shown that the technique 'is used in the Radio Ballads not only to link songs and voices but to penetrate the very mode of writing the songs'. MacColl began to write songs that responded directly to the selected actuality, 'extending' it, as he put it, reflecting its vocabulary, textures and rhythms (Vacca 2014, 313). In constructing his songs, 'he borrowed the informants' actual words and phrases, speech and breathing patterns, tone and pitch of voice – all those features that make a person's vocabulary and vocal delivery as distinctive as a fingerprint' (Seeger 2001, 18).

Accepting the productive juxtaposition of images as a definitive feature of both the ballad and working-class speech, the songs of the Radio Ballads are ballad-like in their construction. But, in extending the principle of juxtaposition beyond the verbal, the programmes themselves also arguably constitute a multimodal extension of the ballad form: tape afforded the isolation and recombination of real sounds, extending the characteristic clash of images beyond the lyrical domain. Where traditional ballad singers had to represent an image through word or gesture, radio producers could take pieces of audible reality—the sound of escaping steam, of grinding metal, or of a miner's

pick—and recombine them with verbal images and musical components in the construction of complex image sequences. The songs of the programmes are also embedded within a larger multimodal form that combines sound, speech and music; the Radio Ballads, as their name suggests, were a form of song that moved beyond words and music to utilise the full resources of modern radio.

WORK AND IDENTITY

As Harker (2009) notes, the experience of manual labour was fundamental to MacColl's understanding of working-class identity and is a recurring theme in the Radio Ballads. *The Ballad of John Axon* (1958) is, Vacca (2014, 182) argues, a kind of working-class Bildungsroman, concerned with learning, cumulative experience and proving oneself. Lyrical images continually underscore this position: the heroic worker is married to his machine: Axon's whole life, we are told, was built 'round the engine', a 'she', 'a puller', an 'iron horse' who 'answers to every touch'. The relationship of Axon and his engine is cast as a tragic love story in which man and machine end up literally fused in death. The programme's basic message is perhaps best summed up by the foregrounding of one driver's assertion that, 'the old railwayman, it was a tradition, it was part of your life, it went through... railways went through the back of your spine like Blackpool went through rock'.

Tape effects allow this synthesis of human and machine to be illustrated through the layering of musical material, lyrical images and actuality sound. Instruments are audibly blended with fragments of actuality using cross-fading: after the introductory verse, for example, Seeger's banjo is double-tracked and treated with echo, merging with an actuality recording of a speeding locomotive. The effect is of a metaphorical transformation: the banjo used to suggest the speed and power of the train in the introductory section *becomes* the train itself. This blending produces a shift from the epic register of the traditional ballad to that of realist radio reportage and suggests equivalence between the ballad and radio documentary. Instead of remaining within this documentary register, however, the programme quickly shifts again. Following a declamatory section in which a choir with trumpet and snare-drum accompaniment foreshadow the programme's climactic crash, the sound of a trumpet merges with the actuality sound of an oncoming train's horn. The effect is subtly kaleidoscopic; continually shifting between ballad-epic, documentary realist, official and informal registers, the programme denies the right of any single mode of

discourse—and most particularly the ‘official version of events’—to tell the whole story.

Actuality sound is also used as a rhythmic component in blended sequences, perhaps most strikingly in the song ‘Long Handled Shovel’, whose call and response structure recalls the style of an American prison work song:

MacColl: You bend your back almost double.
Feed that coal-hungry fire, swing that shovel, that’s a fireman’s trade.
You’ve got your long-handled shovel.
Three and a half feet of sweat-polished wood and a narrow steel blade.

A rhythmic sequence of actuality shovel sounds enters after the phrase ‘narrow steel blade’, and provides an off-beat pulse which falls on the last syllable of each line. This syllable is the focal point of the physical effort and heavily emphasised in the singers’ articulation. MacColl’s lead vocal is answered by a male chorus in a call and response pattern:

Chorus: Swing your long-handled shovel.
MacColl: Hear that shovel ring.
Chorus: Swing your steel-bladed shovel.
MacColl: Hear that fire sing. Give us some rock, a round at a time, fire your signal along the line.

With MacColl’s chanted imperative to ‘hear that fire sing’, the sound of a locomotive is heard, gradually picking up speed, falling into sync with the chorus on the phrase ‘...along the line’. A variation on the vocal melody is then whistled over the accelerating pulse of the engine, which continues to set the pace for the main vocal in the following verse:

MacColl: Put your weight behind your shovel.
Chorus: From your middle, swing.
MacColl: Swing your steel-bladed shovel.
Chorus: From your shoulders, swing.
One at the front, one at the back,
One at each side, and that’s the knack.

The juxtaposition of the actuality machine sounds with the human voices whose effort pattern rises with the speed of the actuality suggests an intimate relationship between the workers and the engine, equating human effort with mechanical power. The final crash is treated as the culmination of the programme’s central conceit that train and man are essentially one being with

a shared destiny. At the final moment, John Axon and his train are fused together ‘in a welter of blood and oil / Twisted metal, splintered bone’. Again, actuality sound gives the listener the literal audible experience of metal colliding with metal, drowning out MacColl’s voice as the programme reaches its climax.

TAPE EDITING AND HETEROGLOSSIA

As noted above, the use of taped actuality allowed the Radio Ballads to creatively juxtapose different linguistic repertoires often with subversive effect. This productive juxtaposition of registers recalls the work of soviet literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, whose notion of heteroglossia imagines language as a stratified system of speech genres. Heteroglossia is a feature of literary genres such as the novel which combine these various social languages, both official and unofficial, in ways which reveal their origins in specific social positions and interests:

The existence of heteroglossia constituted of multiple social discourses allows speakers to achieve a [...] position of outsideness to language. It is possible to recognise the ideological contours of one social discourse by outlining it against other discourses. In this way any monological truth claims made by one language will be relativized by the existence of other views of the world. (Morris 1994, 16)

For Bakhtin, who was interested primarily in literary language, the author takes up a position at the centre of the clamour of social discourses that makes up the totality of language. Heteroglossic forms like the novel continually ironize dominant ideological perspectives by contrasting them with others, revealing their interested nature. This is what, for Bakhtin, marks the difference between the novel and monologic forms like the epic poem, which presents a unified viewpoint and value system, reflecting its origins in a less stratified society. The successful novelist is able to identify and to recombine the various ideological voices that constitute discourse in such a way as to present a true picture of a given society at a given historical moment.

In his autobiography, and elsewhere, MacColl likewise imagines language as inseparable from social position, arguing that different class positions manifest different ideological positions and thus different speech forms (MacColl 1990; Moore and Vacca 2014). MacColl felt that the actuality gathered in the Radio Ballads proved this point: the process of actuality gathering for *Song of a Road* (1959), for example, seemed to him to exemplify what he saw as fundamental differences between the language of the

management and that of the migrant 'muck-shifters' who carried out the 'pick and shovel work':

The labourers [...] used both similes and metaphors liberally. They changed tense constantly, often to emphasize a point or to sharpen an argument. They made use of extended analogies and emphasized verbs in such a way as to give every sentence an effort-peak. Almost all of them used the first person singular and the present historical with equal effect. (MacColl 1990, 317)

In contrast, the managers' use of language appeared an impoverished form of expression:

Our managerial informants tended to use an extremely small area of the vocal effort spectrum. [...] Irrespective of the subject under discussion they scarcely ever varied the tempo of delivery. Almost all of them made constant use of the impersonal pronoun [...] Verbs were given no more vocal weight than nouns, and similes and metaphors were almost totally eschewed. (MacColl 1990, 317)

The heteroglossic potential of radio is strikingly illustrated in a scene from *Singing the Fishing* (1960) which juxtaposes four distinct modes of social discourse: a storm at sea is described first in terms of the Beaufort scale, then in lyrical images which describe the crashing violence of the waves. Actuality recordings recount the terror and physical exertions of the crew in their own words while the music builds to a slow crescendo suggesting increasingly dangerous and chaotic conditions. Throughout the sequence, the disembodied voice of an auctioneer monotonously reels off the price of the catch at market. By comparing the language of economics and meteorology with the striking images drawn from the actuality recordings, the specific character of each social language is revealed. In doing so, the specialised repertoires constitutive of the capitalist worldview are shown to obscure the reality of labour experienced at the level of the individual:

Announcer: Biscay. Winds south to south west force four to six, gradually veering north-west and increasing to force seven tomorrow afternoon.

Chorus: When the breeze is freshening to a gale.
And climbing up the Beaufort scale
And the wind is streaming,
Your mind's not on the market then,
The buying then and the selling men
And the market prices.

Actuality: They went in this boat and that come on a gale of wind, that came down the Saturday night, and that blew for three or four days a living gale and we were in these little boats...

As the song progresses, the sea continues to rise and conditions become more dangerous. The images in the actuality and in the lyrics become more vivid and dramatic. The voice of the auctioneer, however, remains emotionless, reeling off a continuous stream of numbers:

Auctioneer: Seven four and six, seven pound and eight now, eight pound ten

Chorus: Gale force nine, gale force nine,
Fighting for the nets and lines,
Water black and white and grey,
Now the air is full of spray.
Gale force ten on the Beaufort scale,
Now it blows a living gale.
Force eleven, force eleven,
Close your eyes and pray to heaven.

Auctioneer: [Voice becomes unintelligible]

Actuality: And there's great seas a-coming now and again they'd peel you know and break and once they break, look out. So I was stood in the wheelhouse long of the skipper, I was there the whole blessed night, me and the skipper. The chaps down below are crying—they were these young chaps, you know. Well, once she shipped this sea I said, Ted, look out, I say, there's one a-going to get us, they that come roaring along. I bet you our boat stood on our end like that. I bet she stood up like that!

This section juxtaposes these different linguistic registers to make a powerful point about the arbitrary relationship between exchange value and the labour power expended in industrial production. Official language and associated forms of knowledge are shown to be as effective at serving exploitative structures as they are useless for the purposes of poetic description. More importantly, however, the sequence makes a larger point about the connection between artistic viewpoint and class position. MacColl felt that the working classes, at the nexus of various official and unofficial discourses were better placed than most artists to experience and thus to represent the complexity of modern society. By placing the fisherman (like Bakhtin's author) at the centre of various competing discourses, the sequence demonstrates the crucial importance of the working-class viewpoint for understanding and representing modernity. The sequence underlines the social value of traditional forms such as the ballad which are believed to originate from this position at the centre of various discourses. It also makes a strong case for the possibility of new forms, such as the Radio Ballad, to extend the power of traditional form by constructing a productive unity out of the chaotic polyphony of the modern world.

AGAINST POP CULTURE: ON THE EDGE (1963)

Having made their discovery about the expressive character of everyday language, MacColl, Parker and Seeger turned their attention to other subjects. One of their targets was the new phenomenon of 'youth culture' and the commercial pop industry that built upon it. The concept of a 'youth culture' opposed to both the 'parent culture' and to other modes of collective identity rooted in class or locality, became increasingly visible from the mid-1950s onwards, with a proliferation of cultural products aimed specifically at young people (Osgerby 1998, 24). The image of a newly affluent younger generation became a highly visible trope in politics, advertising and the media, encouraging a sense of an experientially defined generation gap (Osgerby 1998, 17–29). For politicians, advertisers and the culture industry alike, the 'affluent youth' concept was a rich source of political and economic capital.

If young people were 'the outstanding financial beneficiaries of the postwar situation', they were also frequently constructed as victims of the new consumer culture (Frith *et al.* 2013, 121). MacColl was unambiguously negative in his assessment, viewing young people as at the mercy of advertisers and unscrupulous politicians. In particular, he saw 'pop music, and indeed pop art generally, as a defiant relinquishing of responsibility towards this society [...] the responsibility of thinking, the responsibility of being committed to any idea, to any point of view, to any course of action. And it's this negative attitude to society, to human thought, to historical processes [...] permeates the whole of beat music' (MacColl quoted in Parker 1975, 136). The sixth Radio Ballad, *On the Edge* (1963) treated the teenage experience and the role of the media in perpetuating the notion of a 'generation gap'. In the process it made an enthusiastic (if ultimately unconvincing) case for the ballad tradition as a more adequate basis for expressing teenage problems than the conventional pop song.

MacColl had treated the subject of mass culture in protest song before, recording Karl Dallas's 'Derek Bentley' in 1960. The song, first written in 1953, recounted the story of 19-year-old Bentley, hanged for the murder of a policeman despite having been in police custody at the time of the killing. The song, perhaps strangely, laid the blame for Bentley's death not on the police or the courts but on the 'guns and comics, films of war' which had supposedly influenced his actions leading up to the fatal incident. While *On the Edge* takes a less straightforwardly polemical approach to the subject, the sense that young people are victims of a malignant culture industry is a major theme of the programme.

Built on a series of interviews with teenagers in England and Scotland, *On the Edge* is dominated by themes of loneliness, uncertainty, loss, and

the sense that, as one informant put it, 'there is something to be had [but] I don't know what I'm searching for'. As the informants hover on the threshold of the adult world, the nation emerges into a new regime of individualism and consumerism, and the world stands at the brink of potential nuclear annihilation. The threat of the bomb is a constant reference point, a 'cover over the sky' as one informant puts it; another bleakly estimates that 'unless the situation changes radically, for the better' she has 'about ten years to live'.

MacColl and Seeger's songs present the lives of teenage 'modernists' and 'rock and rollers' alike in terms of a desperate conformity, the pressure to consume and to be 'with it'. Although the powerful discourses of media and advertising hold out the promise of escape into a dream world of effortless style and freedom through commodities (like the motorbike paid for on 'the never-never') the longed-for fulfilment is endlessly deferred. MacColl's informants are presented as perpetually caught in a nowhere-place between the 'Enid Blyton' world of home and family and the gaudy illusions of advertising rhetoric. It is a view which finds hope only in a recovery of traditional modes of thought and expression, and a belief in the residual 'folk' character of the young people's mode of expressing themselves. Parker held steadfastly to the opinion that where US-influenced pop was fundamentally incapable of reflecting the real lives of British youth, the native folk tradition offered some possibility for launching a cultural counter-offensive. The programme's informants 'do not talk in that mid-Atlantic Americanese of pop', he insisted; 'their language is still akin to the language of the traditional ballads' (Harker 2007, 169). The testimony of one of the programme's informants in particular, Dot Dobby, a Salford factory worker, caught the team's imagination. Seeger claimed that in Dobby's speech, 'The beauty, the terror, the pathos and tragedy of life flowed through her in succession and she possessed the ability to express it all in a stream of almost trancelike images. She spoke poetry' (Seeger 2001, 58).

MacColl's song 'The Tale of the Children of the Troubled World' forms a bleak backdrop for the recorded interview material, framing adolescence as a journey through a harsh and hostile landscape:

The tale of the children of the troubled world,
 The tale of the search and the long journey,
 Each one awaits the word of comfort
 The single gesture of recognition,
 From those who once made the same journey.

The programme makes use of the now familiar technique of splicing together recorded excerpts of speech with songs. However, the sequences

of concrete images that made songs in the previous programmes so effective at conveying work processes are less effective at interpreting the abstract sentiments of the informants in *On the Edge*. Although the songs attempt to incorporate slang words (sometimes excruciatingly: 'dig it dad, get with it lad, be with it!'), the attempt to translate the actuality material into traditional forms results in vague and portentous phrases which bear little relation to the tone of the informants' natural mode of expression. It is hard to imagine any of the young people interviewed addressing their parents as:

You, the two who gave me breath,
 You who fashioned me,
 You who clothed me with your flesh and bone

The theme which the programme approaches most confidently is the negative effect of advertising and popular music culture on young people's lives. A sinister echo effect is applied to the voice of one informant as he talks about the power of advertisers, 'the mummies and daddies of today' who are 'really telling you what to do although you don't really know it'. Doyle (2005) notes that, in the film and popular music of the 1950s, artificial echo could connote both repressive authority and the uncanny. Both sets of associations seem to be at work here; the short excerpt is blended into the sound of a girl crying, again treated with echo. There then follows the song 'Be With it', a parody of teenage conformity, which intersperses excerpts of teenagers discussing pop music with a chorus consisting of the single word 'beat!', and actuality in which a male voice describes the sound of a pile driver he encountered in the Tottenham Court Road whose 'sheer monotony and deadness' was exerting a 'spellbinding effect'.

More transparently than in previous programmes, MacColl, Parker and Seeger impose their interpretation upon the actuality material presented. Most of the teenage voices heard on the recording speak positively about popular music; a few are at worst ambiguous, one describing it as 'simple, that's the main thing'. Harker (2007) accuses the programme of ignoring the testimony of one of the programme's informants who 'was forthright in the opinion that only "beatniks" and "girls who wear really long skirts, no make-up" would bother with music other than pop' (Harker 2007, 169) Peggy Seeger was hesitant about the programme's success, citing the team's inability to reproduce the idiolect of contemporary pop, and remarking that 'we should have gotten in some advisors' (Harker 2007, 169). Parker nevertheless felt that the use of traditional forms to translate the young informants' testimony, had posed a successful challenge to 'the pop song idiom so closely associated with the teenager' (Harker 2007, 169).

CONCLUSION

In what sense, then, are the Radio Ballads songs of protest? During a long career in political song, Ewan MacColl wrote a great deal of what Denisoff (1968, 230) has called ‘magnetic’ song, that ‘which appeals to the listener and attracts him to a specific movement or ideology within the ranks of adherents by creating solidarity’. The Radio Ballads, however, clearly do not belong in this category. They are persuasive, not declamatory, and perhaps fit more easily into Denisoff’s category of ‘rhetorical song’, seeking ‘to elicit tacit support or establish an attitudinal set on the part of the listener [...] rather than attempting to recruit the individual to a movement’ (Denisoff 1968, 238). However, in both content and form, the Radio Ballads protested against the various perceived threats, both internal and external, ranged against traditional working-class identities in late-1950s Britain: modernisation, Americanisation, the individualist culture of youth fashion and popular song. Perhaps inevitably, their attempts to construct a master vocabulary for capturing the modern world in all its complexity met with varied success. Nevertheless, they constitute a significant contribution to the field of protest song in several respects. In their innovative use of sound and their commitment to formal experimentation, the programmes moved beyond the notion of political song as a matter of text alone; in this, they both recalled the heyday of interwar British modernism and presaged the counter-cultural ‘politics of sound’ which emerged in the later 1960s. Perhaps more importantly, they staged their protest at the level of the mass media, bringing the voices of their informants before a national audience, and seeking to create new understandings amongst this listenership through the creative juxtaposition of discourses, both dominant and marginalised. Ultimately, their success lay not in proving the descriptive power of working-class speech or establishing the modernity of the ballad form so much as in their rediscovery of the heteroglossic character of radio and its yet unrealised democratic potential.

NOTES

1. *The Ballad of John Axon* written by Ewan MacColl © 1958 by Harmony Music Limited, Roundhouse Entrance, 212 Regent’s Park Rd, London NW1 8AW. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission.

2. *Singing the Fishing* written by Ewan MacColl © 1960 by Harmony Music Limited, Roundhouse Entrance, 212 Regent’s Park Rd, London NW1 8AW. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission.

3. *On the Edge* written by Ewan MacColl © 1963 by Harmony Music Limited, Roundhouse Entrance, 212 Regent's Park Rd, London NW1 8AW. All rights reserved. International copyright secured. Used by permission.

4. Part of the rambler's rights movement of the early 1930s, the Mass Trespass of Kinder Scout, an area of open moorland in Derbyshire, was a confrontation between members of the British Workers' Sports Federation and local police and gamekeepers (Moore and Vacca 2014, 20; Harker 2005).

Chapter 8

'Message Songs are a Drag' *Bob Dylan, Protesting too Much?*

Joseph O'Connor

In July 1978, when I was fifteen years old, I got a summer job on a building site near Dalkey, a picturesque coastal village in south County Dublin, making tea and running errands for the construction workers. My rate of pay was fifty pence an hour and a can of soda a day, not a bad remunerative package in 1978 if you happened to be fifteen. Dalkey was, and remains, a pleasant place. Immortalised by many Irish writers, including Joyce, Shaw and Flann O'Brien, its little streets and ruined castle cast an otherworldly air over old-fashioned shops and nineteenth-century pubs and a shoemaker's where an elderly man sharpened knives by grinding them on a stone wheel, in between mending the boots. Cyclists sometimes got their wheels caught in the Victorian tram lines that still ran along Castle Street. Single cigarettes could be purchased (illegally, by children or by anyone else) for ten pence each, in the newsagent run by the warm-hearted and utterly adorable old granny whose smile was like an innocent sunbeam.

A hierarchy operated on the building site, and the bricklayers were near the apex: skilled, experienced craftsmen who could put up a wall in a morning. They were amiable, quiet, possessed of a certain princely aura, sunburnt and generous with tips. On no account were they ever to be irritated, inconvenienced or displeased. In construction site terms, they were aristocrats. The foreman, nominally their superior, was terribly afraid of them, a fear I enjoyed observing.

They would send me down to the village, through the winding leafy lanes, past the Georgian or Victorian villas and the neat rows of ivy-covered cottages with roses in the window boxes, for newspapers or sandwiches or a particular bar of chocolate, on one occasion to deliver a note to local publican Mr. McDonagh's redhaired and high-cheekboned daughter, whose loveliness one helpless brickie was smitten by. The sea in the distance was the eternal

blue of youthful summer. The aroma of gorse filled the air. If you brought back what had been ordered with speed and efficiency, your take-home pay could be doubled.

The site was in the grounds of an old hotel on Sorrento Road. A cluster of apartment blocks stands there now. And every time I pass it, I remember one of those men, who was aged about 25 and dressed like James Dean, ample of quiff and leather of jacket. His name was Hughie—often abbreviated by the other bricklayers to 'H', or mock-expanded to 'Hubert'—and in my memory, he hailed from the nearby working-class neighbourhood of Sallynoggin, although perhaps that wasn't so.

At the time, like my friends, I had an enthusiasm for punk rock. I loved the protestations of The Clash, The Sex Pistols, X-Ray Spex, The Stranglers, and I had a particular and abiding devotion to Dun Laoghaire's own heroes, The Boomtown Rats, who were regarded as dangerous in the Ireland of the era, a country of murderous innocence (see O'Connor 1994). Hughie was a great man altogether for the Rats. He had seen them play live, in the basement of Moran's Hotel in Dublin's north inner city. They were scum. ("They don't even fucken wash themselves," he would smile, though how he was in a position to know such a thing was, perhaps mercifully, not revealed.) But one rainy day, as he and I took shelter (yes, from the storm) in the as of yet doorless shell of one of those half-finished apartment blocks, Hughie said to me that punk rock was all very well—it was wonderful, in fact—but it wasn't Dylan.

I had heard of this 'Dylan' character but had never heard him sing. Hughie assured me that Dylan was The Business, "a protest singer" with a voice once heard never forgotten. Dylan was a major poet, too.¹ Dylan had once been a soldier in the American army, Hughie attested, (incorrectly)² and the horrors of war had turned him into "a crusader for peace". His protest songs "pointed the finger" at something that was wrong in society: an injustice, a failing, a cruelty. And he had a voice made for protesting, rough, "a bit uncivilised", he's no "Donny Osmond, that's for sure". Hughie picked up a piece of old sandpaper one of the painters had been using on a door frame. "See that?" he said. "Well, Dylan's voice is like that. Only with the rain on the window, too."³

I was initially interested in protest songs because of The Boomtown Rats, a band who hailed from my hometown and to whose work I had heard the label applied. Their frontman Bob Geldof was a Caruso of protest; everything in his world (and therefore mine) seemed to be wrong. His mix of Jaggery moves and angry, sullen Dublinisms had already made him a hero to every kid I knew. He attacked the Catholic Church and the institutionalised hypocrisies of Ireland with fury, skill and ragamuffin zeal. I asked Hughie if Bob Dylan was up there with Geldof. His response was a gnomic smile.

A few days later I walked into my pal Ciaran Farrell's house and his elder brother happened to be playing a cassette. Strangely, I already knew who was singing. He was doing a song I'd later discover was called "Isis", a strange story of a marriage, from the album, *Desire* (1976). It wasn't a protest song, by Hughie's definitions, yet it seemed to protest about the very notion of the love song itself.⁴ As he sang, the world seemed to unfurl.

The French phrase '*coup de foudre*' means 'a flash of lightning' or 'a thunderbolt' and they also use it to mean 'love at first sight'. The first time I heard Dylan's voice is one of my coups de foudre. A new era was born: AD.

I don't know how many times I've since listened to *Desire*, but it must be hundreds. Its opening track, "Hurricane", transgresses so many norms that I've never been able to count them. It's too long to be a protest song, too wordy, too dense, the early verses too complicated to follow. The story features at least 13 characters in its narrative, and that's before we get to "the all-white jury" who preside at "a pig-circus" of a trial. And the song breaks what is surely the most basic law of all, in that the 'facts' it deploys are frequently inventions, yet the outrage is magnificent and memorable. "Rubin Carter was falsely tried" is the message. Every aspiring guitarist has bashed out that opening chord change, A-minor to F, as the inner echo of those snarled lyrics rises again. The song's use of cinematic jump cuts is so brilliantly effective and economical, conveying urgency, grabbing your sleeve; phrases from the lyric sheet read like a film script or a set of stage directions. This story *had* to be told.

Discovering Dylan around the same time as I discovered punk felt right. For me, there was no contradiction. Among the photographs of him I had seen were those taken on his 1966 British tour, when he binned the dungarees and lumberjack shirts that had adorned the Greenwich Village years and stocked up in the boutiques of Carnaby Street, favouring Kinks-style mod threads, mirrored aviator shades and hair that appeared as though its wearer had recently awoken in a builder's skip, a look anticipating Mancunian punk poet Dr. John Cooper Clarke. It may seem odd that the venn diagram of my teenage musical tastes included a former folkie troubadour *and* Slaughter and the Dogs, but the point of overlap was Dylan's voice and his louche contrarianism, each being the grammar of the other. I think of him as punk's secret grandfather. Well, perhaps that's a stretch. He's punk's Easter Island statue, the nobodaddy by whose stern shadow all must be measured.

I find it hard to listen to the great punk chanteuse Patti Smith and not hear Dylan's after-presence in her every phrasing, that antediluvian snarl and yelped, assertive bark, every consonant and spat syllable slightly over-enunciated into a reachy, sucker-punching stem-winder of a line that hits you like a dart flung hard. She has covered at least four Dylan songs, "Dark Eyes" (1985), "Changing of the Guards" (1978), "Drifter's Escape" (1967)

and "The Wicked Messenger" (1967) and has appeared live with Dylan on many occasions. In Smith's own words:

To me, Dylan always represented rock'n'roll—I never thought of him as a folk singer or poet or nothing. I just thought he was the sexiest person since Elvis Presley—sex in the brain, y'know? Sex at its most ultimate is being totally illuminated, and he was that, he was the King. And he still has it. I don't think his true power has been unleashed. (Smith cited in Miles 1991, 100)

And it must seem evident to anyone with ears that John Lydon was influenced by Smith's scornflake style of vocal projection, perhaps even by Dylan himself. Surely Dylan's magisterially judgemental "How does it feeeceel?" is the grandfather of Johnny's "I am the antichrrrist!"

In his *Chronicles Volume 1* (2004), Dylan refers to his youthful self as a "young punk folksinger" and wishes Mick Jones, "the quintessential guitarist from The Clash", were in his band. Steve Jones of The Sex Pistols guests on Dylan's 1988 album *Down in the Groove*. Siouxsie and the Banshees covered Dylan's and Rick Danko's "This Wheels on Fire" (1987) and punk supremo Johnny Thunders did "Like a Rolling Stone" (1975). Richard Hell's adenoïdal croaky style on "Blank Generation" (1976), "The Kid With the Replaceable Head" (1978) and "Love Comes in spurts" (1977) is pure Dylan; he and his band The Voidoids covered "Going Going Gone" (1982). Swedish prog-punk band Ravjunk have recorded "All Along the Watchtower" (1979). In a 22nd March 1984 appearance on The David Letterman Show, Dylan's backup group included drummer Charlie Quintana and bassist Tony Marsico of L.A. Latino-punk band The Plugz. They performed high-octane versions of "Jokerman" and "License to Kill," both from Dylan's then recently released album *Infidels* (1983), and a neurotically supercharged cover of bluesman Sonny Boy Williamson's classic braggadocio strut, "Don't Start Me Talking", that was punk to the nth degree.

But Dylan the punk had always been there. Anyone who wants to hear him need only listen to the in-your-face sneer of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" (1965) or the version of "It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)" from *Before The Flood* (1974). This live album recorded with The Band captures an explosively powerful onstage Dylan driving the crowd to a frenzy. "Bleeding", recorded on St Valentine's Night, 1974, at the Los Angeles Forum, Inglewood, California, is a particular highlight. A week beforehand, the House of Representatives had voted to authorize the House Judiciary Committee to investigate whether grounds existed for the impeachment of President Nixon for his role in Watergate. The communal roar produced by the line "Even the President of the United States sometimes must have to stand *naked!*" is one of the most exciting sounds of protest that I've ever

heard.⁵ But Dylan himself could be a little arch on such points. In *Chronicles* he writes:

Topical songs weren't protest songs. The term 'protest singer' didn't exist [in the Greenwich Village folk scene] any more than the term 'singer songwriter'. You were a performer or you weren't, that was about it—a folksinger or not one. "Songs of dissent" was a term people used but even that was rare I didn't think I was a protest singer I didn't think I was protesting anything any more than I thought that Woody Guthrie songs were protesting anything. I didn't think of Woody as a protest singer. If he is one, then so is Sleepy John Estes and Jelly Roll Morton. What I was hearing pretty regularly, though, were rebellion songs and those really moved me. The Clancy Brothers....sang them all the time...They weren't protest songs, though, they were rebel ballads.... Even in a simple, melodic wooing ballad, there'd be rebellion waiting around the corner'⁶ (Dylan 2004, 93).

This is Dylan the chameleon, his only lasting guise. With all these refusals, denials and ambiguously finessed categorizations, one comes to feel that the fine writer Jon Pareles of the *New York Times* had it closer than most, when he asked:

Has there ever been a rock star as contrary as Bob Dylan? When taken for a folk singer, interpreting traditional songs, he started to write his own. When taken for a topical songwriter who would dutifully put his music behind party-line messages, and praised as the spokesman for a generation, he became an ambiguous, visionary poet instead. And when taken for an acoustic-guitar troubadour who was supposed to cling to old, virtuous rural sounds, he plugged in his guitar, hired a band and sneered oracular electric blues. (Pareles 2005)

A guidebook to Woodstock, New York, Dylan's hometown for a number of years in the late 1960s, refers to him as the "prince of protest"⁷. This, despite the fact that Dylan did not perform at the iconic countercultural festival to which the town gave its name, indeed refused to take sides on most of the important issues of his time, preferring a shifting game of identities and a veritable firework display of ironies to any form of direct political engagement. Yet, somehow, the idea of Dylan as protest singer has taken root. Perhaps his most banal lyric, "Blowing in the Wind", has been understood (or misunderstood) as a sort of manifesto, though of what, or for whom, remains tantalizingly unclear, a screen onto which much has been projected.

What is demonstrable is that, almost from the beginning of his remarkable career, Dylan himself has at least publicly resisted all attempts to portray him as a spokesman, political commentator, leader or follower. In a famous interview conducted in San Francisco in December 1965 he remarked—"I

prefer to think of myself as just a song and dance man".⁸ In the same year, filmmaker Don Pennebaker documented (in *Don't Look Back*) Dylan's irked encounter with an unfortunate reporter, Horace Judson. Asked to explain why he wrote his songs, Dylan responded, "I just write them. I don't write them for any reason. There's no great message. If you wanna tell other people that, go ahead and tell them. But I'm not gonna have to answer to it ... I don't need *Time* magazine".⁹

In February 1966, Dylan gave an interview to *Playboy*, in which he demonstrated his off-the-cuff creativity, his contempt for journalistic pursuits and his growing restlessness with the labels and expectations of protest. Worth quoting at some length, it reads almost as a rehearsal for story-songs like "Tangled Up In Blue" from *Blood on the Tracks* (1974), which make mockery of reliable narrators.

Q: [...] Why have you stopped composing and singing protest songs?

A: I've stopped composing and singing anything that has either a reason to be written or a motive to be sung. Don't get me wrong, now. 'Protest' is not my word. I've never thought of myself as such. The word 'protest,' I think, was made up for people undergoing surgery. It's an amusement-park word. A normal person in his righteous mind would have to have the hiccups to pronounce it honestly. The word 'message' strikes me as having a hernia-like sound. It's just like the word 'delicious.' Also the word 'marvellous.' You know, the English can say 'marvellous' pretty good. They can't say 'raunchy' so good, though. Well, we each have our thing. Anyway, message songs, as everybody knows, are a drag. It's only college newspaper editors and single girls under 14 that could possibly have time for them.

Q: You've said you think message songs are vulgar. Why?

A: Well, first of all, anybody that's got a message is going to learn from experience that they can't put it into a song. I mean it's just not going to come out the same message. After one or two of these unsuccessful attempts, one realizes that his resultant message, which is not even the same message he thought up and began with, he's now got to stick by it; because, after all, a song leaves your mouth just as soon as it leaves your hands. Are you following me?

The interviewer indicates that he fully understands what Dylan is saying. Dylan continues by stating that other people's messages also need to be acknowledged. He then proposes renting Town Hall and allowing 30 Western Union boys to deliver their messages. This will result in the audience hearing more messages than they have ever heard before.

Q: But your early ballads have been called 'songs of passionate protest.' Wouldn't that make them 'message' music?

A: This is unimportant. Don't you understand? I've been writing since I was eight years old. I've been playing the guitar since I was ten. I was raised playing and writing whatever it was I had to play and write.

Q: Would it be unfair to say, then, as some have, that you were motivated commercially rather than creatively in writing the kind of songs that made you popular?

A: All right, now, look. It's not all that deep. It's not a complicated thing. My motives, or whatever they are, were never commercial in the money sense of the word. It was more in the don't die-by-the-hacksaw sense of the word. I never did it for money. It happened, and I let it happen to me. There was no reason *not* to let it happen to me. I couldn't have written before what I write now, anyway. The songs used to be about what I felt and saw. Nothing of my own rhythmic vomit ever entered into it. Vomit is not romantic. I used to think songs are supposed to be romantic. And I didn't want to sing anything that was unspecific. Unspecific things have no sense of time. All of us people have no sense of time; it's a dimensional hang-up. Anybody can be specific and obvious. That's always been the easy way. The leaders of the world take the easy way. It's not that it's so difficult to be unspecific and less obvious; it's just that there's nothing, absolutely nothing, to be specific and obvious *about*. My older songs, to say the least, were about nothing. The newer ones are about the same nothing—only as seen inside a bigger thing, perhaps called the nowhere. But this is all very constipated. I *do* know what my songs are about.

Q: And what's that?

A: Oh, some are about four minutes; some are about five, and some, believe it or not, are about eleven or twelve.

Q: Can't you be a bit more informative?

A: Nope. (Dylan 1966)

Johnny in the basement was thinking about the government, but about many other things too. But, despite Dylan's often-repeated and perhaps self-defensive insistence on not being a writer of protest songs, the demonstrable fact is that he has written many brilliant ones. In a period of less than nine years he wrote "Oxford Town", "With God on our Side", "Chimes of Freedom", "When the Ship Comes In", "Let Me Die in My Footsteps", "Only a Pawn in Their Game", "George Jackson", "Talkin' World War III Blues", "Gates of Eden", "The Times They Are a Changin'", "Emmet Till", "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall", "Maggie's Farm" and "Masters of War".¹⁰

"Maggie's Farm", a protest song that may be read as protesting against protest songs, would become a sort of countercultural anthem during Margaret Thatcher's premiership of Britain, being covered by The Blues Band (who altered the lyric to include scathing reference to the London Metropolitan

Police) and many others. Hugely important ska-group, The Specials, recorded and often performed it and also amended the lyrics; Dylan's "National Guard" became "National Front." The Specials' leader, Jerry Dammers, wrote one of the most powerful (and arguably the most successful) protest songs of his era, "Nelson Mandela" (1984), often mistitled "Free Nelson Mandela". "Maggie's Farm" has been covered by many other artists, including Solomon Burke, U2, Muse, Tin Machine, Richie Havens, Toots Hibbert, Rage Against the Machine and Catalan band, Mazoni. The Beastie Boys' track "Johnny Ryall" contains the lyrics: "Washing windows on the Bowery at a quarter to four, 'Cause he ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more". "Maggie's Farm" was also the name of a cartoon strip by satirical artist Steve Bell that ran in the London magazine *City Limits* throughout Mrs. Thatcher's premiership.

So, Dylan and leftist politics or, at least, countercultural stances, had long been on terms with each other. In a fine essay, Critic Paul Slade of the website Planetslade.com points out that Suze Rotolo, Dylan's girlfriend from 1961 to 1964, was the daughter of two Communist Party activists, and writes fascinatingly of the explicitly political background to Dylan's work at this time:

As with many of Dylan's early songs, *Pawn's* words and music were first published in *Broadside*, a tiny Greenwich Village magazine whose mimeographed pages were filled with radical songs. *Broadside* wanted songs which 'mirrored an America becoming ever more deeply involved with the great national struggles of war or peace, civil rights and [...] the plight of the unemployed and poor.' Songs like these, the editors added, should "reflect an America of still increasing violence and death, inflicted especially on the Negro people and their white allies". In January 1962, when *Broadside* made its debut, that meant contemporary American folk music and, for a while, Dylan was very happy to follow *Broadside's* agenda. In the magazine's first 18 months alone, he gave them 15 new songs.¹¹

Among those songs was "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll", perhaps the greatest of all Dylan's protest songs, certainly the most technically sophisticated. Notice, first of all, the fine-honed economy of the song, the lack of any scaffolding. The opening words state the inciting incident of the story: William Zanzinger killed poor Hattie Carroll. The song goes on to tell a powerful and quite detailed narrative (based on a factual event) in only 419 words. Fascinatingly, it never says one word on the subject Hattie Carroll's race. But every listener sees and knows.

The song's use of detail and images is vivid: the cane sailing through the air, the children who empty the ashtrays "on a whole other level", the judge who "spoke through his cloak, most deep and distinguished". Note the intense and continuous movement in the story: we start "at a Baltimore hotel society

gathering” but a mere two lines later we’re ‘down to the [police] station’. Soon afterwards we’re shown “a tobacco farm of six hundred acres” provided to a young privileged man of 24 by his wealthy and influential parents. From there, we are drawn into the very different world that Hattie Carroll and her ten children inhabit: she is “a maid of the kitchen”, so lowly that she is not even permitted to speak to the people at the table. Finally, we move to yet a further location, the courtroom. In the space of a few dozen lines, Dylan moves us around the important scenes and settings of the story, as a movie director would do. And the state of mind of the storyteller is very much a part of this story. His anger is suppressed all the way through, until the very end: “Now is the time for your tears”.

The song has much to teach about the importance of movement in storytelling. Note how Dylan makes his sentences unusually long, using many ‘ands’, so as to involve and draw the listener in. Each verse begins with a sentence that will in fact continue through a half dozen lines, and in each case the sentence culminates in a statement on which Dylan places immense moral weight. Verse 1, for example commences with the line “... And booked William Zanzinger for first degree murder” (Dylan 1964).

The song is a lesson in storytelling craft because it is constantly unrolling, moving and evolving, deploying assonance, half rhyme, vowel chimes and alliteration with great subtlety and assurance while never losing contact with the juiciness of popular speech. It is perhaps the most technically sophisticated folk protest song of its era, a charged and careful piece of writing disguised as spontaneous utterance. Little wonder that it has lasted so long.¹²

It’s a fitting irony that Dylan, on at least one occasion, found himself on the receiving end of a protest song, Joan Baez’s “To Bobby” (1972). The politically engaged Baez, a friend, advocate and former lover of Dylan, found his withdrawal from the arena of ideological struggle difficult to accept, particularly in the context of the ongoing Vietnam War, and ostensibly penned the song as an attempt to tempt him back to the barricades, perhaps, in truth, to punish him for going. Cooler assessments might intuit that he was leaving a crucible in which he had become increasingly uncomfortable and might conclude that his decision was perhaps the correct one and resulted in no huge loss¹³. The lyrics of Baez’s manipulative tirade summon the spectres of terrified children and refer to obsessed fans leaving gifts of roses outside Dylan’s Manhattan townhouse.

Predictably, Dylan remained unpersuaded. *Chronicles* (2004, 119) riots in sardonic bleakness on the point:

Demonstrators found our house and paraded up and down in front of it chanting and shouting, demanding for me to come out and lead them somewhere—stop shirking my duties as the conscience of a generation Joan Baez recorded a

protest song about me that was getting big play, challenging me to get with it—come out and take charge, lead the masses—be an advocate, lead the crusade. The song called out to me from the radio like a public service announcement. The press never let up”.¹⁴

The rebel whose advice in “Subterranean Homesick Blues” was “don’t follow leaders” clearly didn’t feel like following Ms. Baez. The only wonder is that she, who presumably knew him well, ever thought that this public dressing-down had the remotest chance of success (if she did indeed think that). Her framing of the appeal around the word “we” was only one mistake. It is striking, for an artist so regularly described as a maker of political songs or ‘the conscience of a generation’, how very rarely Dylan uses that most communal of words.¹⁵

The lyrical muscularity, punchy iconoclasm and narrative suppleness of the early protest songs resurface in the early 1980s born-again Christian era of Dylan’s creative and personal life, but often with problematic results. The putting of new wine into old bottles did not always produce sweet outcomes. It’s a phase that saw the appearance of some beautiful songs, for example “Every Grain of Sand” from *Shot of Love* (1981). Reworking lines from.

William Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence”, this is Dylan at his most sublimely joyous. But not all of the Christian-era songs are so poised and hopeful. Indeed, some are chilling. Anger, vengefulness, bitterness, self-hatred, misanthropy, raging regret, foreboding, a shadow of imminent doom and, in particular, a deep sense of the utter untrustworthiness of friends (“They’d like to drive me from this town”, he says in “I Believe in You”, one of many emotional hallmarks of so many of the born-again songs that the listener becomes uneasy. The lyrics of title song on “*Slow Train Coming* (1979), goes on to envision “Sheiks walking around like kings, wearing fancy jewels and nose rings.... controlling America’s future from Amsterdam or Paris... The enemy I see wears a cloak of decency.” On “Change My Way of Thinking”, the world is a moral cesspit, where “sons become lovers to their mothers, old men turn daughters into whores.” In “Covenant Woman”, “I’ve been broken, shattered like an empty cup”. In “Pressing On”, “many try to stop me, shake me up in my mind.” Again, as so often with the Christian songs, there is a self-flaying suspicion and its ugly cousin, arrogance, the determination to “stop being influenced by fools”. In “Gotta Serve Somebody”, it becomes essential to serve either “the devil or the lord”, with no other options, a theme revisited in “Precious Angel” in which “you either got faith or you got unbelief and there ain’t no neutral ground”. “When You Gonna Wake Up?” continues the bleak Manichean sermonizing. “Counterfeit philosophies have polluted all of your thoughts”. An unreleased song “Ain’t No Righteous Man, No Not One” commands the audience to “look around, ya

see so many social hypocrites.” In “Property of Jesus” the listener is asked “What happened to the real you?”, a question the writer may not have asked of himself.

The spirit of protest indeed animates the born-again Dylan, but it’s sometimes hard to listen when God’s on his side.

The subsequent years and decades saw fewer explicitly protest songs, although pieces like “Union Sundown” from *Infidels* (1983) and “Early Roman Kings” from *Tempest* (2012) have roots in the brisk skepticism and clear-eyed pointedness of his early work. But increasingly, a sort of Whitmanesque sensibility emerged, a dreamy lyricism less weighted and freighted than “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll”, descended from “Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands”, perhaps, with the associated strengths and shortcomings.

That said, Dylan’s technical skill and peerless artistry had infused the protest song with new possibilities, significantly raised the standard and left an indelible thumbprint on so many future examples of the breed that any credible history of the twentieth century protest song (indeed, any credible history of twentieth century protest) would need to include reference to his work.

Did his protest songs achieve anything? Do anyone’s? “Poetry makes nothing happen”, wrote W.H. Auden in his great 1939 poem on the death of Yeats. And while that may be true (and it also may not be), it must be added that the call to moral attentiveness is one of the highest reasons why art exists, and that a plausible mission of artists is to help people see what’s around them. Going further, it can be argued that, in the UK throughout the 1980s, the activist campaigning work of organizations like Red Wedge and Rock Against Racism changed perceptions and outlooks, therefore self-definitions and actions, and was somewhat successful in altering a socio-political landscape in which the National Front was organized in almost every city and racist attacks were an everyday occurrence. In the cauldron of political debate or cultural contesting, the protest song at least provides a shared means of expression, a point around which to rally, a sort of lingua franca. And if the protest song has a tendency to preach to the converted, what of that? The converted deserve to be uplifted now and again. To some extent, all protest singers transmit the Dylanesque message that the times are a-changing, a valuable warning in itself. And they still ask Woody Guthrie’s question: “Which Side Are You On?” Some will call the protest song a form of virtue-signaling and little more. But virtue is rare enough and should be signaled more than it is, in a world where stupidity, loutishness, ignorance and malice trumpet themselves with such breezy regularity.

At the time of writing, some years have elapsed since we last heard a new Dylan-penned song of any kind. Some have felt that the onetime rebel has been annexed by the establishment: the Congressional Medal of Honor

and the Nobel Prize for Literature would have seemed distant indeed to the threadbare young heir of Woody who rambled into New York town almost six decades ago. Others feel that the establishment has lowered its guard and admitted one of the barbarians. Dylan's Nobel award led to icy and sometimes lofty phrasemaking by certain commentators and stirred a controversy that had long been quietly festering. Poet Vona Groarke remarked: "What, have they run out of writers? Next, they'll be giving Sportsperson of the Year to Margaret Atwood. Or the Man Booker Prize to Bono. We've waited so long for a winner from the US, and with all the possible winners out there (Marilynne Robinson, Don deLillo?), they've only gone and wasted it on Bob Dylan".¹⁶ Memoirist Blake Morrison described the Nobel jury's decision as 'the oddest since 1953' (in which year the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Winston Churchill). Poet Edna Longley said it was "a ridiculous decision, and an insult to real poets" while Ian Sansom wrote, "The awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Bob Dylan is more than unjust. It is absurd. It's a category error. It's like a race horse winning Crufts". The kerfuffle over Dylan's Nobel was sometimes referred to as "a debate" but, in reality, it was little more than a broadcasting of mindsets as to what poetry is, or should be, with scant attention paid to his writing or its merits. For his own part—entirely predictably—the honoree said little about winning the world's highest accolade for literature and intimated that he might not show up to collect it. Dylan fans everywhere enjoyed and understood the tease, feeling the particular joy of the insider who knows when a tongue is firmly in cheek. And those of us who had long seen him as a secret founder of punk relished the fact that the artist who stood in for him and performed at the Announcement Ceremony was none other than Patti Smith.

Recent Dylan albums have included Christmas carols and extracts from the great American songbook. Perhaps there is a sort of protest there, too, a refusal to meet expectations, a decision to grow old disgracefully. Aged 76, the troubadour is still donning and discarding the masks, crooning one moment, blues-barking the next, refusing to utter a word to his adoring live audiences, unbothered by notions of propriety. Several weeks into Dylan's long delay before contacting the Nobel Committee to say whether or not he would attend the prize-giving in Stockholm, committeeman Per Wasterberg publicly criticized him as "arrogant and impolite", a moment so replete with delicious ironies that it would lead one to think Mr. Wasterberg had somehow never heard "Like A Rolling Stone".

The mischievousness is still there, the sense that play and protest might be forms of one another, each a kind of refusal of convention but sometimes an ethical necessity. It's a recognition I first encountered as a fifteen-year-old kid, those songs buzzing in my head and heart as I walked the summer lanes of an Irish coastal village, and it still moves me, forty years later. One

of Dylan's unique achievements was not merely to write a sheaf of protest songs that redefined the genre forever but to see the formal limitations that would have to be broken down and replaced, to go further, in cleverer ways, while staying quieter. He knew that a song is a pillow as well as a passport, an incredibly powerful form of private consolation and sustenance as well as a weapon in the struggle. His ultimate protest might be silence as style, resistance as rejuvenation. As the chorus of the great shapeshifter's early manifesto "My Back Pages" (1964) has it: "I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now".

NOTES

1. This is not the place to add to the futile debate as to whether or not Dylan is a poet, a controversy even the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature appears not to have settled, but his "Visions of Johanna" from *Blonde on Blonde* (1966) contains lines which W.H. Auden would have been proud to have written. Distinguished Irish novelist John Banville is one of the unbelievers. He remarked in a *Daily Mail* interview (January 29, 2016): "I regard Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen as arch-charlatans ... It's just warmed-up surrealism smeared over the worst of American popular music."

2. Hughie, as noted above, was mistaken in his claim that Dylan had once been a soldier. But Dylan did write, in *Chronicles Volume 1*: "I had wanted to go to West Point. I'd always pictured myself dying in some heroic battle rather than in bed" (2004, 41).

3. Philip Larkin wrote: "I poached Bob Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited* out of curiosity and found myself well rewarded. Dylan's cawing, derisive voice is probably well suited to his material—I say probably, because much of it was unintelligible to me—and his guitar adapts itself to rock ('Highway 61') and ballad ('Queen Jane') admirably. There is a marathon 'Desolation Row', which has an enchanting tune and mysterious, possibly half-baked words." (*The Daily Telegraph*, November 10, 1965).

4. Although 'Sara' from the same album is perhaps Dylan's most emotionally naked song, as beautiful an expression of the preciousness and frailty of human love as has ever been put on a record.

5. Typically, Dylan himself later belittled the record. 'I think I was just playing a role on that tour, I was playing Bob Dylan and the Band were playing the Band. It was all sort of mindless. The only thing people talked about was energy this, energy that. The highest compliments were things like, 'Wow, lotta energy, man.' It had become absurd.' Dylan, in conversation with Cameron Crowe, quoted in the booklet accompanying *Biograph* (1985, 22).

6. It is difficult to take at face value Dylan's contention that he "didn't think of Woody [a man who often performed with the slogan 'THIS MACHINE KILLS FASCISTS' painted on his guitar] as a protest singer." As for Sleepy John Estes, it is possible to read his work as constituting 'protest'; he is frequently mentioned in Lawson's (2017) *Jim Crow's Counterculture: The Blues and Black Southerners, 1890-1945*.

7. The phrase is used by Dylan himself in *Chronicles Volume 1*. "Goons were breaking into our place.... rogue radicals looking for the Prince of Protest." (116) Dylan's years in Woodstock, and the town's long history as a countercultural centre of creativity, make for interesting reading in *Roots of the 1969 Woodstock Festival*, (Blelock and Blelock 2009).

8. *Dylan Speaks: The Legendary 1965 Press Conference in San Francisco*. Interestingly, the credits on the published video read 'Bob Dylan (Actor) [sic], Robert N Zagone (Director):' The 'song and dance man' moment was frequently rebroadcast by television news programmes in October 2016, in the days following the announcement of Dylan's Nobel Prize for Literature.

9. On other occasions, Dylan has come tantalizingly close to admitting that he does indeed have his reasons for writing. A February 1978 interview with Ron Rosenbaum, first published in *Playboy* (not to be confused with a 1966 interview in the same publication, conducted by the same journalist) contains the following exchange:

Dylan: The Devil is everything false, the Devil will go as deep as you let the Devil go. You can leave yourself open to that. If you understand what that whole scene is about, you can easily step aside. But if you want the confrontation to begin with, well, there's plenty of it. But then again, if you believe you have a purpose and a mission, and not much time to carry it out, you don't bother about those things.

Rosenbaum: Do you think you have a purpose and a mission?

Dylan: Obviously.

Rosenbaum: What is it?

Dylan: Henry Miller said it: The role of an artist is to inoculate the world with disillusionment.

(Dylan slightly misquotes Miller (1949), who wrote, "A man writes to throw off the poison which he has accumulated because of his false way of life. He is trying to recapture his innocence, yet all he succeeds in doing is to inoculate the world with a virus of his disillusionment.")

10. "Masters of War" was voted number one in a list of 'the 100 best protest songs of all time' by readers of *Mojo* magazine, edition 126, May 2004, and 'best protest song of all time' by readers of *Rolling Stone*, edition December 3, 2014. In *Mojo's* poll of the '100 Greatest Bob Dylan Songs' (September 2005) it appears at number 16. The final verse which includes the phrase "And I'll stand over your grave/Till I'm sure that you're dead" surely influenced Elvis Costello's 1989 song "Tramp the Dirt Down" (about Margaret Thatcher), with its closing line, "I'll stand on your grave and tramp the dirt down". Either (or both) may have influenced the writing of Morrissey's "Margaret on the Guillotine". (1988; "People like you make me feel so old inside/ Please die".)

11. See Slade's essay 'True Lies, the Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll' on Plan-et-slade.com. Slade's piece is fascinating for many reasons, not least of which is that he reveals Dylan's to be the *second* ballad about Hattie Carroll. 'That last issue, though, - *Broadside* 23 - is less notable for the Dylan song on its front page than the Don West composition nestling within. West, a socialist campaigner and poet, had

composed nine verses of polemic which he called "The Ballad of Hattie Carroll", suggesting it be sung to the tune of "Wayfaring Stranger". Compared to the song Dylan would write six months later, West's effort is a plodding, awkward thing, more concerned with parading its writer's conscience than adding any poetic resonance to the event.

12. Touchingly, Hattie Carroll has had numerous afterlives. Her lament has been covered by many artists including Mason Jennings, Phranc, Cage the Elephant, Michael Rose of Black Uhuru and Christy Moore. (This writer has heard an unreleased version by Tom Waits, in a private collection.) Billy Bragg adopts the melody and phrasing for his own "The Lonesome Death of Rachel Corrie" (2006), commemorating an American activist killed in the Gaza Strip and protesting the cancellation by a New York theatre of a play based on her writings. "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll" is one of the remarkably high number of Dylan songs translated into French (*La Mort Solitaire De Hattie Carroll*), many recorded chanson-style by Hugues Aufray. They include the magnificently titled "Cauchemar Pyschomoteur".

13. "Some have gone so far as suggesting that protest songs may even work against social movements as a surrogate for activity itself". See Deena Weinstein, 'Rock protest songs: so many and so few', in Ian Peddie (2006).

14. Dylan is being generous or self-important (or both) in suggesting that "To Bobby", no masterpiece, was often played on the radio. Baez later penned a brilliant and in some ways even more barbed song about Dylan, "Diamonds and Rust" from the 1975 album of the same name. It is said to be based on a real life incident in which Dylan, having ended the relationship with Ms Baez some time previously, had what some might feel to be the bad form to call her from a public telephone box to read her the (very many) words he had written for "Lily, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts" and ask her what she thought of them. The cover version of "Diamonds and Rust" by Heavy Metal band Judas Priest is quite something. The amp goes up to eleven.

15. It appears in only one of his titles, "We Better Talk This Over", whereas 'I' is the first word of dozens of his songs and fifteen of his titles. Dylan has stated that the chord structure of "Blowin' in the Wind" is based on an old anti-slavery song, "No More Auction Block For Me", which influenced the greatest of all 'we' songs, "We Shall Overcome".

16. Vona Groarke's remarks and the responses quoted here by Blake Morrison, Edna Longley and Ian Sansom were published in *The Irish Times* (October 13, 2016).

Part III

TRANSFORMING TRADITIONS

Chapter 9

Expressions of *Mā'ohi*-ness in Contemporary Tahitian Popular Music

Geoffroy Colson

Today, most scholars agree that globalisation processes have increased the flow of culture in the Pacific¹, a phenomenon that exponentially accelerates change in music and dance (Ammann 2001, 152), and which entailed a continuous and often unequal interaction between indigenous culture and the Western way of life, leading to the development of perceptions of social and political injustices in French Polynesia.

This chapter examines the emergence of protest music in Tahiti, understood not only as voiced feelings of opposition against social or political injustice, but also as more implicit, indirect, and “pacific” forms of artistic reactions to such issues. It explores its connections with cultural heritage and practice, and advances the hypothesis that the relative cultural and artistic isolation of French Polynesia from Anglophone areas of the Pacific² could have entailed a specific development of expressions of protest in indigenous music, with regard to protest music movements in the Pacific. Relying on published and online primary as well as secondary sources on the one hand, and interviews with cultural representatives on the other, I discuss key historical, cultural and artistic factors that have led in the last decades to the emergence of contemporary Tahitian protest music. Framing the problematic within the Tahitian musical system understood as a complex, interacting and coherent cultural landscape open toward external influences, I investigate how the history of colonial and postcolonial indigenous consciousness in traditional arts, letters and popular music as a resonance of the 1970s cultural revival³ might shed light on contemporary musical expressions of protest. I explore how rhetoric in contemporary Tahitian music encapsulates this protestation across a variety of musical genres, and how strong cultural values, conveyed through a pacific songwriting tradition, are asserted in reaction to a pervasive Western culture.

Tahitian musicians have absorbed new musical practices and instruments and “have used these to achieve their own ends” (Diettrich, Moulin and Webb 2011, 97). Today, they enact their artistic and cultural agenda as much in the traditional arts sector as in popular music. The individual history of a few influential artists and producers has shaped the Tahitian popular music sector, which is diverse and dynamic compared with the number of inhabitants—the Tahitian population is around 180,000 people (2012 census), resulting in the flowering of a number of groups since the early 20th century.⁴

In contrast to the 1960s, where lighthearted songs used to “celebrate happy parties, Hinano beer, and stories of lovely *vahine*⁵ and sailors”, a new rhetoric appeared in popular songs from the 1990s onwards. Contemporary songwriters popularized themes and rhetoric developed among Tahitian intellectuals at the dawn of the cultural revival, in order to “denounce the corruption of political mores” and “the loss of traditional values” (Saura 1998, 54–55). In addition to reactions against social and political injustice, one can wonder how popular music singers have come to embody what Tahitian intellectual Jean-Marc Teraitetuatini Pambrun has referred to as “paradox of an inner cultural conflict”. According to him Tahitian people live a “deep psychological and ideological trauma” (Pambrun 2008, 92–93);⁶ the result of a “forced coexistence of ... two incompatible cultural matrixes, ... the *Mā‘ohi*⁷ inspired tradition and Westernized modernity” (103). The Tahitian cultural landscape embodies this situation of crisis, through the “steady and uncontrollable reference to *Mā‘ohi*-ness” (92–93).

The first section of this chapter examines the historical grounds for expressions of political and social protest, and interprets the emergence of the concept of *Mā‘ohi*-ness as a crystallization of resistance against processes of cultural standardization and their induced threats to indigenous culture. On the basis of interviews undertaken in Tahiti in 2013, in order to contextualize the analysis I establish a typification of the contemporary Tahitian musical landscape. This global framework guides the analysis of the development of protest songs vis-à-vis expressions of *Mā‘ohi*-ness. Against this backdrop, the last section of the chapter interprets the contemporary traditional arts as a form of implicit protest through the diachronic analysis of the connections between literature, *‘ōrero* (traditional oratory art) and songwriting.

EXPRESSIONS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROTEST IN TAHITI

Tahiti entered the era of postcolonial modernity at the beginning of the 1960s. The installation of the Centre d’Expérimentation du Pacifique (CEP, the French Pacific Nuclear Testing Centre) in 1962 represented a new era

in Tahiti, heralding important economic growth, increased financial and migration flows and the beginning of the tourism industry⁸ (Notwithstanding the political and social turmoil; see Villierme 2012). Subsequent to this, the creation of Télé Tahiti, the first Tahitian television channel in 1965, was followed by a growing diversification that brought international standards in popular music to Tahitians.⁹ The success of social networks, and particularly of Facebook, among urban French Polynesians in the early 2000s has also had deep consequences for how music is listened to, transmitted, and produced within and beyond the confines of the French Polynesian archipelago.

THE MĀ'OHĪ CULTURAL IDENTITY

A spontaneous artistic movement relating to traditional culture arose, embodied by Madeleine Moua¹⁰ and in 1956 she created Heiva, the first professional traditional dance group,¹¹ which subsequently became a nursery for a new generation of indigenous talents. This movement gained institutional support from organizations that emphasized cultural identity as a heritage, without contentious political value (Saura 2008, 59). However, issues and rhetoric surrounding the Mā'ohi identity and the connection with religious practice constitute the basis for the emergence of protest songs about perceptions of culture loss and fears of out-of-control globalisation processes, and for claims for indigenous identity in popular music.

From the 1960s onwards, Tahitian intellectuals originating from the Protestant community¹² initiated a reflection about the redefinition of Polynesian culture, in particular through the creation of the Maohi Club in 1964 (Tevane 2000, 15). This cultural revival gained rapid support from new Tahitian cultural institutions.¹³

The role of Protestant elites in the cultural revival has been as determinant in French Polynesia as it has been elsewhere in the Pacific. The elites used the sacralisation of their origins and cultural heritage for their own theological agency (see Babadzan 2009, 193), and despite having contributed to the destruction of the indigenous culture, they ultimately came to transmit it (Langevin 1990, 146, 160). For example, together with the Académie Tahitienne, Protestant liturgy became the sanctuary of the Tahitian *beau parler*, or *'ōrerora 'a parau*, which has been transmitted to political discourses (Tetumu and Teahua 2008, 5) and, as will be discussed shortly, has nurtured both traditional singing and popular music. Similarly, artists and musical practices also circulated between the Roman Catholic community and the realm of popular music. Following the Second Vatican Council,¹⁴ important changes occurred in the liturgy, including the use of vernacular languages and the introduction of modern instruments in liturgical music.

The understanding of how and to what extent claims for indigenous cultural identity arose in contemporary Tahitian music in reaction to colonial culture is subservient to the definition of the term “Mā‘ohi” given above. Tahitian cultural identity oscillates between a constructivist approach through a multiethnic political discourse and “substantivist traditionalist” representations in connection with the concept of nation or community linked to an origin (Saura 2011, 1–2). This resonates in the vocabulary that is employed in relation to identity. The words “Tahitian”, “Polynesian” and “Mā‘ohi” encompass various notions and carry a historical background that it is important to recall here briefly. The term “Tahitian” has been historically employed in opposition to *papa‘ā*¹⁵ and *tinitō*,¹⁶ before the expansion of the use of “Polynesians”, a term recently claimed by indigenous people as “a cultural label and a political banner”, but also today, by Western people and people of mixed heritage in a constructivist vision. The Tahitian term Mā‘ohi by which indigenous French Polynesians refer to themselves in a “substantial” perspective, as Saura (2011, 14) reminded us, “refers to a rewarding image of the ancestral culture”. Raapoto defined the term in opposition to “Tahitian”:

Mā‘ohi refers rather to that which is indigenous. It is a community of shared traditions, language, culture, and ideology whose duty it is ‘to understand, to become impregnated with our past, our culture, our language, to create a new world in our image and in our dimension. (Raapoto, quoted in Stevenson 1992, 119)

Pambrun is perhaps one of the few Tahitian intellectuals who has articulated the complex relationships of Tahitians using the concepts of tradition, identity, and culture (2008, 59, 96, 139). For him, “the claim for Mā‘ohi identity is stopped”, the “dominant discourse” imposes limits on how to live the tradition, and “ancestral rituals and practices are tolerated as far as they remain at the level of folklore”, that is, at a superficial level relayed by the tourism industry. However, in the case of traditional dance groups, which for him form “spontaneous and permanent activities referring to the past”, these limitations constitute a threat to deeper thinking about Mā‘ohi identity (107). According to Pambrun, the solution to this cultural crisis and to the sustainability of tradition lies in the “resacralization of Mā‘ohi culture” through “the claim of Mā‘ohi spiritual and religious beliefs”, in order to “retrieve the consistency of the pre-contact world” (21–22, 168).

In the early 1990s, scholars questioned the sustainability of Tahitian society. Langevin (1990, 162) asserted that as cultural mixing was increasing, the Mā‘ohi ethnic group would be at risk compared to the expansion of the *demi*¹⁷ group whose members would not have known the pre-CEP period. For Babadzan (1982), the danger for Tahitian identity could come from a folkloricization and a commodification of traditions. He questioned its capacity

to integrate innovation and yet avoid the traps of Westernization. Babadzan also points out the deculturation process that has been accelerated by social policies in urban zones and has led to the development of a vulnerable youth generation. However, a couple of decades later Brami Celentano (2002b, 649) showed how contemporary urban disadvantaged youth in search of an identity claimed the Mā'ohi identity and in the process contributed to its redefinition. The latter occurs in a conflictual mode, whereby the collective process of selection and reinterpretation of elements from the past regularly gives rise to intense debate. Brami Celentano also acknowledges the process of indigenization (what she called *maohisation*) of imported cultural models, resulting for example in the “fun” subculture associated with surfing (Brami Celentano 2002b, 657). This subculture is strongly associated with Western musical styles that young urban Tahitians deeply identify with, in conjunction with their attraction to a Western-oriented sound aesthetic.¹⁸ The identity revival among urban Tahitian youth is, for Brami Celentano (2002b, 657), a “true effort to adapt to the new living conditions resulting from the beginning post-CEP era in French Polynesia”.¹⁹ It is characterized by a disjunction between, on the one hand, a real identity defined by the lack of resources and the quest for cultural points of reference and, on the other hand, an idealized Mā'ohi identity.

Eventually, Brami Celentano warns us about the limits of ready-made categories to explain the apparently ambiguous and contradictory aspects of this search for identity. In the contemporary globalized acculturated context, young Tahitians—the cultural revival instigators who do not share the political activism of their predecessors—claim their identity both by various forms of cultural commitment and by external signs of belonging to the Mā'ohi community, such as tattooing. In contrast to their elders, they emphasize the need to promote their culture internationally and to modernize it through creative research and borrowings from other cultures, rather than the need to preserve and protect it (Brami Celentano 2002b, 654–55). In the wake of the rise of this subculture and following the pioneers of contemporary Tahitian popular music, new music groups engaging with musical genres generally associated with protest, such as heavy metal, rap, and reggae have emerged.

The settlement of the CEP, the exponentially increasing flow of peoples, information, material goods and culture that has followed, and the cultural revival that has arisen in reaction to it, have both occasioned important transformations in the Tahitian cultural landscape. Among them, the growing dichotomy between an increasingly Westernized popular culture and a *culture d'élite* occasioned by the institutionalization of culture and the development of the Heiva,²⁰ reveal the contradictions within contemporary Tahitian society. This turmoil has shaped a renewed cultural landscape and its dynamics, with important consequences for musical change, creativity and innovation.

THE TAHITIAN MUSICAL LANDSCAPE

In a previous study (Colson 2016), I identify and discuss six major musical intersystems within the Tahitian musical landscape, overlapping in a complex system of three musical “fields”, identified by their musical styles and forms, their audience and practice contexts, and their cultural content. This cultural field encompasses the various genres in *'ori tahiti* (traditional Tahitian dance) and associated musics, *ōrero*, and *hīmene* (traditional *a cappella* polyphonic songs). Overlapping with this cultural field is the religious field, including Protestant, Roman Catholic, pre-contact surviving practices, and other Western and Asian worship forms. The last field, which I called “popular” in contrast with the two other fields, comprises indigenous traditional string bands, contemporary expressions of indigenous music, Western and international genres and musical products of casual encounters with international artists. Intimately linked to colonial history, Tahitian popular music has developed within a music industry framework where a small number of musicians and producers have had a particularly significant impact on the repertoire, the music style and the music production. These artistic personalities include American pianist Eddie Lund (who settled permanently in Tahiti in 1938 and founded the Reo Tahiti recording company in the 1950s), Tahitian cinematographer and producer Gaston Guilbert (founder of the first professional recording studio of the island then of the phonographic company Tiare Tahiti Records in the 1950s) and French composer Yves Roche, who collaborated with Gaston Guilbert and Eddie Lund before creating his own label, Manuiti Records, in 1965. Roche took Tahitian music to an international audience through a joint venture with Criterion Records in Los Angeles in the late 1950s and 1960s and undoubtedly contributed significantly to the shaping of Tahitian popular music sound during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Besides these producers, Oceane Production issued from 1980 to 2003 a number of local musicians including the group Fenua,²¹ and Bobby Holcomb. These influential personalities settled Tahitian popular music into the globalizing network of popular musics, and created the music industry foundations for the development of protest music in Tahiti.

Within this framework, performance practices of the various musical genres are strongly differentiated and intimately bonded to performance venues and circumstances. As Cottrell (2007, 103) suggested, a praxiological approach is determinant in understanding intercultural music as a result of globalisation processes. The schema in Figure 9.1 depicts the Tahitian musical landscape suggested above. It typifies the various Tahitian live musical genres performed today in Tahiti, and highlights the flow of artists participating in several genres. Criteria for defining the genres include the general aesthetic of the music, the conditions of the performances, and the origin of the musicians.

'Ori tahiti includes the various traditional art genres: 'aparima²² and its variations, 'ūtē, 'ōte'a, hivināu, and pā'ō'ā.²³ I mention 'ōrero in the musical genres because it constitutes a liminal utterance and today it often features musical instruments. Traditional 'aparima as performed during traditional music and dance performances shares many aspects with Tahitian popular music and contemporary bands. Based on a Westernized harmonic accompaniment, this genre cannot be separated from other contemporary genres, because it shares musicians, playing techniques, lyricists, instruments, and performance venues. I label as "Tahitian popular music" the particular genre of popular music featuring string bands, singing in indigenous languages and adhering to a more or less stabilized aesthetic. The "contemporary indigenous music" genre, even though not clearly separated from the preceding one, includes emerging groups whose aesthetic contrast with *kaina*²⁴ music in various ways, like the language or the music style used. Classical music and other non-Polynesian genres, though also potentially performed by indigenous groups, form the predominant genres performed by Western-originated communities, and by external international artists touring in Tahiti. I define the "products of casual encounters" category for often one-off performances featuring artists from different origins and producing unusual musical combinations. The arrows represent the participation of performers in a musical genre that is not their usual one. Musicians navigate between the musical genres constituting the traditional arts and between traditional arts and contemporary popular music. For example, contemporary indigenous music singer Angelo has written texts for 'aparima (Saura 2013). The case study of Bobby Holcomb, which follows, shows further inter-genre and interdisciplinary collaborations.

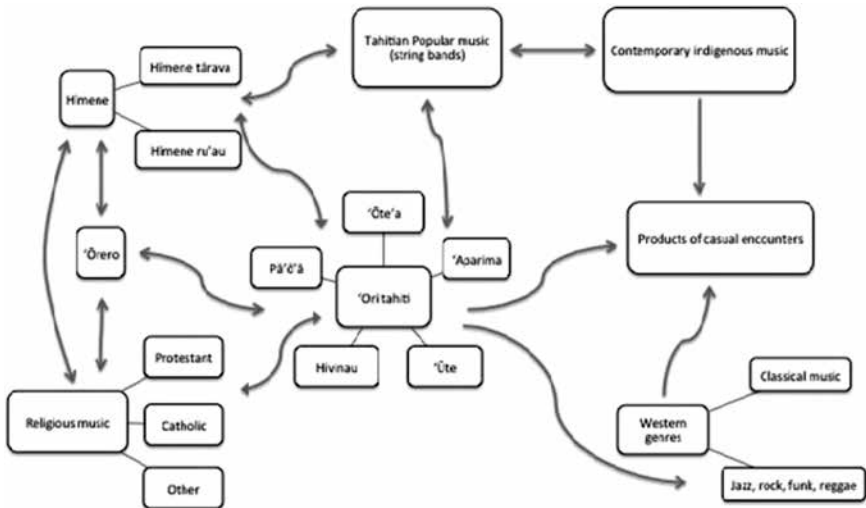


Figure 9.1 Flow of People in Contemporary Tahitian Musical Genres.

HENRI HIRO AND HIS INTELLECTUAL DESCENDANTS

A closer look at the literary figures of the cultural revival is useful to fully understand the rhetoric employed in contemporary protest music. I describe below the way Tahitian intellectual, playwright, filmmaker and poet Henri Hiro elaborated the main themes and vocabulary that have been subsequently developed in Polynesian literature and that have pervaded in contemporary song writing.

Hiro (2004, 80) thought that literature was an efficient way to return to the source of Polynesian culture. For him, Mā'ohi people are separated from Polynesian culture by the time that has been spent away from it. In the poem “*Aitau*”,²⁵ Hiro exposes his cosmic vision of temporality, the detrimental effects of colonization on indigenous culture, and the necessity to connect with the past. Using a metaphoric neologism²⁶ (*'ai*, formal term for to eat,²⁷ and *tau*, time) Hiro exhorts his kin to find their own way to connect to the past and to build a new society.

Despite Hiro's wish, Mā'ohi people did not immediately develop a common way of thinking (Bambridge and Saura 2006, 149). Tahitian writer Flora Devatine (2006) noted, however, that a Polynesian identity was progressively emerging in literature. A growing number of writers, poets, and songwriters started using literature as a way to connect with their Mā'ohi cultural identity. Among them, several female French Polynesian writers emerged (Mateata-Allain 2005). *L'île des rêves écrasés* (1991), Chantal Spitz's first novel, is considered to be the first novel in Polynesian literature. This novel, writes Károly Sándor Pallai, constitutes “the beginning of ... a radical questioning of the unbalanced relationship established by the descriptive and cultural exoticism.”²⁸ Using a vigorous, dynamic, innovative and dissenting style, she enacts Hiro's wish and advocates a renegotiation of postcolonial condition and a new approach to intercultural relationships:

Progressing upstream in the rivers of memory in order to reach the origin of the harm,... a demanding ride up in the meanders of patiently accumulated pains and terrors [...], in order to rebuild our interiority devastated by the violence of contempt, and to cease accepting ourselves as colonized. (Spitz 2013a, 70–71)²⁹

It is unclear as to when and how the themes conveyed in Tahitian literature were adopted into song writing. In popular music, however, such themes significantly emerged from the mid-1990s, in opposition to the majority of popular music at that time. Pambrun (2008, 99–101) severely criticized the lack of creativity and reactivity of popular music songwriters, and painted a

rather negative picture of Tahitian popular music. If this highlights the lack of singers' political and social engagement in popular music during the 1980s and 1990s, I suggest however that these conformist songs might represent a form of passive—and pacific—resistance to a model of society and a music industry imposed from the outside. As a ramification of *'aparima*, it complements the strong creativity observed in *'ori tahiti*, where, following Saura (1998, 54), Tahitian composers profusely celebrate “the stunning beauty of their land as well as the physical and spiritual qualities of its people, a people chosen or indulged by God”. The success of the sonic aesthetic conveyed through a number of recordings by Oceane Production, although highly criticized today³⁰, embodies the ideal of “happy music” in which, for several decades, many Tahitian people recognized themselves.

However, in parallel to this pacific song writing tradition, the capacity to convey strong cultural values through protest songs has emerged progressively since the 1990s, based on implicit references to the oratory tradition, which I examine next.

ORALITY

Whether conveying pacific or protestation phraseology, contemporary song writing, infused by the emergent Tahitian literature, is also intimately linked with orality and oratory tradition. *'Ōrero* is an ancestral literary oral expression form with social and political aims. It is the repository of ancestral memory. In pre-contact society, it was “the living book of religion, of tradition, of sacred chants, of politics”³¹ (de Bovis, quoted in Mesplé 1995, 53). To enthral the audience, the orator uses the various facets of rhetoric: reciting, chanting, changing the intonation, the rhythm and the speed of his discourse, and combining them with gesture (*'apa*) and dance.

'Ōrero was reintroduced into cultural celebrations during the cultural revival of the 1970s, where it affirmed the vitality and the richness of Polynesian literary culture (Tetumu and Teahua 2008, 5). Oratory art, democratized by its integration into the *Heiva* and into primary school curriculums, is now a fully artistic discipline. Today, it is very popular among Polynesian people and is part of any political, religious, or cultural event (Pambrun 2008, 106). *'Ōrero* recitation is usually accompanied by traditional instruments such as the *pū*, the *vivo* (nose flute) and the *pahutupa'i rima* (membrane drum). In the example below, Raapoto praises the beauty of his motherland with pride. Such themes were particularly developed in popular music of the first half of the twentieth century, and remains at the core of the rhetoric of contemporary *'aparima*.

E te tari'a e,	O my ear
A fa'aro'o i te navenave o tā'u pehe	Listen to my melodious chant
E te mata e,	And you, eye
A hi'o i te nehenehe o tō'u fenua	Admire the beauty of my homeland
E te ihu e,	And you, nose
A ho'i i te no'ano'a o te miri	Breathe the pleasant perfume of the basil
E te vaha e,	And you, mouth
A fāna'o te haumārū o te pape	Taste the freshness of the water
E tā'u vārua e,	And you, spirit,
A te'ote'o, e fenua maita'i tōi'oe	Be proud, your homeland is generous to you
A 'ōu'au'a, tei mua ia 'oe te ora	Rejoice, life lies before you

Figure 9.2 “Fa’ateni ‘āi’a” (Supplication for the motherland) by Turo Raapoto.³²

‘APARIMA, LITERATURE AND TRADITIONAL ARTS

In Polynesian culture, the oratory tradition has pervaded in literature, and subsequently in the rhetoric encountered in traditional and popular music. Devatine (2012) encapsulates these various forms of literature in the term “oral writing” which is: *te reo* ‘ōrero, the language, the discourse. It is *te pehe*, the chant, to sing, the traditional song. It is *te pehepehe*, the poem, the celebration through poetry, through singing. It is the writing of the chant, the writing of the poetry (Devatine 2012). The work of Patrick Amaru, a renowned ‘aparima songwriter, embodies the connection of song writing with contemporary Mā’ohi literature. As in ‘ōrero, his song writing develops a strong natural imagery using a refined and highly poetized style. In addition to conveying the notion of exoticism and counter-exoticism,³³ elements of protestation in Amaru’s work include the denunciation of domestic violence and incest (2012 47-48). The pride of the homeland, the rhetoric conveyed in the ‘ōrero fa’ateni and ‘aparima also clearly emerges from the lyrics of many popular music groups. For example, in “Pahoho”, the renowned popular music group Te Ava Piti³⁴ celebrated the beauty of the fenua.³⁵ Later, this phraseology spread into imported genres such as reggae and rap, sometimes undergoing changes in the object of pride. Songwriters enounce the claim for indigeny identity within a Westernized musical genre, as in songs by singer Mesik (see below). In “Tō’u Fenua”, upon a standard reggae-rap instrumentation including drums, bass, guitar and keys, Mesik alternates rap singing verses and pitched melodic chorus refuting the imagery usually conveyed in ‘aparima (e.g., beauty of the homeland, themes connected to nature) and reverses the imagery of the vahine in giving the role to a Western woman. Instead, he moves the feeling of pride towards social behaviours and the local way of life.

Oh-Oh Oh-Oh Yeah tō'u Fenua,
 Porinetia (bis)
 Ma terre natale n'est pas une carte
 postale,
 Elle n'est pas que sable, eaux
 turquoises, et cocotiers.
 C'est loin d'être une occidentale
 dénudée,
 C'est tout un art de vivre made in à la
 locale !
 Chez nous, on ne connait que le
 tutoiement,
 T'es le frère t'es la sœur de tout le
 monde évidemment !
 Chez nous, il y a des vélos sans
 pédales,
 Il y a des charrettes qui font boom,
 brad c'est de la balle !

Oh-Oh Oh-Oh Yeah my *Fenua*,
 Polynesia (bis)
 My homeland is not a post card,

 It is not only about sand, turquoise
 waters, and coconut trees.
 It is far from being a Western
 stripped girl
 It is a whole local way of life!

 Here we talk to each other with
 familiarity,
 You are of course everyone's
 brother and sister!
 Here there are bikes without
 pedals,
 There are noisy chariots, brad it's
 really cool!

Figure 9.3 “Tō'u Fenua” by Mesik (2012).³⁶

The use of reggae and rap genres, emblematic of protest and urban counter-culture, have spread in the Pacific as a privileged expressive means of construction of indigenous identities and of protest against Western hegemony (see for example Levisen 2017). Clearly rooted in reggae ideology, ethos, aesthetic and musical practice, the example above illustrates the “pacific” and “Pacific” twists the composer gives in his “localisation” of the musical genre.

BOBBY HOLCOMB

The figure of Bobby Holcomb, a Hawaiian painter and singer who settled in Huahine in 1976, has been determinant in the shaping of contemporary songs in French Polynesia. It exemplifies the shift that expression of Mā'ohi-ness has undergone from traditional singing to contemporary popular music. Although he defined himself more as a painter than a singer-songwriter, he became a renowned singer in 1985 with the song “*O Rio*” (Holcomb 1991b), and rapidly became an iconic figure of the cultural revival. Bobby can be considered as one of the first figures of protest song *à la tahitienne*. He was the first non-Tahitian singer to sing in Tahitian language, combining jazz, rhythm-and-blues, rock-and-roll and reggae influences (Lind 2005, 121).

His lifestyle was almost countercultural in its simplicity, and he preferred to travel great distances to perform for the islanders in community centres, youth clubs, hospitals and sports fields. He was deeply engaged in the defence of the environment, encouraging “environmental awareness in Tahiti’s polluted capital of Papeete”, for example with “*SOS Teie*”, a reggae track promoting the environment, and campaigning for a nuclear-free environment. A member of Pupu ‘Arioi,³⁷ he collaborated with Hiro as a costume designer and a scenographer in his filmed play *Ariipaea-Vahine* (1983),³⁸ and popularized some of Hiro’s poems through his songs, such as “*O ‘oe Tō ‘oerima*” or “*Te Upe ‘a*” (Holcomb 1991a).

In using art as his weapon, Bobby was unconventional. Although sometimes contested both by some Tahitian people (because he was not Tahitian) and by governmental representatives (because he was threatening the plans for the development of the nuclear tests), he contributed to the reconnection of indigenous people of French Polynesia with their culture and to the expression of indigenous identity and pride in popular music.

Bobby’s intellectual and cultural legacy has spread in several groups of popular music, including contemporary rap and the hip hop scene (e.g. rap singer Weston, who refers to Bobby as a precursor, see Benhamza 2013). Many contemporary Tahitian singers and musicians had their debut with Bobby. However, in addition to promoting feelings of pride and celebration of the fenua as in traditional ‘ōrero and ‘aparima genre, and in contrast with Bobby’s pacific approach, these singers and others would embrace Western-derived musical genres traditionally categorized as protest music genres (rock, reggae, hard rock) to convey explicit messages against social issues, domestic violence and political corruption.

ALDO RAVEINO

Towards the end of the 1980s, Aldo Raveino, a Tahitian journalist and political militant, founded the popular music group Manahune. *Manahune* is the Tahitian term for the lower social class in pre-contact society. In choosing this word as his group’s name, Aldo seeks to remind his audience that the contemporary Tahitian society still remains deeply unequal. Considered as the first Māori pop music group,³⁹ Manahune’s music borrows backbeaten rhythms from reggae or rock-derived raw sounds, and adds traditional percussion instruments such as the tō‘ere and the Australian didgeridoo. Aldo’s texts point out social unrest in Tahiti and combine questions surrounding indigenous identity, his attachment to Tahitian language and to the motherland in order to awaken his listeners’ consciousness.⁴⁰ The last CDs of Manahune exemplify the anchorage of the group in the imagery of historical social

protest and its links to Tahitian language and imagery.⁴¹ In using the symbol of the clenched fist in colours associated with historical protest movements together with iconic Tahitian words related to sacredness and indigeneity, Manahune affirms its strong connection with and support of claims for indigenous identity, through texts mixing attachment to Tahitian language, to the motherland, and to Mā'ohi identity.⁴² In the album *Tumu Nui*, Aldo distillates his texts in Tahitian over a rhythm section alternating reggae, rock, and folk grooves, including brass and flute riffs, a choir reminiscent of traditional male *ha'u*⁴³ singing lines, a tō'ere subsidiary rhythmic accompaniment, and ukulele textures using *hula* strumming style—an indigenous strumming technique. The texts denounce the contemporary Tahitian society's ills related to delinquency, violence, drugs, religions and politics.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW GENERATION OF MUSICIANS

A new generation of musicians emerged, who embraced the contemporary music styles generally associated with protest. Reggae, as a music of global resistance appealed to Melanesian people from the early 1980s (Dietrich, Moulin and Webb 2011, 103), and spread throughout French Polynesia. Some members of the new generation, however, started to develop more aggressive imagery and discourse. Following the hard rock group Vārua 'Ino (Evil Spirit), who introduced hard rock to Tahiti in the late 1990s, Tikahiri represents a successful development of this new trend. The group, created in 2007 by two tattoo artists of mixed Pā'umotu, Anglo-Saxon and Tahitian origins, includes two teachers from the Conservatoire Artistique. Tikahiri defines itself, as “gothic rock” and “pā'umotu rock”.⁴⁴ The group plays heavy metal flavoured with elements of Polynesian tradition, and includes a violoncello that, according to the singers, aims to embody the idea of earth and volcanic lava.

Whether in perpetuating the glorification of the island either in its traditional form or through contemporary modes of expression and themes, or in conveying and popularizing themes pertaining to oral tradition, I suggest that Tahitian musicians' rhetoric is rooted in the oratory tradition of 'ōrero. In promoting the construction of the Mā'ohi identity, they enact an implicit form of pacific resistance to the Western world and they convey a certain idea of rupture, through the creative expression of pride and indigeneity, the reconnection with pre-colonial times, the celebration of their homeland, and the reaffirmation of the ancestral pact of Polynesian people with their environment (see Massau 2011).

However, since the 1990s this resistance has taken a more radical and explicit turn with socially engaged singers giving birth to a new generation of

popular music ensembles that cross-feed with the development of a Polynesian literature which emerged in the 1970s. Navigating between local adaptations of musical genres usually associated with forms of protest in the West (e.g. rock, rap, reggae, or heavy metal) musicians also integrate elements of the Mā'ohi musical heritage in using, for example, traditional instruments (tō'ere, vivo, ukulele) or singing and vocal techniques (e.g., male voices chanting, grunting and humming).

Whether implicit or explicit, contemporary popular music engages with the claim for Mā'ohi-ness. In the wake of the intellectuals of the cultural revival, literature and song writing echo one another while keeping strong links with the oratory art tradition. In addition, the acquisition of multi-musicality represents both a reflection of the multicultural characteristic of contemporary Tahiti, and a form of freedom for Tahitian musicians who have become able to navigate between traditional and popular musical genres for economic, cultural, aesthetic of purposes.

But due to the colonial context of Tahiti, which involves complex relationships with a distant European country, and to collateral effects of the crisis of the model developed in the second part of the twentieth century culminating with the 2008 global economic crisis, a new kind of protest song has emerged, whereby artists emphasize a feeling of isolation and abandonment together with denunciation of social insecurities.

Taking over the rhetoric and aesthetics developed in French unprivileged urban districts through the rap genre, the work of some local artists emphasises a deep feeling of isolation as well as social issues. For example, the songs of rap group Fenuastyle and the associated visuals embody these anxieties and discrepancies connected with the local way of life. The visual for the groups (2010) digital album "*Sans Taboo*" explicitly associates the iconic figures of the vahine and that of the surf subculture to the feeling of remoteness and powerlessness, representing Tahiti as a skull drifting in the middle of an empty ocean. This imagery complements the feeling of isolation in the middle of the Pacific expressed in songs like "*Mon Fenua*", where the island is described as "a very small black point on the map", "A world at the end of the world".⁴⁵ Contrasting with the 'ōrero fa'atani, the feeling of pride yields to a feeling of pessimism and the denunciation of a difficult life on the island. This despondency deeply contrasts with the other musical forms of protest described above, and with the implicit refusal of Tahitians to see their culture becoming overwhelmed by alien cultures, as can be interpreted through the great success of traditional arts. These various musical expressions of opposition, objection to, disagreement with, and denunciation of social, political, and economical issues cannot be separated from the claim for and pride in Tahitians' strong cultural identity. Altogether, they arise in a highly moving musical landscape where musicians use multi-musicality to serve their own artistic and rhetoric

agenda, and where authors' creativity relies on a strong oratory tradition and a growing literary culture. The resulting "flowering" of groups demonstrates the profound originality of the Tahitians' response to the threat posed to their culture by the processes of globalisation and the various strategies enacted by Tahitian musicians to resist Western globalization through their music.

NOTES

1. See Diettrich, Moulin and Webb (2011, 97).
2. This relative cultural autonomy is related to linguistic borders, a specific educational system and politico-economical alliances (see Mateata-Allain 2005; McCall 2010).
3. From the 1960s onwards, Tahitian intellectuals originating from the Protestant community initiated a reflection about the redefinition of Polynesian culture and theorized the concept of indigenous identity. In parallel, an artistic movement without political content arose, which entailed the revival of traditional arts.
4. In October 2013, the media and library shop Odyssey in Papeete was displaying more than 140 audio recordings of local music, including new releases, compilations, and re-publications of indigenous popular music singers.
5. Woman.
6. All quotations of Pambrun are author's translations.
7. Tahitian term by which indigenous French Polynesians refer to themselves.
8. From 8,563 tourists in 1961 after the inauguration of the Faa'a airport, annual tourism figures stabilized to around 130,000 visitors in the 1980s (Gay 1995, 276, 280). This figure rapidly grew during the 1990s, culminating with 250,000 tourists in 2000. However, the 2008 global financial crisis severely impacted on tourism figures, which has stabilized again around 180,000 since 2014. Accessed January 23, 2017. <http://www.ispf.pf/bases/Tourisme/EFT/Details.aspx>.
9. For further information about the history of media and their influence in French Polynesia, see Bambridge (2001), Bambridge et al. (2002), and <http://cinematamua.canalblog.com/archives/2006/08/04/2413177.html>.
10. Accessed April 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_9wU5wv-0M.
11. Lehartel (2013) interviewed by author.
12. Until the 1950s, Tahitian indigenous people were predominantly Protestant. Having been the crucible of Mā'ohi intellectuals back then, Protestantism still is today the repository of the literary Tahitian language. Not only does it create social bonds, but also it embodies the taste of Tahitians for ritualized speech, exegesis, and polyphonic singing (Saura 2008, 64). By contrast, the Catholic Church progressively gained adherence in the last decades, and represents today about one third of Tahitian people (Fer and Malogne-Fer 2002, 357; Copenrath 2013). It has placed education as one of its pivotal missions (Soupé 2002, 349).
13. The Maison des Jeunes-Maison de la Culture (1971), the Académie Tahitienne (1972), the Musée de Tahiti et des Îles (1977), the Conservatoire Artistique (1978), and the Centre des Métiers d'art (1980).

14. Closed in December 1965.
15. The term for “white people”, as opposed to Mā’ohi people. By extension this term designates non-indigenous people.
16. Chinese people settled in Tahiti.
17. French colloquial name for Tahitian people of mixed blood, in particular between Chinese and Tahitian communities.
18. Examples of Tahitian musicians deeply influenced by Western popular genres are numerous. Michel Poroi and Angelo are historical representatives of this culture, characterized by an instrumentation including electric guitar and bass, with a very clean and neat sound.
19. Author’s translation.
20. The Heiva is an annual celebration that starts in late June and continues through mid-July. It features many different kinds of activities celebrating the Mā’ohi cultural heritage, including not only traditional music and dance competitions but also a ‘ōrero competition, canoe races, cooking, traditional sports competitions and fire walking.
21. Created in the late 1990s by Madeleine Moua’s grandson Guy Laurens, Fenua was the sign of a successful attempt to mix traditional musical elements with dance floor and techno music genres. Example accessed September 26, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-QKNGd6cGo>.
22. A storytelling dance featuring expressive hand movements, accompanied by guitars, ukuleles and the bass drum, *tari-parau*.
23. ‘Ūtē is a song genre consisting of a main melody performed alternately by one or two singers. ‘Ōte’a is a drum-accompanied dance where men and women dance separately. Pā’ō’ā and hivinau are mixed female-male group dances where solo recitation alternates with unison answers by the group.
24. For Babadzan, the term is a *Pā’umotu* (language of the Tuamotu Islands) word meaning “the motherland, the district” (Tahitian equivalent: *‘aī’a*). In the Franco-Tahitian colloquial language, the term means “yokel”, with a pejorative connotation (Babadzan 1982, 29). In music, the term broadly encompasses popular Pā’umotu-influenced genres.
25. Hiro (2004, 34). Translated into English in Hiro, Toyama, and Stewart (2005, 84).
26. Neologism is a widespread rhetoric figure in Tahitian language, which writers and poets particularly appreciate.
27. The word is also very close to *‘a’i*: will to eat fish and *‘ai*: being in possession of. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://www.farevanaa.pf/dictionnaire.php>.
28. Author’s translation. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://mondesfrancophones.com/espaces/philosophies/exotisme-et-contre-exotisme-dans-lecriture-contemporaine-de-la-polynesie-francaise/>.
29. Author’s translation from the original in French.
30. Zik Prod (2013) and Marii Roura (2013) interviewed by author.
31. Author’s translation.
32. Author’s translation from Tahitian. *‘Ōrero fa’ateni* is a subgenre aiming at glorifying a particular land, person, deed, or action (see Tetumu and Teahua 2008,

8-11). Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://mondesfrancophones.com/espaces/pratiques-poetiques/culture-exotisme-et-identite-dans-la-poesie-polynesienne-raapoto-amaruhiro/>.

33. Accessed July 12, 2016. <http://mondesfrancophones.com/espaces/philosophies/exotisme-et-contre-exotisme-dans-lecriture-contemporaine-de-la-polynesie-francaise/>.

34. Accessed July 12, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Q_Ayb5sH8c.

35. Motherland.

36. Author's translation. Accessed July 12, 2016. http://media.wix.com/ugd/1194e1_2997edccd4964201bf7d98746b2b2bf4.pdf.

37. A group of intellectuals, singers and actors formed in the late 1970s around Henri Hiro and aimed to promote indigenous culture.

38. Accessed July 12, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QE-BnOzuoG0>.

39. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://monvr.pf/regard-du-chroniqueur-multimedia-aldoraveino-25-ans-de-musique/>.

40. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://monvr.pf/regard-du-chroniqueur-multimedia-aldoraveino-25-ans-de-musique/>.

41. <http://www.mangrove.nc/index.php/catalogue/albums-de-tahiti/537/tumu-nui>. Accessed July 12, 2016.

42. Accessed June 26, 2016. <http://monvr.pf/regard-du-chroniqueur-multimedia-aldoraveino-25-ans-de-musique/>.

43. In traditional hīmene singing, the ha'uis the male voice layer constituting the song basement. Men sing a wordless and strongly pulsating drone, mouths closed, and sometimes add guttural effects and hand clapping.

44. Accessed July 13, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tikahiri/23842196196>.

45. Author's translation from the original in French.

Chapter 10

Casteism and Cultural Capital

Social and Spiritual Reform through Kabir-Singing in North India

Vivek Virani

Prahlad Singh Tipanya (b. 1954) is the most famous person in his village. He is one of the most famous people in the entire Central Indian region of Malwa.¹ He is also an “untouchable”.²

Many untouchables in Malwa sing devotional poetry attributed to the legendary fifteenth century North Indian poet-saint Kabir.³ Tipanya is the most renowned of these singers; some even consider him a modern *avatār* (reincarnation) of Kabir. In recent decades, Kabir’s presence in Indian popular culture has increased dramatically and so, therefore, has Tipanya’s popularity at the national level. Many urban Indians champion Kabir as a “rebel saint” whose poetry speaks truth to power. They are naturally drawn to Tipanya, who has spurred a movement of singing Kabir poetry to protest caste discrimination. Tipanya’s status as “protest singer” undoubtedly bolsters his urban following, but few urban Indians understand the forms of “protest” engaged in by Malwa’s singers, or the theological and social mechanisms by which this protest operates at the rural level.

Tipanya was born into a *jātī* (caste) considered “impure” by orthodox Hindus.⁴ Within his village, many Brahmins (the highest ritual status caste) consider everyone from his caste to be “untouchable” (*achyuta*). Despite increased activism, lower castes in much of rural India are still forbidden from living in the same streets as upper castes, drinking from the same wells, or entering the same temples.⁵ Their access to education and other important avenues of social mobility is significantly restricted.

Tipanya’s status as a nationally celebrated singer does not overwrite his status as an untouchable. Like millions of Indian villagers, he dwells simultaneously in multiple spheres of social organization with different systems of cultural values. Each sphere accords Tipanya varying levels of what Pierre

Bourdieu (1990) terms embodied cultural capital. Tipanya's performance ability, association with Kabir, and birth have dynamic value that fluctuates as he negotiates his place between the orthodox village in which he was born and the globalized democratic nation-state of which he is now a cultural representative. Within the village, the hierarchical categorization of caste dominates social life. Within the broader Indian nation-state, caste coexists with many other frameworks of cultural capital.

Describing rural Malwa in the mid-twentieth century, anthropologists K. S. Mathur (1964) and Adrian Mayer (1970) observed that ritual hierarchy had a complicated, non-linear relationship with social hierarchy. A wealthy merchant, for example, may be an important man despite his lack of privileged ritual status. Similarly, while Tipanya's Brahmin neighbors consider him inferior by birth, they cannot ignore that he has the largest house in the village. In the twenty-first century, the social life of the Indian village has become more deeply intertwined with the social life of the Indian nation. Mass media, urbanization, wireless technology and increased migration ensure that religious and social discourse at the national level directly impacts everyday village life. On the other side, technological and social developments have provided many villagers with unprecedented opportunities to perform on national stages (Virani 2016). Brahmins in Tipanya's village must confront a dissonance; they disparage his inferior status even as nationally acclaimed scholars, musicians, and politicians come to their remote village to meet him.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted from 2014 to 2015, this chapter explores how devotional singers use the performance of *bhajans* (devotional songs) associated with Kabir to navigate overlapping spheres of cultural capital.⁶ It describes the processes through which a nationally revered poet-saint is being reinterpreted (perhaps *reclaimed*) as a voice of the subaltern by lower-caste singers who blend centuries-old philosophical principles with distinctly modern ideologies of universal human rights and subaltern identity formation.⁷ As these singers perform to increasingly widening audiences, they adapt their language and mechanisms of protest, negotiating audience expectations with adherence to their own beliefs and social objectives. Through their singing, they align themselves with the prevailing frameworks of cultural capital in different social contexts.

RELIGIOUS SONGS AS SOCIAL SONGS

Kabir is one of many poet-saints whose songs and hagiographies are essential to *bhakti* (devotional) Hinduism. These saints are often considered a theologically homogenous group whose values and ideologies generally conform to those of respectable, middle-class Hindus (Hawley 1995b). In reality, they

represent many different approaches to the concept of divinity and their followers have historically come from diverse social backgrounds (Dube 1998; Lamb 2002; Lorenzen 1996, 2006; Sharma 1987; Virani 2016). Kabir is the most recognized of a group of poet-saints called *Sant*-s (literally “good ones”) whose philosophical and social messages oppose the hierarchical status quo of orthodox Brahminical Hinduism (Vaudeville 1987). Sants and their followers have mostly been from lower-caste or untouchable backgrounds (Vaudeville 1987; Westcott 1907).

Kabir is distinguished by his confrontational voice that denounces hypocrisy, false piety and social violence. His most scathing criticism is directed towards religious authorities who use the language of faith to divide and exploit people for material or political gain:

The pious awake at dawn to perform ablutions,
but never cleanse their wicked minds
Forgetting the Inner Divinity,
they worship a stone—they understand nothing!

Hindus claim, “our Ram is God,”
Muslims shout of their Rahim
The two factions fight and die,
Nobody discovers the truth.

Kabir is known for both his religious and social messages, and often celebrated as one of the earliest voices of Indian modernity (Dwivedi [1943] 1993; Agrawal 2009, 2010; Wakankar 2010). At the national level, Kabir has become a powerful symbol of inter-religious harmony due to his critiques of sectarianism and his liminal status between Hinduism and Islam (Hedayetullah [1977] 2009; Virmani 2008b). The recent rise of religious fundamentalism has disillusioned many Indians from mainstream Hinduism and Islam (Nandy et al. 1995; Panikkar 1999). Progressively minded urban Indians look to poets like Kabir and Bulleh Shah for spiritual inspiration legitimized by tradition but free from the baggage of institutionalized religion (Virani 2016).

In recent decades, Malwa has seen a dramatic rise in the use of bhajan-singing as protest against caste discrimination. This resonates with increased lower-caste social activism and political movements throughout North India (Jaffrelot 1996, 2003), although it is manifesting in a local musical idiom. The influence of modern progressive liberalism, disseminated through global mass media, is strongly evident among the younger generation of singers (Virani 2016). Many secular activists, particularly Buddhist or atheist Ambedkarites, believe that Kabir’s social message is more important than his spiritual message (Hess 2015; Virmani 2008c).⁸ The following section explores that poetic message, and how singers interpret it simultaneously as a message of spirituality and social protest.

Spiritual expression in Sant bhajans takes two major forms that overlap considerably, but have different social implications. I describe these forms as mysticism and devotion. The former is concerned with the realization of an incomprehensible but omnipresent divinity, while the latter involves an attitude of worshipful surrender, usually to a personal deity.

SONGS OF MYSTICISM

Most Hindus worship deities; they approach divinity as *sagun* (literally, “having form or characteristics). Kabir and the Sants conceive of divinity as *nirgun* (literally, “having no form or characteristics.”) In the absence of a personal deity with describable attributes, *nirgun* bhajans rely on abstruse, often paradoxical metaphors that emphasize the presence of divinity within all beings:⁹

Without moonlight or the sun’s rays, light shines forth from within
Do not go searching other worlds—find it right here!

A mute man sings, while a deaf man listens,
a cripple dances while a blind man watches in fascination

On the peak of nothingness, a Yogi is doing penance
But there is no fire, no ash, and no one doing penance

Gulabi Das sings, ‘the lock of my heart has been opened’
Bhavani Nath says, ‘my body has become effulgent light’

* * *

My heart is intoxicated, what is left to say?

I was light when I ascended the scales
‘I’ have disappeared—what is left to weigh?

My Master resides within this body
Why open my eyes to the outside world?

Kabir says: Listen my friends,
I have found the Master within a mustard seed

At first glance, such lyrics seem unrelated to social action; if anything, they express a radical disinterest in society. However, they emerge from a tradition of Indian religious heterodoxy with significant social implications.

Scholars including Louis Dumont (1980) and Ravindra Khare (1984) have argued that popular Hinduism champions two contrasting ideals of

spiritual behavior. The first ideal, personified in the figure of the Brahmin, upholds the social order and adheres to prescribed ritual practices. The second ideal, represented by the Ascetic, rejects social norms and hierarchies and disavows prescribed ritual observances. Khare suggests that untouchable communities, though they do not literally renounce worldly possessions, align themselves theologically with the mystical Ascetic as a maneuver of protest against the iniquitous social order imposed on them by the Brahmin (Khare 1984). Khare's claim is historically supported by lower-caste communities who have adopted the mystical theology and yogic practices of the Nath or Kabir sects and are subsequently placed partially outside the ordinary ritual hierarchy (Mathur 1964; Mayer 1970; Russell [1916] 1969).¹⁰

When singers use bhajans to protest caste discrimination, the mystical language becomes an explicit, rather than implicit, social critique. During concerts, they often adopt the mode of preachers, explaining their interpretations between sung verses. "Brahmins and their scriptures tell us that we are inferior, that we are impure",¹¹ Prahlad Tipanya calls to his audience of thousands at a performance. "But the Sants tell us that the same divinity resides within every being!" Such performances dismantle the notion of "impurity" that many of Tipanya's listeners have held since birth. The upbeat music attracts and captivates listeners, and Tipanya's interpretations provide an enduring sense of self-respect that is validated by Kabir's name and its divine implications. Tipanya's studio recordings, disseminated through cassettes or MP3 CDs, are the main vehicle of spreading Kabir's poetry through Malwa. Many of these recordings include his discourses between tracks, creating the feel of a live concert and framing the listeners' interpretations.

SONGS OF DEVOTION

Despite Sant bhajans' persistent exhortations to seek inner divinity, the strain of *bhakti*, meaning spiritual reverence or devotion (typically to an external entity), pervades the bhajan tradition. The object of devotion might be God, the spiritual leaders of a sect, or the Sants themselves. A precise discussion of "*bhakti*" in Kabir is complex, because the term has become inextricably linked in both academic and mainstream conceptions of Hinduism with the notion of a coherent, homogenous, primarily Vaishnava pantheon of poet-saints.¹² Scholars like Krishna Sharma (1987) have challenged this conception on the basis that it obscures the theological and social distinctions between different poet-saint traditions.

This social distinction is sharply evident in rural Malwa, where upper and lower-caste devotees pray in different temples. Bhajans by Kabir, Gorakh, and other Sants often use Vaishnava names to refer to God (such as Govinda,

Hari and Ram), but lower-caste singers maintain that their Ram is not the *avatār* Ram whose idol is worshipped in upper-caste temples (Shah 2007; Virani 2016).¹³ This fault line has grown sharper in recent decades as the name of Ram, among the most popular names of God throughout North India, has increasingly been co-opted as a slogan by Hindu fundamentalists (Nandy et al. 1995; Virmani 2008b). Some Kabir singers have responded by deliberately excising the name of Ram from bhajans and replacing it with the metrically equivalent “*nām*,” meaning the “Divine Name” (Hess 2015).

In Malwa, the theological distinction between *nirgun* and *sagun* is intertwined with the social distinction between caste Hindus and lower-caste or non-caste Hindus. This separation reflects the historical exclusion of lower-castes from upper-caste temples and religious sects. Contemporary Sant singers take pride in their *nirgun* theology. Malvi *nirgun* singers denounce upper-caste devotional worship as “superstition;” they mock practices that involved worshipping carved stone idols (Hess 2015; Shah 2007; Virani 2016). Many Kabir bhajans express these ideas in his characteristically confrontational tone:

You make a delicious sweet
and place it in front of a statue, you crazy fool!
A dog will piss on that lifeless statue
While a squirrel gobbles up the dessert.

In reaction to their oppression in the material world, lower-caste singers claim superiority in the spiritual world by deprecating or subverting mainstream forms of devotional Hinduism. This is encoded into the texts and practices of many subaltern theologies throughout India (Lorenzen 1996; Wakankar 2010). Such manoeuvres may not have a concrete effect on the singers’ social mobility, but are important in cultivating self-respect among the singers and uniting their audiences in the rejection of the hierarchical framework imposed on them. Undoubtedly the increased refusal of the lower castes to play by the Brahmin’s rules also reflects the new economic realities of modern, neoliberal India, in which there are increasing paths for social mobility that are not beholden to orthodox ritual hierarchy.

DEVOTION AS OBEDIENCE

The precise role of devotional theology in social reformist discourse is complicated, and often contradictory. *Bhakti* is viewed by its adherents as an egalitarian tradition; it advocates of a direct heart-to-heart connection with God rather than a ritually circumscribed relationship mediated by Brahmins or other religious authorities. However, many scholars have observed that the utopian ideal of egalitarianism often does little to alleviate the real-world conditions of caste

oppression (Lorenzen 1987; Zelliott 1981). Some even argue that *bhakti* can itself become a mechanism of oppression; Ranajit Guha (1997) has suggested that *bhakti* internalizes the logic of “obedience” in its adherents, and Christophe Jaffrelot (2003) argues that the prevalence of *bhakti* theology in North India has precluded anti-caste activism of the intensity seen in West and South India.

Although *nirgun* bhajans repudiate devotion to personal deities or idols, the guru (spiritual teacher) assumes the deity’s place as object of reverence. The logic of “obedience” critiqued by Guha (1997) is evident in bhajans that advocate complete surrender to the guru and emphasize the absolute necessity of a guru for all spiritual adherents:

Remain ever in surrender to the Guru, O heart
 United with the Guru, you will cross the ocean of creation,
 So turn your back to the world

Offer your body, mind, and all possessions to the Guru,
 Heed the Guru’s word
 When he asks you to tilt your forehead,
 Cut off your entire head and offer it.

Exactly who is this “guru,” to whom initiates should be willing to offer their very lives? The bhajans are ambiguous, particularly since the terms *Sadguru* (true teacher) and *Vāheguru* (awe-inspiring teacher) refer to the Supreme Godhead in Sant traditions. In many *panth*-s, or sects associated with Kabir, sectarian leaders such as *mahant*-s exploit this ambiguity to place themselves in the position of reverence, invoking bhajans to legitimize their claims of divine authority. This is particularly egregious when *mahants* use their authority to coerce their membership to offer lavish gifts and monetary donations in return for spiritual knowledge or ritual services—despite Kabir’s vehement criticism of such practices (Hess 2015; Virmani 2008c).¹⁴ Resisting such forms of exploitation, many singers are in the ironic position of using Kabir bhajans in protest against the authorities of certain Kabir sects.

SPIRITUAL AUTONOMY

Singers reconfigure guru bhajans as songs of protest rather than obedience by singers reinterpreting the meaning of the term “guru.” Prahlad Tipanya always explains to his audiences that the “guru” described in bhajans refers not to a physical person, but to each individual’s life experiences that cultivate a deeper understanding of divinity. He cites Kabir’s words to validate his interpretation:

All gurus exist within bounds,
 there is no boundless Guru
 You can become boundless yourself,
 By dwelling in the house of experience.

This reinterpretation resonates with the strategy Khare (1984) describes as “moral individuation,” by which untouchables assert themselves as autonomous spiritual agents. In response to the use of religion as a tool of exploitation, Tipanya and other singers are reclaiming it as a movement toward individual subject-hood or self-determination. In contrast to secular activists who reject the language of faith altogether, Malvi singers embrace faith but reject the forms of subordination that have historically accompanied it.

One powerful vehicle for lower-caste spiritual autonomy in Malwa was the non-profit educational organization Eklavya, which launched an initiative in the 1990s called the *Kabir bhajan evam vistār manch* (Platform for Bhajans and Discussion of Kabir), or simply the Kabir Manch (Hess 2015). The Kabir Manch brought together singers from around the region for the first time and encouraged them to discuss Kabir bhajans outside a ritualized or sectarian context, with an emphasis on social reform. In the *panth* context, singers were expected to perform in the service of *panth* authorities and were not permitted to offer their own interpretations on the bhajan texts. By contrast, the Kabir Manch encouraged all to share their views in an open discussion.

The Manch ended in 1998, but its legacy has prevailed through the networks of singers it created and the precedent of spiritual autonomy it established. Today, these networks are primarily mediated through mobile phones and social media platforms such as WhatsApp. While conducting research in Malwa, I was added to at least half a dozen different WhatsApp chat groups in which singers eagerly share and discuss Sant poetry. Social media allows *nirgun* singers to maintain digital spaces for community dialogue in which religion and politics flow and blend together. The latest post might be a song by Kabir, or a news article about the latest atrocities committed against lower-caste people in another part of India. For contemporary singers, abstruse mysticism, political reform, and ritualistic exploitation are part of the same conversation.

MORAL TRANSFORMATION AS SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION

Malvi Kabir singers assert the impact of Kabir bhajans in effecting *samājīk parivartan* (societal change); many speak of a bhajan *chalan* (movement) or *krānti* (revolution). Whenever I asked singers about specific social changes effected by bhajans, however, singers responded by describing individual moral transformations that initially seemed irrelevant to

casteism protests. They particularly emphasized how Kabir bhajans had inspired them to 1) reject ritual worship and other forms of “superstition” and 2) avoid social vices, particularly the consumption of meat, alcohol, or other drugs.

Although many urban scholars and listeners have been attracted by Kabir’s iconoclastic voice, the ideological mechanisms of social action in rural India often take forms that do not resonate with urban progressive values. Some urban listeners and scholars are disillusioned by Kabir communities’ extreme emphasis on moral puritanism. David Lorenzen (1987, 302) laments, “to see the religious insight and biting social criticism of Kabir’s verses reduced to little more than vegetarianism can hardly help but inspire cynicism”.¹⁵ Activist filmmaker Shabnam Virmani (2008a) described her difficulty making the documentary *Chalo Hamārā Des* (Come to Our Land), which addresses Kabir singers’ experiences of casteism. Virmani expected Tipanya to engage in outraged tirades against Brahminism, as she had seen from Dalit activists elsewhere in the country. His performances did not fit this narrative, however. “He would not be my ‘Dalit hero’”, she explained to me.¹⁶ He may speak derisively of Brahmins’ *and aviśhvās* (superstition) and *śhoṣhaṇ* (exploitation) in private, but during performances he spoke only of recognizing divinity within all beings—and of renouncing ritualism, meat, and alcohol. Dietary advice may not be what Virmani or other urban activists expect from a protest singer, but in the rural sphere, it is absolutely central to the discourse of caste discrimination.

DIETARY ABSTINENCE AND “SANSKRITIZATION”

I asked many Malvi *nirguṇ* singers to tell me how bhajans changed their lives. The most common response was, “I have given up eating meat and drinking alcohol.” Some added tobacco and *gānjā* (cannabis) to the list. I was puzzled; I did not encounter a single bhajan emphasizing dietary abstinence, but it was clearly a pressing issue for lower-caste singers and listeners. When pressed, Prahlad Tipanya provided a few examples of bhajans that repudiated meat and alcohol, but they were by modern poets rather than Sants, and I rarely heard any performed.

Scholars of Indian religious life will recognize the phenomenon of lower-caste groups relinquishing meat and intoxicants in an effort to attain higher status within the caste hierarchy (Dube 1998; Jaffrelot 2003; Lamb 2002; Lorenzen 1987; Lynch 1969; Mathur 1964; Mayer 1970). In most cases, such efforts have little effect in changing the upper-caste perception of these individuals or groups as “impure”. These practices are commonly ascribed to the broader phenomenon of Sanskritization:¹⁷

Sanskritization is the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a

high, and, frequently, ‘twice-born’ caste. Generally, such changes are followed by a claim of higher position in the caste hierarchy. (Srinivas 1966, 6)

Sanskritization is often viewed dismissively in the context of social reform; rather than opposing an oppressive system, marginalized communities assimilate to the values of the system and attempt to enhance their place within it, leaving the status quo intact (Jaffrelot 2003). Sanskritization certainly plays a role in Kabir singers’ emphasis on vegetarianism, but it is not the complete story.¹⁸ Resistance and subversion also contribute to Kabir singers’ vegetarianism, as does as the moral agency of the singers.

PURITY AS RESISTANCE

Srinivas himself observed that Sanskritization could be a subversive action (1966). By abstaining from behaviors and foods deemed impure, lower-caste singers eliminate the upper-caste claim to ritual superiority. One afternoon, I was walking through the fields with a few young Brahmin men from Prahlad Tipanya’s village, who proudly cited diet in their declarations of superior status. “You know we are above those low-born people,” they told me, “they do all kinds of bad things—eat meat, drink, gamble...” I reminded them that everyone in Tipanya’s village had relinquished those practices. The young Brahmins scrambled for further justifications, but were unable to maintain a strong logical position.

Historically, this manoeuvre has shown limited efficacy in improving ritual status; the typical upper-caste response is to claim that lower-caste persons remain impure, even if vegetarian, due to the meat that they (or their forebears) previously consumed. However, India’s socioeconomic transformations have been working in the favor of the lower castes. Increased opportunities in education empower them to highlight the obviously spurious logic of oppression. Increased economic mobility allows many of them to reduce their economic dependence on the village and instead tie their income to urban economies, which grant a much higher degree of independence. If an untouchable finds a job in the city, changes his name, and adopts vegetarianism, his urban colleagues may never know his origins and he may not suffer socially or economically from the opinions of the upper castes in his home village.

An important theological protest strategy for Kabir singers has been to claim an even higher status of purity than the Brahmins. This is achieved by condemning violence not only against animals, but against the plants and flowers that are used copiously in orthodox Hindu ritual observances:

A deluded gardener tears off a leaf,
but there is life in every leaf!
He tears a leaf and offers it to a stone god
That stone god has no life, crazy fool!

The branch is Brahma, the leaf is Vishnu,
 the flower is the Lord Shiva,
 He tears a living flower,
 Gives it to a lifeless stone god

O crazy one, why have you lost your way?

By denouncing upper-caste ritual worship as a form of unnecessary violence, Kabir singers reject the position of spiritual inferiors and the entire edifice of caste oppression.

Another central, but often-overlooked aspect of lower castes adopting dietary restrictions is their own moral agency. They are not merely aping the values of upper-caste Hindus, but making decisions based on their own theology. The individuals I met during my research have made a conscious decision that if the same God is present in all beings, then the unnecessary killing of animals for consumption is as indefensible as the oppression of an “inferior” group of people. Similarly, their firm stance against alcohol is not merely an adoption of Hindu values of purity, but a reaction against their experience of the social destruction caused by rampant alcoholism in villages.

In Indian thought, the moral transformation of an individual is not a separate issue from social activism; it is the main substance of social activism. This position was most notably asserted by Mohandas K. Gandhi, who believed that India’s independence would be won through each Indian’s attainment of self-mastery and self-control (Gandhi [1909] 1938). This belief is most frequently summarized in his (apocryphal) quote, “be the change you wish to see in the world.” As evidence of the ability of individual morality to effect social change, singers throughout Malwa referred to the transformation that occurred among the Kanjar community in the Dewas district.

THE REFORMATION OF A CRIMINAL CASTE

The Kanjar community is a Scheduled Caste of traditionally nomadic people whom the ruling British administration had labeled a “criminal tribe”, a stigma which has endured even after India’s Independence from the British Empire (Russell [1916] 1969). Many Kanjar people in Malwa continued to engage in criminal activity and the community at large was disproportionately targeted by the police. Prahlad Tipanya recounts his first interactions with them:

Tipanya: These people came to our bhajan program and did lots of *sevā* (service). They stayed and helped until four in the morning... I was surprised, I heard Kanjar people were rotten... A few days later I passed their area, and I thought I would go see them... I noticed one window in this man’s house was

broken. He said the police broke it—I couldn't believe it. "Last week the police conducted a raid," he said. At that time, I did not even know what a raid was. He explained, "the police will come every now and then and arrest anyone they can catch, innocent or guilty. They lock them up and demand money for their release."¹⁹

Tipanya spoke with the police chief, who admitted they were arresting Kanjars and even demanding large sums of protection money that compelled the Kanjars to resort to thievery. Tipanya's response was to begin weekly bhajan sessions with the Kanjars in their homes, which continued for five years. More and more Kanjars began to attend, and many were inspired to relinquish meat, alcohol and theft. Tipanya estimates that 40–50 percent of Kanjars who had been engaged in criminal action have ceased. I have no means of confirming this estimate, but many people from the Kanjar community and nearby areas provided similar estimates. The police, once they saw that Kanjars were participating in bhajans and renouncing crime, changed their behavior as well; they ceased their raids and extortion. The Kanjar example was frequently cited by singers in Malwa as evidence of societal transformation through bhajan-singing.

The response of the police in this story is significant, as their decision to stop persecuting Kanjars was based on their *perception* of bhajans and the people who sing them. In other words, by participating in bhajans, the Kanjars acquired a measure of cultural capital that increased their estimation in the eyes of an outside party. This may be seen as a precursor to the larger phenomenon that followed, as Kabir singers from Malwa began to gain recognition at the national level.

REDISCOVERING "ROOTS"

Kabir bhajans have been prominent in urban popular devotional music since the 1950s, when classical vocalist Kumar Gandharva, who had relocated to Malwa, adapted local *nirgun* bhajans in a classical idiom (Hess 2009; Patel 2009; Virmani 2008d). At the time, Gandharva's inclusion of "village songs" in classical music was a coup, but it soon gained widespread acceptance. Within a generation, Kabir was a major part of the new genre of "cassette bhajans" sung by urban professional recording artists such as Anup Jalota and Hari Om Sharan (Manuel 1993). In such music, marketed primarily to a middle-class audience, Kabir is no heterodox revolutionary. Rather, he is presented as a devotional saint who generally conforms to the religious and moral values of the Hindu middle class (Hawley 1995b).

The music scene changed in the mid-1990s as globalization and India's policy of economic liberalization prompted a surge in cultural consumption.

As foreign products, money, and media pour into India, many urban Indians seek “authentic” cultural products to maintain a connection with their (real or imagined) roots.²⁰ Indian popular media seems to be undergoing a process of folk music revival during an era in which internet and mobile technology facilitate rapid sharing of cultural products across the world or, more importantly, between village and city (Virani 2016). Ironically, in this process performers from oppressed or marginalized communities are seen as more authentic because of their marginalization. Paradoxically, they are seen as truer repositories of the Indian cultural self precisely because of their social “otherness.” Similar examples abound in globalizing societies, as performers from the cultural margins convert their difference into cultural capital for audiences anxious about maintaining their cultural identity (Bilby 1999; Markoff 2002; Rees 2000).

Urban India’s disillusionment with mainstream religion and desire for “authentic” cultural expression has produced unprecedented performance opportunities for singers of heterodox spiritual traditions, such as Sufi and Baul (Krakauer 2015; Manuel 2008). These include folk festivals, religious festivals, and popular folk-fusion programs like MTV India’s *Coke Studio*.²¹ In the spirit of celebrating “unity in diversity”, many state governments have become patrons of traditional performers, promoting their presence in festivals to increase their state’s cultural cache (and domestic tourism revenues) (Ayyagari 2009).

The state of Madhya Pradesh faces a conundrum: located in the center of North India and historically influenced by many neighboring cultures, it has few widely recognized traditions to call its own. The growing Kabir bhajan movement in rural Malwa eventually caught the attention of elite culture brokers and of the state, and has subsequently been championed as an authentic representation of Madhya Pradesh’s rich culture and spiritual heritage (despite the relative newness of the tradition).

Today, the region of Malwa is becoming synonymous with the name of Kabir.²² Audiences in the thousands flock to hear Malwa’s Kabir singers at the Mumbai Kabir Festival and other devotional festivals in which the musically untrained bhajan singers often share a stage with renowned classical performers. Many urban Indians have even begun to turn to Tipanya and other singers for spiritual guidance (Virani 2016). My parents, who left India in the late 1970s, could not have imagined the day when wealthy businessmen, artists and activists from Mumbai would consider a lower-caste village schoolteacher their personal guru.

The consequence of this recognition within the sphere of rural Malwa is significant, but complex. Brahmins in Tipanya’s village still consider him impure, but they cannot ignore the fact that notable scholars and performers from all over India and abroad are suddenly coming to their village to meet

him. They also cannot ignore the fact that he now has the biggest house in the village, or that the national government has honored him as a cultural icon.

The vast majority of Kabir singers in Malwa have not enjoyed the level of fame or success that Tipanya has. However, they have radically changed their attitudes and practices regarding bhajan singing. Once a marginalized voice shared among small groups of untouchables in their own homes, Sant bhajans are now a voice that might reach across the world and provide unprecedented social mobility for its singers in the process. A younger generation of Kabir singers are professionalising; they are establishing formal performance troupes, with business cards and music videos, and marketing themselves with aspirations of performing on the national level (Virani 2016).

CONCLUSION

Kabir singers in Malwa now see their spiritual and musical tradition as a potential source for cultural capital, if properly directed. A considerable number of them have been able to transform this into social and economic capital and have experienced unprecedented social mobility. Others have seen no socio-economic benefit, but have dramatically enriched their sense of self-perception. They no longer see themselves merely as farmers or field-hands who sing songs that nobody hears, but as representatives of a spiritual tradition that carries prestige as well as transcendent wisdom. However, they are highly sensitive to the fragile and contextual nature of this prestige. As they perform for broader audiences, they reposition their protest discourse to avoid alienating listeners. Liberal progressive urbanites love to hear the rebel Kabir rage against the machine of fundamentalism, but they do not want to be lectured to about vegetarianism. Upper-caste Hindus may love to hear Kabir's religious poetry at a *bhakti* music festival, but may be offended by anti-ritualism tirades that seem to malign their beliefs. The singers are in a complicated position: they do not want to compromise their ideology, but they recognize that the "success" of their efforts towards self-determination (and economic mobility) is tied to their success as popular performers with crowds who may not be concerned for their struggles.

The lower castes in rural Malwa are slowly, but surely, seeing positive changes, but the question remains: to what degree can we credit this to the power of the Sants' words, bhajan performances, and the singers' interpretive theological maneuvers, and to what degree must we credit it to the changing socio-economic landscape of a nation rapidly undergoing processes of urbanization, globalization and technological development? The case of Malvi *nirgun* singers suggests these processes cannot be decoupled; spiritual musical expression both reflects and shapes social realities. These singers further

illustrate the potency and versatility of song as a means for individuals and communities to develop and articulate a sense of self, and to position themselves amidst shifting systems of cultural values.

NOTES

1. Malwa describes a geographic and cultural region rather than a strictly defined political region. It is a natural plateau bounded by the Vindhya Mountains to the North and the Betwa, Narmada, and Chambal rivers to the East, South and West (Mathur 1964).

2. “Untouchable” (*achyuta*) is a derogatory term used to refer to persons whose caste status (*jāti*, see note 4) is considered so low that persons of higher castes believe it is ritually polluting to physically contact them.

3. The attribution of poems to Kabir and other poet-saints is uncertain at best, and has been the subject of much scholarship. In this work, I quote poems that exist in Malwa’s oral tradition without assessing their provenance; the singers’ *belief* that the poems are by Kabir is more important for my purposes.

4. Castes or *jātī* are hereditary endogamous groups. Each *jātī* is usually classified into one of the four major ritual divisions, or *varṇa*, described in Hindu scripture. The relationship of *jātī* and *varṇa* and the hierarchy of different *jātī* within a *varṇa* is highly complex and constantly renegotiated at local levels (Jaffrelot 2003; Mathur 1964; Mayer, 1970). See Bayly (1999) for a more thorough exploration of caste in India.

5. I use the term “lower caste” in this chapter (non-pejoratively) to refer primarily to the groups officially classified as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC). Membership in these groups is highly politicized due to voting blocs and affirmative action (reservation) policies (Jaffrelot 2003). While the preferred contemporary term is Dalit, this term’s political connotations are misleading in this context; Dalit identity is not yet widespread in Malwa. Lower-caste persons in Malwa often refer to themselves as *anusūchit jāt* (scheduled caste), *Harijan* (“person of God”; a label coined by Mohandas Gandhi), or using the English acronyms SC / ST / OBC. Brahmins and other upper-caste persons in Malwa generally refer to them as *nīchā jāt* (literally “low-born”).

6. The term “*bhajan*” is not exclusive to a specific region and style, but refers to any devotional song. It most often refers to strophic songs praising Hindu deities or authored by Hindu poet-saints.

7. Kabir’s position as a voice of orthodox Hinduism or of the lower castes, the heterodox, or even the Sufis has been a major debate in Hindi literary scholarship (Agrawal 2009, 2010; Dharmvir 1997; Hess 2015; Wakankar 2010).

8. B. R. Ambedkar was the most important figure in India’s caste reform movements of the twentieth century. Ambedkar and his followers incorporate Kabir in their lineage of heterodox reformists, which begins with Buddha and culminates with modern-day lower-caste political leaders.

9. These and many other metaphors in Malwa’s Sant tradition draw heavily from imagery associated with the *yoga-tantra* philosophy of the Nath sect.

10. The social mobility facilitated by participation in a Nath or Kabir sect never results in a clear vertical shift within the ritual hierarchy for communities involved. Rather, it places them outside the quotidian hierarchy in certain contexts, although they remain bound by it in other contexts.

11. Tipanya refers to an oft-quoted passage from the *Puruṣa Sukta*, a hymn from the *R̥g Veda*.

12. Vaishnava refers to sects dedicated to Vishnu, primarily in the form of Ram and Krishna.

13. Kabir singers in Malwa describe the distinction between *nirgun* and *sagun* beliefs and practices as a stark contrast, reflecting their social reality. Theological distinctions in devotional poetry are not so clear (Hawley 1995a; 2005).

14. There is considerable diversity and even hostility between different Kabir sects. The Dharamdas Panth, which is dominant in Malwa and Chattisgarh, necessitates the performance of certain rituals, but other sects may differ from or condemn this practice (Das 2003; Hess 2015; Lorenzen 1996; Virmani 2008c).

15. Lorenzen's research has not been based in Malwa, but with Kabir *panths* in other regions of India. However, the situation is a clear parallel.

16. Personal interview conducted December 4, 2014, at Shrishti School in Bangalore.

17. Srinivas's original formulation of Sanskritization (1952) placed even greater emphasis on vegetarianism, but was later modified as Srinivas felt it was *too* "Brahmin-centric".

18. An early twentieth-century account of Malwa reports that the Balai caste, to which most contemporary Kabir singers in Malwa belong, is notable for its members' willingness to consume beef (Russell [1916] 1969).

19. Personal communication at Tipanya's home, September 15, 2014.

20. Ashish Nandy (2001) provides an excellent analysis of urban India's relationship to the imagined village, beginning at independence and ending just before the period emphasized in my work.

21. Coke Studio is a television program that features musical collaborations between popular singers, producers, session musicians, and traditional or folk musicians. Coke Studio Pakistan first aired in 2008, followed by Coke Studio India in 2011. The programs are very popular, particularly on YouTube, among South Asians from both countries and the diaspora. They have brought many folk singers to an exponentially larger audience.

22. A few urban Indian friends who regularly attend the Kabir Festival in Mumbai and other cities remarked to me that they were surprised to learn that Kabir actually lived in Varanasi, since they had assumed he lived in Malwa.

Chapter 11

Singing Against the Empire

Anti-structure and Anti-colonial Discourse in Nineteenth-century Irish Song

Tríona Ní Shíocháin

Song is a moment of daring. It is an intrinsically *present* moment that symbolically suspends the real-world order long enough to make change imaginable. To *sing* in protest is to perform a moment of sheer potentiality in which the contemporary political order is symbolically divested of power and new possibilities in real-world politics become thinkable for a fleeting time (Bruner and Turner 1986; Turner 1969; 1982; Ní Shíocháin 2018). This power of the fleeting moment of song is enough to undermine the most powerful in society: it is this power of singing that enabled practitioners of oral tradition in the colonized world to throw down the gauntlet to the literate enlightenment establishment whose complex rationalised systems of hierarchy and social control devalued indigenous traditions and negated the possibility of a life of dignity for the colonized subject. Rather than viewing literacy as a milestone of emancipation on the road to enlightenment for the colonized subject, the aim of this chapter is to look beyond the performative rationality of the male-dominated literary spheres of political engagement to the rich potentiality of oral tradition and song performance, through which men and women of no letters disputed the colonial order. Thus this chapter engages with the work of a female song-composer of the indigenous Irish vernacular tradition whose songs problematized class and status and undermined the authority of British colonialism in Ireland.¹ Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire² (1774–c.1848; Yellow Mary O’Leary) practised an oral genre which due to its re-creative performance aesthetics created a compelling experience of anti-structure, thus temporarily removing listeners from the strictures of real-world norms and making new ideas of revolution both imaginable and compelling. Her work represents the incredible liminal potentiality of song for thought and political agitation (Turner 1969). Song and singing is here seen to frame colonial experience and enact important “moments of becoming” for the community; singing is

“the tide that lifted a charismatically led group out of everyday life” (Weber 1978, 1121), thus enabling the imagining of new political horizons and the visionary impetus for an anti-colonial movement.

This chapter offers an anthropological theoreticization of protest song by focusing on the inherently subversive dynamic that song embodies in many oral traditional or semi-literate societies (Caraveli 1986; Furniss and Gunner 1995; Gunner 2009; Jama 1994; cf. also Darnton 2010) and relating this to anti-colonial protest in the Irish-language oral tradition. Much like recent studies on music and protest (Mattern 1998; Winkler 2009; Peddie 2012; Kutsche and Norton 2013), I explore the extraordinary moments in music that define social protest and mobilize a community; however, following Caraveli (1986), social protest song as conceived here encapsulates oral traditional performance as practiced by non-literate people beyond our usual conception of social protest song in modern Western(ised) society. The licence to protest that traditional song performs is a central concern, as is the anti-structure that song creates that makes change thinkable and possible. Drawing on the work of anthropologists Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, the concept of song as a liminal social process, as *living politics*, is explored; song is here understood as embodying *socio-processual* thought, or ideas ‘in the making’ (Bruner and Turner 1986). Anthropological theorists more recently, such as Thomassen (2014) and Wydra (2009), have argued for the critically liminal dynamic of social revolutions and of political spaces. Similarly, I assert that song is at once a liminal space and a political space, a site of contestation and intense possibility, one that is richly symbolised through the performance of verse and music.

Song creates a musical and poetic anti-structure that can counterbalance the dominant subjugating colonial discourse of the imperial state, subverting power and creating a dynamic sphere of anti-colonial discourse that lives in the very moment of song performance itself. It was this power and potentiality of song that Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire harnessed in nineteenth-century County Cork in the south of Ireland, when she challenged colonial rule through anarchic radical millenarian song and verse. Her songs not only tell the tale of an alternative history of ideas to that of mainstream political history, but illustrate the transformative power of *singing ideas* in society, how song performs the experience of colonialism, how singing engenders anti-colonial thought, and how song constitutes a powerful vehicle of protest and anti-colonial activism (Ní Shíocháin 2018). The medium of song embodied a competing sphere of authority from within the oral tradition that challenged the politics of the official state: Máire Bhuí’s songs of social protest performed a compelling narrative of oppression and injustice that delegitimized colonial rule and sparked violent political agitation. It is argued here, however, that it is beyond the meaning of words alone in the compelling and fulsome experience of anti-colonial thought *through liminal song performance* that the political power of

protest song lies. Rather than viewing songs as historical documents, therefore, they are here understood as pivotal liminal *moments* in history, as social processes at the heart of thought formation and consciousness building. In song, thought is therefore ‘alive’, and a song is literally ‘history in the making.’ To understand the power of Máire Bhuí’s medium of protest, therefore, we will firstly turn to the liminal potentiality of song as a pivotal experiential moment in which political fortunes “tremble in the balance” (Turner 1982, 44) and the world as we know it can be radically re-imagined.

LICENTIOUSNESS, POWER AND POSSIBILITY: UNDERSTANDING THE ANTI-STRUCTURE OF SONG

For decades oral theorists have opposed the reduction of oral performance genres to mere textual artefacts in the study of oral culture, stressing, instead, the importance of performance in our conceptualisation of the oral arts (Finnegan 1977; Foley 2002, Lord 1960; 1996, Nagy 1996). Performance, the core paradigm of oral theory, is of immense importance for understanding not just oral composition and transmission, but also the history of thought and political engagement through singing. It is as a full-bodied performance that the power of song as a medium of thought and political agitation and mobilisation becomes apparent. Following the tripartite structure of the ritual process, formulated by van Gennep and developed by Turner, I argue that song *performs* liminality (Ní Shíocháin 2018), that in-between space in everyday life, a moment of potentiality, in which new ways of thinking become possible, and through which the subject can be born anew. Song is a liminal experience that speckles everyday life, a cultural form that marks human existence much like the “great rhythms of the universe” (van Gennep 1960, 194), inaugurating a special time outside of ordinary time, a ludic in-between space that renews and regenerates ordinary life (Huizinga 1970). Or as Caraveli explained as regards the female lament tradition of rural Greece: “Singing itself ... can facilitate the transition from ordinary to extraordinary experience” (1986, 175). Liminality, which is created by “a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions” (Turner 1969, 95), has to be performed to be realised, and song is one such symbol, through the fusion of oral verse and music, that symbolises and actualises liminality³ (Ní Shíocháin 2012; 2018). Much like how Thomassen (2014) and Wydra (2009) have argued for the inherently liminal dynamic of social revolutions and of modern politics, this liminal space that song creates is also a political space. Song therefore is at the very crux of larger societal political processes, a liminal site of contestation where social norms can be inverted and new political horizons imagined.

This liminality of song is key to understanding the power and import of protest song. The ritual character of Irish song in contemporary Irish society has been illustrated by Lillis Ó Laoire's analysis of the Irish-language singing tradition of Tory Island, off Ireland's North-West coast (2002), gives us a sense of the inner-workings of song, of the social process that song engenders beyond the text alone. His observations of singing occasions on Tory Island also resonate with traditional singing in Ireland more generally: the special space marked off as different from ordinary life, the sheer intensity of meaning experienced through singing, the feeling of communion between those present. The following description of the performance of ritual by Sewell could easily be mistaken for a singing session in Ireland today:

In most religious rituals, the participants are collected into a place marked off as sacred and then participate in a series of activities that induce a certain emotional state – quiet awe, rapt attention, terror, intense pleasure, or frenzied enthusiasm... (1996, 870)

Singing, often eagerly anticipated by members of the community, indeed rouses such responses as described by Sewel (1996), and the 'rapt attention' inspired by song also suggests its sacred status in society. Experiences of intense listening, of rousing interaction, of 'emotional heat' as Ó Laoire puts it, as found in the Irish singing tradition is typical of ritual contexts more generally (2002, 176; Alexander 2004, 536). It is this heady mix of heightened emotion and experience that makes song a particularly potent medium of thought and political agitation (and what sets song apart from the more tame experience of reading). It is what makes the ideas of song potentially transformative for the subject. It is what enables a feeling of unbridled possibility (Turner 1982), and much like a rite of transition, song enables the social re-birth of the subject.

The very structure of this oral poetry and music is determined *in the moment of performance itself*, and therefore song teems with a kind of creative (or re-creative) potentiality that is at the core of the aesthetic and transcendental experience of singing (Ní Shíocháin 2009). The *sean-nós*⁴ singer is a creative artist who refashions the air to the song, adding new twists and turns, incorporating new (but still traditional) motifs that combine with old motifs that excite the listener. This play of song literally 'trembles in the balance' (Turner 1982, 44), the listener not sure what form the air will take until it happens—and then it is gone. In every respect, down to the very experience of musical embellishment and re-creativity, song symbolises what Turner would term anti-structure: a moment when the ordinary structures that govern life are temporarily suspended, a moment of 'sheer potentiality' in which the impossible becomes possible (Turner 1982). Thus through the semiotics of

poetic verse and music combined, song creates a place outside of ordinary time, a sacred space in which societal norms can be challenged and inverted.

This challenging nature of song can of course be seen in many cultures, and, as has been argued by Furniss and Gunner (1995), song is central to the negotiation of power in many oral cultures. Furthermore, the sacred space of song ensures the right to challenge of those of a lesser status in society: this is evident in the Irish keening women who are given licence to voice dissent against injustice and domestic violence, much like the Scottish women of the waulking⁵ songs (Bourke 1988; 1993), and also in the female genre of the kúrubi⁶ songs which are publicly performed at the end of Ramadan, posing a threat to the male status quo and constituting an important ‘counter power’ in society (Derive 1995; cf. also Dlamini 1994; Jama 1994). Agovi also stresses this challenging power of song, a sort of social subversion that is granted immunity, as in the case of the Nzema *avudwene*⁷ festival songs: “What we have in *avudwene*, therefore, is not just a catalogue of gratuitous insults arising from the simple fact that the occasion demands and guarantees immunity. Rather there is a conscious attempt to raise insult into a swerving instrument of public policy” (1995, 60).

The power of satire through song or oral performance is also to be found in the Irish tradition, with the belief that satire had the power to even kill or maim (Ó hÓgáin 1982, 335–48). This echoes what Turner would term “the powers of the weak” in liminality: the inversion in liminality of power relations in society through which the weak are allowed to challenge the powerful (cf. Agovi 1995). In liminality, even the king himself is not beyond reproach, as we see in Turner’s analysis of the role of the jester in society: “They were privileged to throw into the water any of the great nobles ‘who had offended them and their sense of justice during the last year’ ... These figures, representing the poor and the deformed, appear to symbolize the moral values of *communitas* as against the coercive power of supreme political rulers” (1969, 110).

In the metaphorical sense at least, song reserves the right to throw the nobles into the water, as is evident in the songs of Máire Bhuí. Song, song poets and singers, have a kind of sacred immunity that mirrors the permitted licentiousness of the novitiate during transition rites as van Gennep describes: “During the entire novitiate, the usual economic and legal ties are modified, sometimes broken altogether. The novices are outside society, and society has no power over them, especially since they are actually sacred and holy, and therefore untouchable and dangerous, just as gods would be” (1960, 114).

In cultures in which people’s right to free speech is restricted due to social hierarchies and norms, they are often allowed to express themselves freely *through song*. John William Johnson has illustrated how song enables individuals of low social status to engage and challenge the powerful in society,

concluding that song “catches the powerful off guard” (1995, 121). This melting of the usual social rules and norms of behaviour is what led Victor Turner to refer to liminality as a “fructile chaos”, a temporary “free-for-all” from which new ideas and new models for living can emerge:

“Anti-structure”, in fact, can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs which are capable of influencing the behaviour of those in mainstream social and political roles (whether authoritative or dependent, in control or rebelling against it) in the direction of radical change, just as much as they serve as instruments of political control. (Turner 1982, 33)

Rather than being an account of the important ideas of history that were developed elsewhere in society, song itself, therefore, can be seen to be a locus of thought formation and political mobilisation in society. Not only should song be understood as a Turnerian storehouse of possibilities, however, but also as a key moment in which identity itself can be reconfigured and in which the subject can be born anew. Liminal song performed a temporary suspension of the political order and of hierarchy that could allow alternative models for living to emerge. Song was literally a political threshold, a creative emotive intellectual space that could send society down one track rather than another. As Alexander tells us of the importance of the symbolic performance of ritual for the subject and society, “Rites not only mark transitions but also create them, such that the participants become something or somebody else as a result. Ritual performance not only symbolizes a social relationship or change; it also actualizes it” (2004, 537). It was this liminal potentiality of song that Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire harnessed when composing radical prophetic anti-colonial verse in nineteenth-century Ireland, seizing the power of the moment of song in which anything might seem possible and the political fortunes of Empire itself would tremble in the balance (Turner 1982, 44).

MÁIRE BHUÍ NÍ LAEIRE (YELLOW MARY O’LEARY) AND SINGING ANTI-COLONIAL DISCOURSE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND

Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire (1774–c.1848) lived through two significant revolutionary periods in Ireland during the colonial period: she was in her early twenties when in 1796 the revolutionary French fleet attempted to land in Bantry Bay, County Cork, in the South of Ireland, and she witnessed the ferocity of the United Irish Rebellion in 1798;⁸ when she was in her prime in the 1820s she was to become embroiled in the violent millenarian anti-colonial Rockite movement.⁹ She lived through the Penal Laws which prohibited the

civic rights and freedoms of Roman Catholics, she lived through famine in the 1820s during which time she saw great extremes of poverty under British colonial rule. She also lived during a time in which the Irish-language oral tradition was extensive and prolific, marking almost every facet of existence for rural communities (Ó Madagáin 1985). She was considered to be one of the greatest song poets of her era, and folklore accounts attest to her prodigious talent and fluency in poetic composition: Pádraig Ó Crualaoi, a song poet whose father knew Máire Bhuí personally, refers to her as having a command of oral composition above that of the ordinary poet. Ó Crualaoi, when referring to the song “A Mháir’ Ní Laeire” (Oh Mary O’Leary, n.d.) which was a sung poetic dialogue composed between Máire Bhuí and her male contemporary Donncha Bán Ó Luínse, remarks on Máire Bhuí’s extraordinary ability in composing many more verses than Donncha Bán:

Bhí a lán do shórd Dhonacha ann: d’fhéataidís véarsa dhéanamh go maith ach ní fhéataidís leanúint dō, ar chuma éigin. Ach ní raibh Máire Bhuí mar sin i n-aohor: bhí ana-ruille cainte aici.

(Ó Cróinín 1982, 116; There were many people of Donncha’s sort: they could make a verse well but they couldn’t continue it, for some reason. But Máire Bhuí wasn’t like that at all: she had a great flood of speech).¹⁰

Elsewhere she is referred to as the most melodious poet in Ireland (Ní Shíocháin 2012, 245).¹¹ Folklore accounts attest to her own involvement in the anti-colonial movement at the time and her close ties to the Rockite movement. Her anti-colonial fervour is made very clear in the tale of “Máire Bhuí and the Weaver” (n.d.), when she shows her ire at British dominance through verse, and the implication of her family in the anti-colonial struggle can be read in the mocking verse of Donncha Chruíd who taunts Máire Bhuí, claiming that, unlike her, none of his people were ever hanged or transported (Ní Shíocháin 2012, 245, 254).¹² On the one hand, therefore, Máire Bhuí represents oral traditional composition at its height; on the other hand she represents the radical millennial zeal that emanated from the experience of colonization and economic crisis during the 1820s in Ireland. She sung ideas of great immediacy that wrought meaning out of colonial subjection and crisis; through her mastery of oral traditional song craft Máire Bhuí would not only protest against the Empire, but she would sing an image of the world that would have a lasting effect on anti-colonial thought and agitation (Weber 1948).

In choosing to *sing* political ideas, Máire Bhuí was taking on the charismatic role of prophet as well as poet, and the medium through which she moulded her political ideas was an incredibly potent one¹³ (Gunner 2009; Mattern 1998, 5, 25; Winkler 2009, ix). In “A Mháir’ Ní Laeire” (Oh Mary O’Leary, n.d.),

Donncha Bán refers to Máire Bhuí as “Bláth ’s Craobh na nÚdar” (Flower and Greatest of Authors), as ‘údar’ denotes not just author, but often prophet also. Indeed the connection between prophecy and poetry is well established in the Irish tradition, and the etymology of the Irish word for poetry, *filíocht*, literally means ‘to see’, as discussed by Nagy and Ó hÓgáin. This seer-like quality of the poet is found in many literary and folklore representations down to Modern times (Nagy 1985, 24–25; Ó Buachalla 1983, 82; Ó hÓgáin 1982, 15). Ó Buachalla also argues that prophecy was much more ‘real’ than just a literary trope (1983, 77), and the pressing importance of prophecy in Irish society down to the nineteenth century has also been illustrated by Morley (2011). The meaning of poetry itself ventures into otherworldliness, therefore, and, as Nagy has illustrated in his analysis of the Fenian sagas, poetry is the language of prophecy in the Irish tradition (1985, 21–26). The medium of oral poetry (which invariably is sung in this context) is meaningful in itself: song symbolizes mediation with a higher truth, or as Becker would say, with a “power beyond oneself” (2004, 2), and the experience of ekstasis through singing in response to the artistry of the words and air is also integral to the experience of this higher meaning. This is demonstrated in many song cultures, for example, by the female praise singers or *Jelimusow* of Mali who embody an ecstatic sense of truth telling in their performance, and some of whom were advisors to the king (Durán 1995), or in the Ewe song tradition in which the song poet embodies a sense of fearless poetic speech (Anyidoho 1995, 250). Indeed, Weber categorizes song as belonging to the ecstasy-inducing culture of prophecy historically (1978, 422). Interestingly, there was a well-established tradition of popular prophecy throughout Europe in response to the French Revolution, in which women were active participants (Smith 2013, 4). Máire Bhuí, though markedly different from our usual conception of serious European political thinker, nonetheless was part of a wider cultural heritage of female prophetic millenarian thinkers across Europe more generally. The nineteenth-century Irish-language song-poet, therefore, is not just a master of words and music, but is a master of the performative realm of prophecy and truth telling. In taking up the mantle of the song poet, Máire Bhuí also took up the traditional mantle of parrhesiast (Foucault 2011).

MOMENTS IN TIME (OUT OF TIME): ORAL PERFORMANCE, THE NARRATIVE OF THE PAST AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL MOBILISATION THROUGH SONG

Máire Bhuí was a most traditional poet and an analysis of her songs suggests that she practiced oral formulaic composition, re-using and re-creating

received formulas and themes that she acquired by ear (Ní Shíocháin 2012; 2013; 2018). Of particular interest is the way in which the traditional language of oral verse did not restrict the song poet, and ‘old’ ideas are reborn and ‘new’ ideas emerge through Máire Bhuí’s use of traditional formulaic language. Not only does this attest to the sheer importance of the traditional idiom of oral composition as a means of political engagement, but was also key to the symbiosis between political ideas and *identity* in her songs. As Foley said of the creative dynamic of oral formulaic tradition: “This idiom is liberating rather than imprisoning, centrifugal rather than centripetal, explosively connotative rather than claustrophobically clichéd” (1991, 7). Máire Bhuí’s songs evoke both former rebellions and the deep rich fabric of oral traditional themes, creating a sense of intense poignancy and immediacy that resonated with shared identity under colonial rule in Ireland. A close analysis of her songs shows her mastery of resonance and evocation through song and her ability to weave political radicalism and protest to the ‘we-image’ of the community so adeptly. Rather than viewing tradition as something which ‘illiterates’ needed to be emancipated from in favour of a seemingly more ‘advanced’ literate culture, the oral tradition of singing ideas is taken here as seriously rivalling the literate tradition as a medium of thought and protest in nineteenth-century Ireland and beyond. Through her mastery of the *echoic* nature of oral poetry, to use Foley’s term, Máire Bhuí shows us what a potent medium the song is in the generation of political thought. Máire Bhuí’s political vision didn’t mark a radical break with tradition the way the vision of her Jacobin male literate contemporaries did, of whom Whelan remarks “The United Irishmen’s necks were set in concrete, staring relentlessly forward” (1996, 61). Though a radical anarchist, Máire Bhuí does not display the schismatic enlightening impulse of modernity that defines many of her male contemporaries, as described by Palmer in his summary of the modern *mentalité*:

God places his blessing on the individualistic, competitive person (implicitly male) who exercises restraint and represses desires in the interest of more ‘rational’ goals: power and control ... History perceived as a straight line that never circles back on itself, becomes the story of man’s gradual self-improvement through the exercise of reason. (Palmer in Turner 1987, 73)

Indeed, Máire Bhuí’s songs create a narrative of identity that circles back upon itself, creating an experience through song in which time itself as linear is superseded by the here and now of singing experience, where reliving past revolutions re-configures the meaning of the contemporary. Thus radical anti-colonial thought can be seen to emanate from tradition and be seamlessly woven to the collective identity of the community. In this sense, Máire Bhuí’s

work shows how a song is a moment in which everything—including narratives of the past, the meaning of traditional tropes and formulas, or even the meaning of the air to a song—trembles in the balance (Turner 1982). Thus the traditional song form can be seen to be a liminal powerhouse of ideas through which meaning can be recreated and new social and political visions forged and voiced. Máire Bhuí’s earliest known composition, “Ar leacain na gréine” (On the sunny side of the hill, 1796) is a traditional *aisling* or vision theme wherein the otherworldly female figure of the sovereignty goddess relays an important message—however in the concluding verse we find a most radical Jacobin sentiment: “beig talamh gan chíos gan íoc gan cháin is gan phlé” (Ní Shíocháin 2012, 176; we will have land without rent without payment without tax and without dispute). Here Máire Bhuí predicts that social reality as the impoverished know it will be upturned, and that the status quo as it exists under colonialism will be destroyed. This radical sentiment however is preceded by the emotive message of the *spéirbhean*¹⁴ who hails the imminent return of great kings and the traditional symbolism of deliverance:

go bhfuilid ag tíocht go buíonmhar fí ghrán is fí philéar –
geárthacaig ghroí, an Laoiseach, ’s an Spáinneach dá réir ...

(Ní Shíocháin 2012, 176; that hordes are coming laden with gun powder
and bullets –
young stout supporters, Louis and the Spaniard commanding them)

In the visionary world of Máire Bhuí, the radical Jacobin fleet who awaited in Bantry Bay have the support of European kings—whose authority was fundamentally undermined by the French Revolution! Máire Bhuí’s compositions are generally anti-aristocratic, however here the motif of the return of the king lends authority to the fast approaching revolution (cf. Ní Úrdail 2002, 150). Therefore these echoes that circle back upon themselves are core tenets of her thought, and result in a contemporary anti-colonial discourse that evokes powerful traditional symbols of deliverance and sovereignty that give authority to contemporary anti-colonial radicalism. Likewise in other of her *aisling* (vision poem) compositions is found a most traditional development of the theme: the protagonist sees the otherworldly female who is overwhelmingly beautiful, who is questioned as to who she is and from whence she has come including reference to the mythical female figure of Céarnait. However, this is accompanied by a vigorous impetus to drive out the nobility: “d’fhúnn go mbeadh a’ lá againn ’us cead ráis ar na huaisle” (Ní Shíocháin 2012, 197; so that we will have the day and the right to send nobles racing). This anti-noble sentiment is further augmented by images of the destruction of core symbols of class and wealth such as “white houses” and “noble carriages”:

‘Beig Sasanaig á thnátha ’us ní cás liom a gcruatan,
 a dtithe geala bána go láidir á gcuardach,
 a leathaireacha géarrtha ’na gc’ráistíochaibh uaisle
 ’us siúlóg Gaeil go rábach ar a lán-chorpaibh muara’ –
 ’us gheóm arís a’ crúiscín ’us bíodh sé lán

(Ní Shíocháin 2012, 198; Englishmen will be worn down and I care not their plight. their bright white houses will be ransacked, the leathers in their noble carriages will be cut and Gaels will walk with gusto over their fat fulsome corpses and let us get the jug again and let it be full.)

Through traditional orality Máire Bhuí problematises class and status; even the image of the dead bodies of the ruling classes also reaffirms the moral imperative why death awaits them—because they are guilty of opulence while others starve. This contrast between the opulence and comfort of the nobles with the poverty and wretchedness of the poor is central to Máire Bhuí’s political discourses, as is her problematisation of colonial power and authority. What is most striking about her songs, however, is the manner in which these key ideas of radical and violent insubordination are woven so adeptly to the identity and collective narrative of community, to tradition itself. When we consider the added experience of cathartic liminality and of spontaneous *communitas* through singing, the full force of these identity laden discourses becomes even more apparent. In this sense, Glassie’s reading of song as “being tight about space, loose about time” is particularly pertinent (2012, 205). In the liminal moment of song performance, historical time takes on a different form, as though historical time and the present time have fused: in the liminal performance of song, the normal structures of time are suspended. This creates a compelling symbolic intensity to Máire Bhuí’s anarchic anti-colonial vision of the world in which stories of injustice and insurrection past and contemporary political mobilisation feed one another. This ‘temporal fusion’ is central to the parrhesiastic quality of her songs, as can be seen in “Cath Chéim an Fhia” (The Battle of Keimaneigh, 1822), Máire Bhuí’s most famous composition, and the one most closely associated with the Rockite movement and most favoured among singers and Irish-speaking communities to this day. “Cath Chéim an Fhia” tells the story of the Battle of Keimaneigh in 1822, a clash between the agrarian secret society of Rockites, and the British authorities. The battle itself is considered by Donnelly (2009, 68-70) and Katsuta (2003, 282–85) to have sparked a larger Rockite uprising throughout the county, and though Donncha Ó Donnchú, who edited the 1931 publication of Máire Bhuí’s songs, maintains that the importance of that song was that it kept the memory of the battle alive, a close reading of the song would suggest that it did much more than that. “Cath Chéim an Fhia”, with its strong millenarian predictions of the annihilation of

the ruling classes, can be interpreted as a visionary prophetic battle cry through song. Indeed, when one considers the sheer speed with which song spreads through oral tradition, it is highly likely that the song spread with no small rapidity through Irish-speaking Cork and Limerick in the southern province of Munster at that time, telling the tale of the David and Goliath encounter of the Rockites with the authorities, delegitimizing colonial authority, singing with parrhesiastic authority of the impending downfall of the nobility:

Sa bhliain seo 'nis atá 'gainn beig rás ar gach smíste,
 cuirfeam insa díg iad, draoib orthu 'us fóid;
 ní iarrfam cúirt ná stáitse, beig árd-chroch 'na suí 'gainn,
 's a' chnáib go slachtmhar sníte le díolthas 'na gcóir.
 Is acu 'thá 'n tslat, is olc í ' riail,
 i gcóistíbh greanta is maith é ' ngléas,
 gach sórd le caitheamh, flea 'gus féasta,
 ag béaraibh ar bórd.

Go b' é deir gach údar cruínn liom sara gcríochnaí siad deire an fhóir
 insa leabhar so Pastorína go ndíolfaid as a' bpóit.

(Ní Shíocháin 2012, 213; This coming year every good for nothing lump will be sent racing, we'll bury them in the ditch, covered with mud and sods, we will seek not court nor stage but will have a high-hanging, with the noose neatly taught in vengeance. It is they who hold the cane and terrible is its rule, in ornate coaches their glossy polish is grand, everything to consume, feast and banquet, laid out for bears. Every authoritative author [prophet] tells me that before they finish the end of harvest-time that in this book of Pastorini they will pay for their drunkenness.)

Here Máire Bhuí refers to the written prophecy of Pastorini, the pen name of conservative Catholic Bishop Charles Walmesley, who had predicted the annihilation of Protestantism in 1825 (Scott 1985). However, as Niall Ó Ciosáin has remarked, the downfall of Protestantism, the religion of the colonizers, was akin to a profound social revolution in the eyes of the Catholic poor (1997, 196). It is clear here that Máire Bhuí does much more than repeat Pastorini's prophecy: she recreates it as a radical Jacobin vision, such that would appall the original author who was strongly anti-revolutionary and who had also predicted the waning of Jacobinism by the year 1825. However, Máire Bhuí builds up to the reference to the millenarian prediction of Pastorini by first invoking the authority of the will of the people "ní iarrfam cúirt ná stáitse, beig árd-chroch 'na suí 'gainn" (we will seek neither court nor stage, but we will hold a high-hanging ...), castigating the misuse of power by the colonial authorities "is acu 'thá 'n tslat, is olc í ' riail" (it is they who hold the cane, terrible is its rule), and showing her ire against the glossy coaches of the nobility, symbols of class and status. Though Máire Bhuí refers to

Pastorini, it is she herself who truly fulfils the role of millenarian prophet as described by Cohn:

It is the prophet who carries out this adaptation of traditional lore and who becomes the bearer of the resulting ideology. If in addition the prophet possesses a suitable personality and is able to convey an impression of absolute conviction, he is likely in certain situations of emotional tension to become the nucleus of a millenarian movement. (1962, 42)

It is Máire Bhuí, rather than Pastorini who moulds and articulates the prophetic vision—and there is no questioning the sense of conviction she portrays in her songs. Not only does she create ideas that are borne of the experience of colonial subjection, ideas that in the liminal moment of song would ‘go the root of something profoundly communal and shared’ (Turner 1969, 138), but the air to which she composed “Cath Chéim an Fhia” is also the air to a 1798 song ‘Cath Bhéal an Mhuighe Shailigh’ which told of the defeat of the United Irishmen at the Battle of the Big Cross in Clonakilty, County Cork (Ó hAnnracháin 1944, 289). Therefore the very air resonates with rebellion and radicalism past. Not only that, but Máire Bhuí explicitly invokes the French revolutionary while singing her prophecy of the contemporary revolution fast approaching:

Beig na sluaite fear a’ teacht gan chiach,
 ar longa mear’ is fada é a dtriail,
 ’s a’ Franncach theas nár mheathlaig riamh
 i bhfaor agus i gcóir.

Beig catharacha á stríoca agus tínteacha á lasa leó –
 tá ’n cáirde fada díolta ’s a’ líonrith ’na gcóir.

(Ní Shíocháin 2012, 213–14; Hordes of men will joyfully arrive, on swift ships they travel from afar, and the Frenchman to the South who never waned in blades and arms [or zeal and justice]. Cities will submit and be set ablaze, long have we been owed, and terror is in store for them)

“An Franncach theas” (The Frenchman to the South) is delivered in all its connotative might at the high point of the air. The contemporary scene of 1822 in the moment of song is fused with the experience of rebellion past, radicalising the present, and creating a sense of continuity and shared meaning through an imagined past. Thus, as Steve Coleman would say, the listener is ‘*projected into the scene* that song represents’ (2010, 26), and the world image of anarchic rebellion becomes ‘up close and personal’ (Weber 1948). When we consider the sense of sheer potentiality that can be associated with liminal experience, the fusion of the political discourses of the songs with

the experience of song as a moment in which ‘everything trembles in the balance’ is potentially transformative. For it is one thing for a concept such as the authority of the will of the people, or anarchic anti-nobility sentiment, or the delegitimization of colonial authority, to emerge at any given moment in history; it is another thing entirely for those same ideas to go to the root of identity and to become part of the web of ideas by which we live our lives. The power of song is such that the ‘new’ political concepts by being cloaked in traditional referentiality feel like they are at the core of who we are. The power of song is also to imbue the listener with the ‘feeling of endless power’ of liminality (Turner 1969, 139), of a world of possibility, where throwing the nobles into the water is possible. Thus song performs the consciousness of the colonized and mobilises anti-colonial agitation. Song was more than a text therefore, it was a liminal ludic space from which new ideas could emerge. Máire Bhuí’s predecessors, such as Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin and Aogán Ó Rathaille, also composed *aislingí* and also spoke of the return of the rightful king, albeit in the context of the earlier Jacobite rebellion. Though Máire Bhuí uses the same themes as earlier eighteenth-century poets, new proto-egalitarian anti-establishment discourses emerge from within the tradition.¹⁵ Song generated new ideas to live by, ideas that would continue to be sung for generations, and that contributed to the web of ideas that would inspire subsequent generations to cast themselves into the precarity of anti-colonial resistance and violent revolt.

CONCLUSION: PERFORMANCE, REGENERATION AND TRADITIONS OF THOUGHT IN ORALITY

Máire Bhuí, who could neither read nor write, *sang* ideas of immense contemporary relevance that would ignite violent political agitation. Her mastery of orality *enabled* her engagement in political ideas, and also symbolized the prophetic authority of the song poet that would add further clout to her parhresiastic anti-colonial discourses. To its very core, song performs a liminal time outside of ordinary time, a time of heightened consciousness and meaning, a time of perceived *truth*, a time in which new ideas and motivations can come into being. Furthermore the inherent *communitas* of singing experience creates a compelling sense of the collective, thus mobilising anti-colonial engagement on a larger scale. The structure of the music and the words ‘tremble in the balance’ of performance, creating the thrill of anti-structure and a feeling of endless possibility. It is from this sphere of potentiality that these key concepts in the history of anti-colonial thought in Ireland emerged: ideas of anarchy and self-determination, ideas that problematized the established authority of the nobility and of the colonial state, ideas that cast a deep

suspicion over wealth and status. That these ideas were *sung* is of particular importance, because ideas that are sung get under our skin. The thought of song is not cold and detached like the performance of literate thought oft can be; the performance of song is hot, ecstatic, up close and in your face. Singing ideas is therefore compelling in a way that a political treatise or philosophical tome perhaps cannot rival. Therefore, I argue that song is a crucial pivot in everyday life in which the very ideas we live by can be born anew, in which experiential ideas can take form and take off. In the case of the song poet Máire Bhuí, therefore, we don't just have a repertoire of songs that merely reflect the larger anti-colonial movement in nineteenth-century Ireland, but rather a repertoire of songs which generated the vision of radical revolution that would spur a "fanatical pursuit of the millenium" (Cohn 1971). These songs so imbued with the "subjunctive mood" of liminality (Turner 1982, 84), would perform a profound sense of possibility, and thus create new horizons in the political fortunes of Empire.

NOTES

1. The British conquest in Ireland dates from the twelfth century with the arrival of Old English or Anglo-Norman settlers, however it was from the sixteenth century onwards that a markedly aggressive colonial approach on the part of the British ruling classes comes to the fore in Ireland (Montano 2011, 369). From this time onwards, British colonial policy, and indeed mentality, is marked by a 'civilizing' impulse, one which saw the elevation of British culture and customs over the culture and customs of the 'uncivilized' Irish. Indeed, many historians argue that the subsequent ideology that defined the various colonial exploits of Britain in the nineteenth century, which embodied the highly ideological degradation and oppression of indigenous people and customs, has its roots in the culture of British colonialism in Ireland (Canny 1988; Montano 2011). In the century that followed the Battle of Kinsale (1601) the ownership of 80% of Irish lands was transferred to British colonialists (Howe 2000, 31), and Gaelic society, which patronized both poets and harpists, collapsed, resulting in both the political divestment of the Gaelic nobles and the devastation of Gaelic arts. This was the century that also saw the turmoil and devastation of the Cromwellian wars and plantations (1649–1658), soon to be followed by the Williamite wars (1688–1691). From the eighteenth century onwards, Ireland as a colony of Britain was politically unstable, and often teetered on the brink of revolution or anarchy. Perhaps the most devastating legacy of British colonialism in Ireland was the Great Irish Famine (1845–1852) during which time millions of indigenous Irish either starved or fled starvation by emigrating. The Great Famine was also a pivotal time in the linguistic fate of Ireland, due a large number of native speakers of Irish either perishing in the famine, or emigrating, and thus accelerating language decline and the increased Anglicization of Ireland. Traditional Irish song from the nineteenth century gives us important insight into the anti-colonial thought

that was developing among the indigenous Irish-speaking population during the period.

2. Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire (1774–c.1848) from near Keimaneigh in County Cork is celebrated to this day as one of the greatest nineteenth-century Irish-language song poets. She was an oral composer who could neither read nor write, and her aesthetics are strongly ‘echoic’ and rooted in traditional formulas and themes of the oral tradition. She was famed for her prodigious fluency in oral composition, but also for her strong anti-colonial views (Ní Shíocháin 2012; 2018). Máire Bhuí had direct links with the millenarian agrarian Rockite movement (1821–1824) and her songs epitomise the power and intensity of anti-colonial agitation through song during the nineteenth century in Ireland. Her songs continued to be sung during subsequent revolutionary periods in Ireland (Ní Shíocháin 2018) and indeed are still very popular today, particularly in Irish-speaking parts of County Cork.

3. For an in-depth discussion of liminal symbolism in the Irish poetic and literary tradition cf. Nagy (1985), Ó Riain ([1972] 2014), Ní Shíocháin (2012; 2018) and Partridge (1980).

4. *Sean-nós* literally means ‘old-style’ and refers to the unaccompanied, free-rhythmic and often highly embellished Irish-language singing tradition. This style of singing is still practised in *Gaeltacht* areas (Irish-speaking districts) in Ireland today.

5. Waulking songs are songs which accompany the waulking of the cloth among Scottish Gaelic speaking women; waulking cloth was the process of pounding newly woven cloth to soften it and the rhythm of the pounding fused with the singing and composition in performance of the women. Waulking was an all-female occasion, and the waulking songs often let fly criticism of the worst excesses of patriarchy (Speer 1985; Bourke 1998).

6. Kúubi songs are an oral traditional female genre of Dyula society in West Africa, through which women reserve the right to publicly criticize men at the end of the festival of Ramadan. These songs embody the traditional right to protest inherent in song, and how song regulates power relations in society (Derive 1995).

7. Avudwene festival songs among the Nzema in Ghana are satirical songs that embody a fearless sense of licentiousness and insult (Agovi 1995).

8. The United Irishmen were a radical Jacobin movement heavily influenced by the American and French revolutions who sought to unite Irish people of all religious persuasions, or none, to overthrow British rule in Ireland through violent means and found a more egalitarian and democratic society (Whelan 1996).

9. The Rockites were a violent millenarian secret society that gained traction in Ireland from 1821–1824 who believed that the times were fast approaching in which the political and social order as it existed was to be overturned, the ruling classes decimated, and the indigenous population restored to power in Ireland. During the early 1820s acts of violence against the establishment were pervasive, particularly in Counties Cork and Limerick, at the hands of the Rockites. For a comprehensive account of the history of the Rockites, see Donnelly 2009. Máire Bhuí’s sons and brother were active members of the Rockites, according to local lore, and her songs speak directly to their cause (Ní Shíocháin 2012; 2018).

10. All Irish lyric translations are by the author of this chapter.

11. ‘File dob ea Máire agus lena línn féin ní raibh aon fhile eile in Éirinn chò cliste léi nù chò binn léi’; ‘Filíocht ab ea ga’h aon fhocal a labhradh sí’ (Ní Shíocháin 2012, 96; Máire was a poet and during her own time there was no other poet in the whole of Ireland as clever nor as melodious; or as every word she spoke being poetry).

12. During Máire Bhuí’s lifetime Ireland was under British imperial rule and penal laws were imposed on the indigenous Catholic population, preventing participation in official politics, curbing opposition to colonial rule, and restricting social mobility. In nineteenth-century colonial Ireland, as well as public hangings, a common punishment both for revolutionary activity but also other more minor misdemeanours was transportation to New South Wales, see Reece 2001.

13. Cf. Caraveli for a discussion of the emotional intensity of singing in an oral poetic tradition that incorporated social protest (2012); cf. Vansina (1985) for a discussion of prophecy as oral history; cf. Morley (2017) for a discussion of the power of popular oral genres, such as prophecy, in eighteenth-century Ireland.

14. The *spéirbhean* is the otherworldly sovereignty goddess who appears in the traditional *aisling* (vision) song. Usually the incredible beauty of the *spéirbhean* is described, and then the *spéirbhean* communicates tidings of great political import to the song-poet.

15. As Ó Buachalla would say, what previously had been Jacobite, transformed into Jacobin (2003).

Part IV

FREEDOM AND AUTONOMY

Chapter 12

“Organic Intellectuals”

The Role of Protest Singers in the Overthrowing of the Portuguese Dictatorship (1926–1974)

Isabel David

In this chapter, I explore the role of Portuguese protest singers in helping overthrow the 1926–1974 dictatorship. Using a cultural theoretical framework that combines the ideas of Stuart Hall (1932–2014) and Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), I contend that protest singers can be considered “organic intellectuals”, developing tasks of emancipation through an active role in Portuguese society.

The Portuguese case contributes to the literature on protest songs from six standpoints. First, it demonstrates how the opposition, particularly the Communist Party (PCP), instrumentalised music in their fight against the dictatorship through a planned strategy. Second, it exemplifies how singers shattered the hegemonic narratives of the propaganda apparatus of the dictatorship. Third, it illustrates the role of music in producing cognitive frames allowing the deconstruction of that propaganda. Fourth, it evidences the role of music as a societal and political changer, contradicting dominant conceptions that view sheer power or political parties as the main actors for that end. Music is a locus of contentious politics. Fifth, it highlights how music can be a tool for emancipation. Finally, it underpins the unique role of a protest song (“Grândola, vila morena”, “Grândola, dark-skinned town”) in initiating a revolution.

Despite the undeniable added value of the Portuguese case, it remains understudied. Given scarcity of research, this chapter will provide insights into how music, if mobilised through a coherent strategy, can provide the resources for prompting regime change. The chapter answers two research questions: what is the role of protest songs in fighting unjust and oppressive regimes and narratives? How effective are protest songs in this combat? For reasons of space, I include a selection of the hundreds of protest songs produced during dictatorship.

THE EMANCIPATORY ROLE OF PROTEST SONGS: THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

Protest singers are “organic intellectuals”, in a Gramscian sense.¹ The intellectual must be the protagonist of a philosophy of praxis, i.e., actively participating in practical life as constructor, organizer and ‘permanent persuader’, in order to “become the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world” (Gramsci 1999, 141–42). In order to accomplish this mission, the organic intellectuals of the proletariat must establish hegemony over civil society before winning governmental power. Material force alone does not provide effective leadership (Ibid., 215); the spontaneous consent from the masses to the direction imposed on social life by the dominant group is a much more effective weapon to secure obedience than enforcing discipline through state coercive power, which should preferably be used during crises, when spontaneous consent fails (Ibid., 145).

Spontaneous consent is historically caused by the prestige and confidence enjoyed by the dominant group due to its function and position in the world of production (Gramsci 1999, 145). Stuart Hall developed Gramsci’s ideas, detailing the role of culture, including popular culture, in producing hegemony.² Hall (1980) explains this prestige of the dominant group: the state cultural apparatus is the main domain of perpetuation of a system by creating a “dominant cultural order”. This is done by universalising class interests through the production of consensus in economic and political goals and of intellectual and moral unity, ensuring that all “questions around which the struggle rages” are posed not on a corporate but on a universal frame, under the banner of “general will” or “general interest” (Hall et al. 1982, 203; Hall 1980). Consensus therefore results in domination (Hall et al. 1982, 216). Consent is not just about ownership and control of the means of material production but also about ownership and control of the means of ‘mental production’ (Ibid., 59). Dominant meanings in a society are subject to contestation (Hall 1980). The best way to combat the production of hegemony by the cultural apparatuses of the ruling class is to create an effective counter-ideology (Hall et al. 1982). This depends on three factors: the oppositional actors’ power in society, their legitimacy, and their ability to acquire legitimacy through struggle (Ibid., 75). For Gramsci (1999, 337; 2001, 550), organic intellectuals can achieve this by making coherent the principles and problems raised by the masses in their practical activity, constituting a social and cultural bloc, i.e., intellectuals must remain in contact with the masses. In other words, they form an historical bloc, uniting structures and superstructures. Gramsci (1999, 652) provides the strategies intellectuals must use when dealing with the masses: repetition of arguments and raising their intellectual level (the most important condition).

Gramsci (1994, 10; 2001) recognised that culture (and, as I argue here, song) should be the main instrument of revolutionary action. Although Gramsci does not specifically mention music, his ideas on how culture is instrumental in creating a counter-hegemony provide a frame for the inclusion of songs in this process. In fact, music provides a cognitive frame that allows for the interpretation of social and political reality and for the construction of new forms of knowledge. Hall, together with Paddy Whannel, co-authored *The Popular Arts*, where they explored the role of popular films, music and media in cultural change. In their view (1967, 66–67), the role of popular art, and of music in particular, is to restate values and attitudes already known but adding a personal link between audience and the magnetism of the performer, through whom the former are able to articulate their values and interpret their experiences. Popular music has been particularly instrumental in articulating the views, aspirations and grievances of younger generations, transforming them into a distinct societal group (Ibid., 20, 273–74).

In this context, protest singers can be seen as organic intellectuals, i.e. agents capable of producing counter-narratives and successfully challenge hegemonic narratives.³ They can reform consciousness and methods of knowledge, creating a new ideological terrain (Gramsci 1999, 690). By empowering previously mute actors, protest songs can create a “crisis of hegemony”, which, according to Gramsci (Ibid., 450–51) occurs either because the ruling class failed in some major political task for which it had requested or forcibly extracted the consent of the masses, or because the masses have passed from a state of political passivity to activity, advancing demands that may add up to a revolution. Hence, I define a protest song as a song making claims about social, political and economic events in a way which stands in contrast with the narratives of hegemonic actors (e.g. the government, mainstream media, bosses) thus challenging their legitimacy, with a potentially subversive effect.

THE PORTUGUESE DICTATORSHIP: ESTABLISHING HEGEMONY

Protest songs were one of the main instruments of dissent against the dictatorship implemented by the 1926 military coup and which lasted until the military coup in 1974. The 1933 Constitution created the Estado Novo (New State), the official designation of the regime. Estado Novo was resolutely anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-parliamentarian and against popular sovereignty. Under António de Oliveira Salazar (1889–1970), the office of President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) became the centre of

national life, controlling the National Assembly, the Presidency of the Republic, the judicial system and the Armed Forces.⁴

Salazar reorganised the country, under the banner “dictatorship of finances”. Lowering salaries, eliminating benefits and rights, and increasing working hours reduced labour costs. Strikes and lock-outs were illegalised. In order to secure ‘harmony between capital and labour’ (Salazar quoted in Rosas 1994, 235), Catholic principles were used to check abuses by employers and the government implemented welfare state mechanisms: Sunday rest, twelve as the minimum age to work, fines for breaching the laws, a minimum wage, unemployment subsidies, medical assistance and public investment. The state interfered in the social and the economic fabric by promoting price controls, protectionism and autarchy (mostly until the late 1960s).

Such interventions did not prevent massive poverty. In 1957, Portugal had the lowest GDP per capita in OEEC (Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, the antecedent of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD) countries. In 1953, 44.2% of population worked in agriculture, the highest rate in Europe (Ramos 2010, 685). In the 1960s, as a result of growing industrialisation, thousands flocked to big cities, which had no infrastructure to accommodate them (namely housing and transportation). Slums and prostitution grew (Rosas 1994, 426). Inequalities between rich and poor were huge. In 1973, a third of families could not satisfy elementary needs, 36% of households lacked electricity, 41% lacked sanitation, and the infant mortality rate was 50% (the highest in Europe) (Ibid., 498). Life expectancy was the lowest in Europe: for men, 51.3 years in 1950 and 64.4 years in 1970; for women, 55.8 years in 1950 and 67.7 years in 1970 (Ibid, 420). In 1973, the illiteracy rate was 29%, the highest in Europe (Ibid., 498). In the rural areas, the figures were higher. Consequently, between 1946 and 1973 1,968,921 Portuguese emigrated (Ibid., 421), many clandestinely, mostly to France (between 600,000 and 800,000), Germany (211,735), Brazil (310,594), South Africa (21,986), Venezuela (73,554), US (82,867) and Canada (61,755) (Antunes 1970, 314; Ferreira 2009, 23–30).⁵

Freedom of association and freedom of expression were limited by law. The creation of associations (political, cultural, social, recreational) was subject to prior government authorisation and the government could dissolve them and dismiss their directors. Students and youth in general were forbidden to associate, except for the youth associations of the Catholic Church. The National Union was the single party (although formally designated as an association); it also operated as a mechanism of propaganda distribution and civic education. Throughout the dictatorship, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), founded in 1921, was the only opposition party that survived, although clandestinely. Several opposition groups emerged and vanished, e.g. Democratic Unity Movement (MUD), Portuguese Socialist Action,

Revolutionary Action Movement, National Liberation Patriotic Front, Revolutionary Unity and Action League (LUAR) (see Rosas 1994; Ramos 2010).

The “political police”, PIDE (International and State Defence Police), replaced the military as the sustaining pillar of the regime (Adinolfi and Costa Pinto 2014, 159). It was authorised to torture, interrogate and detain individuals indefinitely and had a countrywide network of informants (who infiltrated workplaces, schools, associations). Repression was completed with special prisons and courts. Many political prisoners (including opposition members and members of liberation movements from Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, which were Portuguese colonies then) were sent to concentration camps in the colonies, where over a hundred prisoners died from ill treatment and disease (Castanheira 2010). Whenever necessary, civil servants were purged. The regime refused to operate under totalitarian principles, considering itself limited by morals and law (article 4 of the Constitution).

The National Propaganda Secretariat, created in 1933 and directed by António Ferro, was the main indoctrination tool of Estado Novo, educating and framing the population (youth, family, work and culture) into the values of the regime through the arts and all forms of expression. Ferro, a journalist with links to the Futurists and other modernist avant-garde circles who identified with Italian fascism, combined these elements with a reinvention of tradition (Adinolfi and Costa Pinto 2014, 164) through the work of intellectuals and artists.⁶ The formation of public opinion was a task of the state, which was to determine the truth (Ibid., 160).

The main mechanisms for this task were the official single books in schools, bulletins, parades, gatherings, trips, youth camps, congresses, arts, literary awards and literature, colonial exhibitions (e.g. “The Portuguese World”, in 1940), films, the press, inaugurations of public works, gymnastics and sports. Music was widely instrumentalised, through folklore and particularly *Fado*, a truly Portuguese genre. *Fado* emerged in Lisbon in the 1820s, being popularised by Maria Severa, a tavern singer accompanied by Portuguese guitars who sang about everyday problems in an improvised and mournful manner, setting the future development of the genre (see Gray 2013). This genre was transmitted orally from generation to generation in the popular milieus. Initially, Estado Novo considered *Fado* dangerous for the regime values: it symbolised a defeatist attitude due to the emphasis of the songs on nostalgia (*saudade*) of a distant, unrepeatable glorious past, thus opposed to the ‘virile enthusiasm’ of the youth promoted by Salazarism (Letria 1978, 106; Elliott 2010, 22). However, the popularity of the songs made the regime claim *Fado* for its ends, through the National Propaganda Secretariat and by instrumentalising the image of its greatest singer, Amália Rodrigues (1920–1999). Rodrigues rose to fame due to her voice, style (eyes closed, thrown back head and black

clothing) and depth, achieving international prestige, and was subsequently showcased as the symbol of national identity.

Indoctrination permeated schools, trade unions and associations. Specific framing associations were created for indoctrination purposes, e.g. the Institute for the Defence of the Family, the Portuguese Youth (with a female branch), the National Foundation for Joy at Work, People's Houses, Popular Recreation Centres, Fishermen's Houses and the Mothers' Work for National Education (Raimundo 2015; Rosas 1994). "God, Motherland and Family" constituted the main dogma. Another privileged agent of indoctrination—and legitimisation of the regime—was the Catholic Church, which supported the regime throughout its duration. Protest songs would provide the main instrument to unmask indoctrination.

THE EMERGENCE OF PROTEST SONGS IN PORTUGAL

Democratisation was expected after World War II, with a timid opening by the regime, including the authorisation of opposition movement MUD, but never materialised.⁷ The strategy to use culture, including music, as a tool against the regime came from the Communist Party, after its reorganisation in the early 1940s (Sapomag 2011). A substantial number of Portuguese intellectuals were members of the party, including maestro Fernando Lopes-Graça (1906–1994), an exponent of neo-realism (which aimed at reviving popular culture). In 1946, he launched song collections "Regional Songs" and "Heróicas" ("Heroic"), combining poems of opposition members (José Gomes Ferreira, João José Cochofel and Carlos de Oliveira) with folk music from rural areas⁸ (Letria 1978, 27). One of the "Heróicas", "Jornada" ("Journey"), became the hymn of MUD. The lyrics appeal to combat and unity: no fighter "walks alone". Lopes-Graça created the choir of the Academy of Amateurs of Music in 1946 (integrating intellectuals, students, labour movement activists and artists politically engaged against the dictatorship) with the mission of singing the "Regional Songs" and "Heróicas". The songs were composed for choral singing, either accompanied by the piano or a capella, directed by a maestro. The repertoire was censored, under the justification that it incited the working classes to revolt (Rajado 2008, 115 quoted in Castro 2012, 24). Nonetheless, the songs became popular among political prisoners and exiles and were sung in social gatherings (Lopes-Graça quoted in Castro 2012, 25), in meetings of opposition groups (Côrte-Real 2010, 222) and by university choirs (Raposo 2014, 210). In 1960, Lopes-Graça launched a second edition of "Heróicas", including poems by José Gomes Ferreira ("Acordai"—"Wake up") and Carlos de Oliveira ("Livre"—"Free"). While "Acordai" called on people to fight, "Livre" claimed "no axe can cut the root of thought".

Simultaneously, another focus of dissent was brewing. In 1956, the government drafted decree 40.900, which placed student representatives under state control. The subsequent student mobilisations (largely controlled by the communists) in the main university centres (Coimbra, Lisbon and Oporto) prevented the law from entering into force and gained momentum with Humberto Delgado’s campaign for the presidency, which constituted the first political experience for many of those who later became leaders of the student movement (Accornero 2011, 11).⁹ Students also demanded renovated syllabuses and the democratisation of university admission. A new student crisis emerged in 1962, after the government banned the First National Meeting of Students and the Student Day. The ensuing protests, strikes and communist-led agitation throughout the country were met with regime violence. A new decree, no. 44.357, expelled fifty-five students from the universities (Accornero 2009, 81). The colonial war (February 1961–April 1974) also influenced student fights and protest songs. The war was initiated by liberation movement Peoples’ of Angola Union, and quickly spread to Goa, Damão and Diu (India), Mozambique and Guinea Bissau. 800,000 men were mobilised—about 90% of Portuguese young men (Brandão 2008). Possession of the colonies was fiercely pursued by the regime and seen as paramount for the survival of the country and the regime. Around 25,000 university students were drafted to the army—the so-called *milicianos*—helping import their political culture into the Armed Forces (Carrilho 1986, 456).

Inspired by these events, university students began using protest songs to fight dictatorship. Coimbra, the first university to have a student union in 1887, thus with a long tradition of political mobilisation, was the origin of the movement. Singers recast the song form *Fado*. Here, *Fado* had developed into a particular, more elitist and eclectic style called *Fado de Coimbra*, traditionally sung by a man accompanied by two others playing Portuguese guitars. Since the 1930s, the style had been undergoing important changes, effected by artists Artur Paredes, António Portugal, Edmundo de Bettencourt, António Menano, José Boavida, Machado Soares and, significantly, for the purposes of this essay, José/Zeca Afonso (henceforth Zeca) who would become the greatest protest singer in Portugal. These artists inserted into *Fado* social, regional, and popular themes that had, historically, a component of social and political criticism (as Lopes-Graça had done with “Heróicas”). Zeca Afonso further added his reflexions from his contacts with workers. The insertion of these features into protest songs created a decisive link between intellectuals and the people: using a language from the common folk, intellectual discourse was made intelligible to the ordinary citizen. *Fado* would also incorporate poems by contemporary opposition poets (António Gedeão, Sophia de Mello Breyner, Manuel Alegre, Ary dos Santos) and by ancient,

acclaimed poets (e.g. Camões, Almeida Garrett) (see Letria 1978; Raposo 2005; Castro 2012).

Communists Adriano Correia de Oliveira (1942–1982, henceforth Adriano), a freshman at Coimbra University, and poet Manuel Alegre (1936–) drew their inspiration from this renewal, composing the first “intervention songs”, as they became known (Raposo 2014, 21). Adriano’s first Fado album, *Coimbra Night* (1960; *Noite de Coimbra*), included songs referring to the future, humanity, hope in love and friendship, subjects dear to the youth (Raposo 2014, 22). “Trova do Vento que Passa” (1963; *Ballad of the passing wind*), a poem by Alegre recorded by Adriano, quickly became the anthem of student resistance to the dictatorship. The lyrics refer to a “disgraced” country, but set a hopeful tone: “there is always someone who resists” in the midst of “servitude”.

In 1963 Zeca Afonso launched the first single, “Os Vampiros” (“The vampires”), of what he termed “replica songs”. While Adriano maintained the Coimbra Fado style, in “Os Vampiros” Zeca played Portuguese guitar and sang alone, launching a new style called “ballad”, which he would henceforth use, thus abandoning Fado. Subsequent protest singers would also use this style (Raposo 2005, 54). The song criticised the wealthy and powerful, who “eat everything and don’t leave anything”, referring to their exploitation of the poor. The highly metaphoric lyrics eluded censors, who thought the song referred to the vampire. The age of singers as “organic intellectuals”, it seems, had truly begun. From 1969, with the launching of his album “Contos velhos, rumos novos” (*Old tales, new paths*), and especially after he started collaborating with protest singer José Mário Branco (in 1970), Zeca’s music became richer, introducing new styles and musical arrangements.

RESISTING SALAZARISM THROUGH MUSIC: DECONSTRUCTING HEGEMONIC NARRATIVES

Protest songs sought to deconstruct and disrupt several categories of hegemonic official narratives, including the colonial war, inequality and poverty and the resort to emigration to escape these. Other songs denounced regime violence and exile, while others sought to mobilise people against the dictatorship.

The role of protest singers in deconstructing the legitimacy of the colonial war was paramount. “Menina dos olhos tristes” (“Little girl with sad eyes”), a poem by Reinaldo Ferreira (1922–1959) recorded by Adriano and Zeca (in 1964 and 1969, respectively), was very famous, for its sharp lyrics.¹⁰ Although written before the colonial war, the poem was easily adapted to portray the death of Portuguese soldiers in the war, metaphorically explaining

they were coming home in pine boxes, i.e. coffins. Adriano's "Canção com lágrimas" (1969; Song with tears), a poem by Alegre, who was drafted to the war, narrates the premature death of a close friend who was drafted to fight in Angola.

Luís Cília, the first singer in exile (in France) to denounce the colonial war and the lack of freedom, composed "Canto do desertor" (1964; Song of the deserter), which narrates his and other deserters' flight from Portugal.¹¹ The lyrics justify his refusal to fight the war—he "does not like killing"—defend independence for the colonies and state that the real traitors are those "who steal our bread" and not deserters.

Protest singers revealed the ample inequality and poverty of the vast majority of the Portuguese. Besides "Os vampiros", Zeca composed "Menino do bairro negro" ("Boy from the black slum", 1963), depicting child poverty and hunger. The song claims that "there is no peace where there is no bread", ending with a hopeful note: one day the boy's misery will end. José Barata-Moura sang "Caridadezinha" ("Charity"; 1973) to denounce the farce of charity to alleviate poverty. The song criticises how the rich supposedly worry about the poor and practice charity to feel good about themselves and obtain society's recognition, yet contribute to worsening misery by stealing the country's wealth.

Songs also denounced massive emigration in order to escape poverty. Adriano recorded "Cantar de emigração" (1970; Emigration song), originally written by a Galician (María Rosália Rita de Castro, 1837-1885). The lyrics portray the desertification of towns and villages, where grieving mothers, wives and children endure the departure of their loved ones. Zeca composed "Canção do desterro" (1970; Expatriation song), which narrates the emigration of a couple from a village. The song asks where they will live and where they will die, since they will not return to Portugal. Another "intervention singer", Manuel Freire, sang Alegre's "Trova do emigrante" (1968; Ballad of the emigrant), which depicts the unwanted departure of a man to France (one of the main destinations, as mentioned above), who leaves behind his wife. Sarcasically, the lyrics contrast the dire fate of the Portuguese, once "masters of the sea", but now have nothing.

Songs on exile told the stories of those who were forced to leave the country due to their opposition to the regime and their quest for freedom making such songs protest songs. Alegre wrote several poems narrating his experience as an exile in Algiers for ten years. Adriano sang "Exílio" (1964; Exile), where the poet states he is not afraid because "truth is stronger than handcuffs" and poems are his way of fighting. In "Canção do exílio" (1969; Exile song), sung by António Bernardino, Alegre states that he lives far away, but he will return to free political prisoners, raising "the sword of freedom in his right hand".

Regime violence was a theme that occupied many composers. In 1973 Zeca composed “A morte saiu à rua” (“Death came out to the street”), about the assassination of communist artist José Dias Coelho by PIDE. The highly-elaborated song mentions communist symbols like the sickle and the anvil and states how the regime prevents justice from being done through the metaphor “the law assassinates the death that killed you”. Zeca also composed “Cantar Alentejano” (1971; Alentejo song), narrating the death of Catarina Eufémia, an Alentejo harvester and mother of three assassinated by the National Republican Guard during a strike against hard working conditions in 1954. The song states that her death will not be forgiven or in vain, concluding with hope for the future of the country. Catarina became a symbol of resistance to the regime and an icon of PCP. The song allowed her story to be remembered, particularly because the case was hidden and her reputation smeared by the regime (see Fonseca 2015). In “Era de noite e levaram” (1969; It was night and they took), Zeca denounced PIDE’s methods of action, describing how its agents broke into homes, gagged oppositionists and arrested them.

Many protest songs appealed explicitly to revolution. Adriano sang “Canção do soldado” (1968; Soldier song), a poem by Urbano Tavares Rodrigues where he states that fight will be till death and will be won. In 1971, Zeca composed “Coro da Primavera” (“Spring choir”), whose lyrics directly address Marcello Caetano (Salazar’s successor, 1968–1974), without naming him, calling him a “scoundrel”, a “tyrant” and a king that “walks naked”. Amidst the word ‘comrade’, the song claims that revolution nears (“drums can already be heard”). Zeca’s most famous song (it was used to initiate the second stage of the 1974 revolution, as discussed below), “Grândola, vila morena” (1971), states in the chorus that “the people are the ones who rule”. The song further praises equality and fraternity. The song was composed after he visited a cultural association in the Alentejo town Grândola and was very impressed by the solidarity among its members. In 1969, Manuel Freire sang “Pedra Filosofal”, a poem by António Gedeão and an immediate hymn of protest songs. The lyrics state that “dream commands life” and it is dreams that make the world advance.

As shown by this selection, protest songs, with their more or less explicit rich lyrics, highly elaborated content and music styles that incorporate folk, *Fado* and the ballad format, became a locus of contentious politics, whose effects will be explored in the following section.

IMPACT OF PROTEST SONGS

Until 1969, the audience and influence of protest songs was restricted to elite circles: intellectuals, opposition groups and universities. Songs were played

during student strikes, in opposition gatherings, in initiatives in support of political prisoners, in trades unions, in cultural associations, in progressive Catholic milieus (Letria 1978, 40). A large number of protest singers were affiliated with the Portuguese Communist Party: Lopes-Graça, Adriano, Cília (who authored PCP’s anthem, “Avante”, “Forward”), Alegre, Carlos Paredes (guitar only), José Jorge Letria, Ary dos Santos (whose poems were sung by protest singers), Barata-Moura, José Mário Branco (for a few months), Fernando Tordo, Paulo de Carvalho. As Letria (1978, 47) mentions, protest songs reinforced unity and determination among those fighting the regime. Concerts and gatherings were venues of unity, as large groups of people strengthened courage (Raposo 2005, 120).

Oral transmission limited impact. Recording was not easy, nor was distribution. Electricity was confined to cities, while the illiteracy rate was very high, as stated previously. Cultural initiatives were often suppressed by censorship and PIDE, and singers detained for interrogation. Several cultural associations were closed down for organising concerts with protest singers (Raposo 2014). Records were frequently apprehended. PIDE’s files repeatedly mentioned the subversive aspect of songs (cf. Raposo 2005) and the institution compiled lists of subversive singers.

Two factors contributed decisively for diffusing protest songs to the general population. The first was the action of exiled protest singers in Portuguese emigrant communities. Cília, Branco, Francisco Fanhais (discussed below) and Sérgio Godinho, exiled in France,¹² habitually sang in student gatherings and at the homes of progressive exiles (Letria 1978, 50). Cília and Branco were influenced by the French protest songs associated with the *style rive gauche*, from Sorbonne University (Côrte-Real 2010, 223). In the 1960s, France was a cauldron of leftist agitation, due to the Algerian War of Independence (1954–1962) and May 68.¹³ Exiled protest singers were no less important than their peers in Portugal: there was no censorship (although they were subject to repatriation), they improved their repertoires through contact with their foreign counterparts, and had a different perspective of Portuguese reality. The songs alerted emigrants to the harsh Portuguese reality and appealed to unity and solidarity (Letria 1978, 52–53). Exiled singers frequently met political exiles like Alegre (who worked with Cília), Medeiros Ferreira, Eurico de Figueiredo and deserters from the army. This created a new ferment for subversion. Mário Soares (the leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party) invited Cília and Branco to play at the first rally of the party in France (Raposo 2014, 170).¹⁴ Exiled singers also met protest singers from other countries. The first clandestine record, Branco’s “Ronda do soldadinho/mãos ao ar” (“Round of the little soldier/hands up” 1969)—anti-war songs—to enter Portugal was produced in France and financed by political associations and emigrant organisations (Branco 2008, 149). Cília habitually sang in

political song festivals in the Democratic Republic of Germany and Cuba. Zeca and other protest singers sang several times in Spain, cooperating with their Spanish counterparts. Singing abroad served to alert international public opinion to the absence of fundamental rights in Portugal.

The second factor allowing the diffusion of protest songs was Marcello Caetano's political liberalisation (1969–1971), fomenting an increase of books, magazines, conferences, debates and television and radio shows. This was instrumental in multiplying the recording of protest songs and for the emergence of new protest singers (e.g. Barata-Moura, Freire, Fanhais, Letria). Newspapers *Diário de Lisboa* and *A Capital*, with their musical supplements "A Mosca" and "Cena 7", respectively, divulged the songs, while criticising the poverty of music made outside the protest format. Magazines *Rádio e Televisão*, *Mundo da Canção* and *Musicalíssimo* followed suit. Radio shows like "Página 1", "Tempo Zip", "Alfa 3", "Enquanto for bom-dia", "23ª hora" and "PBX" divulged protest songs, helping listeners familiarise with the songs and problems addressed by them (Letria 1978, 66).

The role of highly popular television show "Zip Zip", broadcasted between May and December 1969, that later created its own record company, was particularly important. The show had a live audience. Content was previously negotiated with censors, who were also present during recording, with the power to cut whatever they wanted (Raposo 2014, 61). Censorship was often eluded through the use of metaphors. Zeca was never allowed to sing on the show, a fact proving that the regime was well aware of the subversive effect of the songs. "Zip Zip" was instrumental in launching priest Francisco Fanhais (1941–), a member of the so-called progressive Catholics, who started to break with the regime during the 1958 presidential elections, denouncing human rights violations. Censors tried to prevent Fanhais from singing, recognising the huge blow it would deal to the regime. Only staunch resistance from the show's presenters and producers prevented that (Raposo 2005, 114). Fanhais and other priests used music to denounce the regime in association meetings and in parishes, being frequently detained for questioning by PIDE (Raposo 2014, 68–69). After recording two albums, Fanhais was prohibited from recording further and exiled in Paris, where he continued singing for Portuguese emigrants and toured abroad. He also joined radical left LUAR.

"Zip Zip" also helped connect protest singers according to Manuel Freire (Raposo 2005, 117). The regime tried to counter "Zip Zip"'s influence by creating an alternative show, "Curto-Circuito", with collaborationist singers, but the damage was irreversible. "Zip Zip"'s format was reproduced in cultural associations and parishes, where people debated the problems of their towns, often with the presence of protest singers (Raposo 2014, 100). Broadcasting, in the words of then journalist João Paulo Guerra (quoted in Raposo 2005, 116), helped people realise they were not alone in their criticism of the regime.

Emerging Portuguese private record companies like Sasseti and Orfeu were also instrumental in disseminating protest songs, which had become profitable, releasing singers from the control of bigger companies and giving them full freedom. Singer Tino Flores included symbols and texts associated with far-left organisations with which he was involved on the covers of his albums (Castro 2015, 9).

After teaming with communist composer Alain Oulman in 1962, Amália Rodrigues started singing highly elaborated resistance poetry (by David Mourão-Ferreira, Manuel Alegre or Alexandre O’Neill), a move disliked by the regime, but unstoppable, given her untouchable status. She toured the USSR in 1969 and, in 1970, sang “Trova do vento que passa”, although with changed lyrics (Branco 2008, 150).

The multiplication of expressions of dissent ended liberalisation. From January 1972, books and records started to be subject to prior censorship. Adriano was unable to record protest songs until the end of the dictatorship. “Página 1” and “Tempo Zip” were shut down in 1972. At this point, the role of foreign recording companies became essential. Zeca was continuously surveilled and arrested in 1971 and 1973—on the second occasion, only a wide national and international outcry allowed for his release (Raposo 2005, 126). He recorded abroad his last four albums during the dictatorship: *Traz Outro Amigo Também* (Bring another friend too; 1970) *Cantigas do Maio* (Songs of May, which contained “Grândola, vila morena”; 1971), *Eu vou ser como a toupeira* (I will be like the mole; 1972) and *Venham mais cinco* (Another five come; 1973).

Another sector that was mobilised by protest songs was the military. *Milicianos* (university students drafted to the colonial war) introduced songs in the milieu, helping politicise career officers. Vasco Lourenço and Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho, two of the captains behind the 1974 coup (the latter was the mastermind behind the military operations), were influenced by academic struggles and protest songs (Raposo 2005, 126). Additionally, as Adriano (quoted in Raposo 2014, 28) pointed, citing the Minister of Defense, Horácio de Sá Viana Rebelo (1968–1973), the songs against colonial war had ‘demolishing effects’ on the morale of the Portuguese troops.

On March 29th 1974, Casa da Imprensa, a mutualistic association of press workers close to opposition circles, organised the First Encounter of Portuguese Song, with the presence of the main names of protest songs: Zeca, Adriano, Tordo, Ary dos Santos, Fausto, Vitorino, Barata-Moura, Freire and Letria (Fanhais was prohibited from participating). It was the first time these artists came together for such a concert. Many songs were censored by PIDE, which tried to prevent the concert from taking place. Its agents were scattered in the venue in order to spy. “Grândola, vila morena”, which was not censored, was the last song, sung by all singers and by an audience of 5,000, who

enthusiastically repeated the chorus “The people are the ones who rule”.¹⁵ The concert was also attended by some of the military who would conduct the 1974 coup, including Vasco Lourenço and Vítor Alves.

The military coup which would bring democracy to Portugal was led by the Armed Forces Movement. At 10.55 pm of April 24, 1974, the first phase of the coup was initiated by the radio broadcasting of the song “E depois do adeus” (“And after goodbye”). The song, sung by Paulo de Carvalho, had won the 1974 Portuguese Song Festival and apparently had no political content, referring to separated lovers. As such, it would attract no attention. After making sure that everything was on track, the military had “Grândola, vila morena” broadcasted on Rádio Renascença, the Catholic Church’s radio, at 00.20 am, setting the stage for the national launching of the coup. By the end of the day, protest songs were being played freely on the radios, announcing the success of the coup. “Grândola” was later interpreted and reinterpreted by singers in the US, Finland, Chile, Spain and France (Letria 1978, 75).

As Côte-Real (2010) argues, the fact that protest songs were chosen to initiate the revolution recognised and legitimated their role in the fight against dictatorship. Already exiled in Brazil, Marcello Caetano recognised the contribution of protest songs for the fall of the regime, justifying their repression while in power (quoted in Raposo 2005, 9).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has endeavoured to show how protest singers can perform the role of organic intellectuals helping to overthrow an unjust and oppressive regime, using the Portuguese case study. Such findings provide an invaluable contribution to literature on protest songs. The use of protest songs as a weapon against the dictatorship was a conscious and planned strategy developed first by PCP (a strategy that the party continues to use to this day, mainly through its yearly festival called “Forward”, “Avante”) and later by other actors and singers. Songs enabled the politicisation of several segments of the population (university students, the military, progressive Catholics) by denouncing and deconstructing the narratives of the regime (on colonial war, inequality, poverty, regime violence), on the one hand, and, on the other, by defending new values (freedom, tolerance, equality, justice). In particular, songs raised awareness on the injustice of the colonial war and were intimately associated with academic crises throughout the 1960s, thus making the ruling class fail in extracting consent from its citizens. Protest songs established bridges among opponents of the regime, enabling them to pass from a state of political passivity to mobilisation and activity, presenting demands adding up to a revolution. In this sense, singers brought about a

crisis of hegemony that led to the overthrowing of the regime. As a unique feature of the Portuguese case study, protest song “Grândola, vila morena” was instrumental in launching the military coup that put an end to forty-eight years of dictatorship.

Protest songs produced a counter-hegemony by creating cognitive changes and new forms of knowledge, a necessary precondition for the advent of a new society. Protest singers as organic intellectuals were able to establish hegemony, allowing for the subsequent conquest of the state apparatus by the military. The subversive role of protest songs was acknowledged by the regime, which censored and persecuted singers. This fact in itself speaks to the power of protest song, in particular circumstances where censorship and limited literacy prevented the masses from engaging in political action. The Portuguese case proves how these limitations can be circumvented if music and its message is conveyed in shapes that can resonate with the knowledge and cognitive level of the masses.

NOTES

1. Antonio Gramsci was a Marxist thinker and politician, founder and leader of the Communist Party of Italy. He explained how the bourgeoisie maintained its hegemony in capitalist states, using culture for the reproduction of power relations. His understanding that the subaltern groups need to create cultural hegemony through the work of organic intellectuals is a continuous influence on cultural and political theorists.

2. Hall was a sociologist and political activist whose work on race, gender and the media exerted a major influence in cultural studies. He launched the *New Left Review* and directed the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University.

3. For an account on the role of music in social change see Denisoff and Peterson 1972; Rosenthal and Flacks 2012.

4. For further reading, see Adinolfi and Costa Pinto 2014; Costa Pinto 1995.

5. French figures are estimates considering illegal emigrants. The remaining figures are official numbers from 1969.

6. Futurism was founded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909 in a manifesto called *The Music Hall*. It defied bourgeois morality, propounding total freedom of expression and rejecting the past, occasionally through violence. The movement supported fascists and Bolsheviks, who promised modernisation. In Portugal, the movement was introduced by magazine *Orpheu* and thinkers like Fernando Pessoa and Almada Negreiros. For details on Futurism in Portugal, see Raimundo 2015.

7. MUD was founded in October 1945 by a group of oppositionists including Republicans, communists, socialists, Catholics and monarchists. Its popularity threatened the regime, leading to its closure in 1948.

8. One of the main inspirations for these songs came from the rural areas of Alentejo, where folk songs known as *Cante Alentejano* denounced power abuse and injustice (Raposo 2005, 24–26).

9. General Humberto Delgado (former military attaché in Washington and head of the Portuguese mission with NATO) ran for the 1958 elections against the wishes of Salazar, threatening to dismiss him if he won. The candidacy, which was supported by the opposition (monarchists, Catholics, fascists, socialists, communists), deeply divided Estado Novo. In what are seen as rigged elections, the candidate of the regime, Admiral Américo Thomaz, won with 75% of the votes. The regime then purged the military and the civil service and persecuted the opposition. Delgado went into exile and was later assassinated by PIDE.

10. Lyrics available from: <http://www.aja.pt/menina-dos-olhos-tristes/>.

11. Between 110,000 and 170,000, according to Pimentel 2016, 125.

12. 60,000 deserters and around 600,000 Portuguese emigrants lived there in 1973 (Branco 2008, 149).

13. The Algerian War of Independence caused the fall of the Fourth French Republic and ascent to power of General Charles de Gaulle through military manoeuvres. The absorption of around 900,000 Pieds-Noirs (French settlers) expelled from Algeria was problematic. By 1968, de Gaulle, still French President, was seen by the youth as the exponent of an autocratic society. The May 68 events started as a student revolt in the Paris suburbs against prohibition of male and female students sleeping together in campus dormitories, quickly escalating after police intervention. Students demanded education reforms and the democratisation of the political system, being joined by trade unions, which launched a massive national strike.

14. Founded in 1973 in Germany by twenty-seven delegates, including the party's historical leader Mário Soares, with a program committed to democratic socialism.

15. The original recording of the show can be found at www.Rtp.pt/play/p337/e148979/antena-1-programs-espescials.

Chapter 13

Singing Protest in Post-war Italy

Fabrizio De André's Songs Within the Context of Italian Canzone d'Autore

Riccardo Orlandi

Although some scholars (Denisoff 1970, 1983) suggest that protest songs cannot immediately have an impact on social justice, it is widely accepted that protest music has the power to influence the audience's perceptions of social issues and potentially shape its political engagements (Eyerman and Jamison 1998). As Friedman states: "it is clear that protest through song has become embedded in the DNA of our modern social and political fabric" (Friedman 2013, xvii). This is particularly the case in Italian contexts. Since Italian unification (1861), social songs have been a crucial element in the formation of political and social identities. Anarchists, Communists, Fascists and the *partigiani* (the rebels who fought against the fascist regime), have all employed songs to reinforce and encapsulate their ideals (Pivato 2005). However, the bond between popular music and protest movements has rarely been unproblematic: popular musicians have had to deal with the music industry, political parties, cultural movements and the elitist tradition of Italian high culture. This complex relationship between music and various aspects of protest is especially striking in the musical phenomenon of Italian *canzone d'autore*, a genre that arose during the 1960s and that is regarded as more complex and culturally elevated than traditional Italian popular music.

In this chapter I explore and define the political commitment of Italian *canzone d'autore*, with particular focus on Fabrizio De André (1940–1999), whose music is perhaps most representative of the genre. I examine how De André adhered to the social definitions of *canzone d'autore* and illustrate how he influenced the genre's evolution as well as, more broadly, a specifically Italian approach to protest songs. First, I present the broader context of *canzone d'autore*, focusing on a discourse that has often presented lyrics as the dominant force within the genre. I also examine the construction of *cantautori* as publicly committed intellectuals. Next, I challenge these ideas,

arguing that the social impact of songs should be traced not only within the explicit meaning of their lyrics, but also through the analysis of *sounds*, both musical and linguistic. I then focus on Fabrizio De André, showing how his most political albums helped him achieve his status as a pre-eminent singer/songwriter of the genre. While my analysis takes the lyrics into account, I deliberately seek to recalibrate their potential social impact by exploring the dialects and non-traditional sounds in these songs as a means of challenging our very perception of society.

THE BIRTH OF THE CANZONE D'AUTORE

Since the French Revolution, protest songs in Italian culture have been one of the most widespread ways to support and share political ideas. As Stefano Pivato (2005, viii) highlights, the *Risorgimento* (the movement that led to the unification of Italy in 1861) and the rise of the anarchist and socialist movements in the early twentieth century provided a wide range of protest songs. Moreover, those who took part in the Great War enriched the spectrum of Italian protest songs with pacifist songs. The tradition of the protest song remained strong in Italy until after World War II when Italy enjoyed a so called 'economic miracle', a moment of industrial evolution fuelled by the Marshall Plan¹ and the presence of a cheap and abundant labour force that allowed Italian society to evolve from a rural country to a wealthy industrial power (Foot 2014, 158–64). In a context where consumerism and wealth became status symbols of a new era of Italian history, songs appear to have been absorbed by this consumerist process, thereby weakening their social protest role (Pivato 2005, 197–207). By the 1960s, the production of Italian songs developed into a business ruled by market logic, where songs were produced and sold as commodities by the recording industry. This type of song is defined by Umberto Eco (in Straniero et al. 1964) as 'gastronomic song', a pejorative label that underlines the mere commercial aim of this product. In the same book, Straniero and the other authors employ the terms '*canzonetta*', (that is 'petty song'), and '*canzone di consumo*', ('consumption song') which were widely used to identify the purely commercial and melodramatic songs marketed during those years.

However, from the mid-1950s to the early-1960s, musicians began to acknowledge this commercial mechanism, primarily 'through the Adornian categories of "standardisation" and "fetishism", terms which were entering the Italian cultural debate' (Santoro 2002, 114). Some singers felt the need to distance themselves from the traditional approach to music that had been commercialised after the war. These singers developed new themes and styles, opposing the naivety of *canzonetta* through new musical choices,

lyrical themes and literary styles. The label of *cantautore* was used to define these singer-songwriters and first appears in the early 1960s in a catalogue of the Italian branch of the recording label RCA². This category was created as a marketing strategy to identify and sell the albums of a group of singer-songwriters who had signed with the recording company at that time.³

The introduction of the term *cantautore* has thus been convincingly defined by Santoro (2002, 114) as “a semantic move, not a true technical innovation, because such a configuration of roles (songwriter and singer at the same time) was already present in the musical field”. This new semantic category is not thus a simple descriptive category but rather holds a host of connotations that evokes high literary culture, as will become apparent. This new category was “put forward by a network of cultural entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and artists who defined themselves in opposition to the traditional Italian song world”, which was, at that time, seemingly deprived of artistic value (Santoro 2002, 123).

The *cantautori* introduced a new approach to Italian popular music, by using “a brand new lexicon, dealing with everyday language and opposing the solemn verses of traditional songs” (Tomatis 2014, 89). Moreover, on a thematic level, *cantautori* would sing about ‘troubled existence, the absurdities of war and power, deviant and marginal people, but also sexuality in all its forms’ (Santoro 2002, 116), themes with which traditional songs had rarely engaged. The category of the *cantautore* thus started “acquiring a marked symbolic power that could be used to discriminate among singers in the field of popular music according to the qualities of their songs” (Santoro 2002, 113-4), in terms of aesthetic values. The term *canzone d'autore* is derived from *cantautore* and was first used in 1969 in order to create an “aesthetic category” (Santoro 2010, 23) for the new high quality songs of the *cantautori*.⁴

DOMINANCE OF LYRICS OVER MUSIC IN THE CANZONE D'AUTORE

The *cantautori* were said to oppose the *canzone di consume* (consumer songs) through the use of new sounds, themes and lyrical styles, and by providing a central focus on the high quality of the lyrics. In fact, one of the most defining traits of the *cantautori* is the literary quality of their work. This is particularly important since in Italian culture the literary arts have always been regarded as of great importance, as I discuss shortly. According to Santoro, it is this literary quality that was used to distinguish the *canzone d'autore* from the *canzonetta*, a genre lacking this key element and which is arguably more banal by contrast (Santoro 2010, 194). Fabbri (1982) provides a similar

argument, emphasising that the complexity of the *canzone d'autore* derives more obviously from its lyrics than its music. He states that in the *canzone d'autore*, music complexity may vary but this genre “is at the highest level of complexity, with regard to richness of vocabulary, rhetoric and syntax” (9). Moreover, the vocabulary “is richer and more open to literary suggestions” (11) than in other genres.

This dominance of lyrics over music is a key point of the discourse surrounding the *cantautori*, leading them to be construed as poets. Santoro (2010, 202) argues that the *canzone d'autore* underwent a consecration thanks to its proximity to literature and especially poetry, and Tomatis (2014, 87) insists that “the lack of a new generation of charismatic Italian poets caused the best outcomes of *canzone d'autore* to be regarded as poetry”. Because of the earlier lack of poetic quality in consumer songs, the discourse on the *cantautori* emerged with an “inherent awareness of the task of saving the Italian *canzone* from the stupidity and standardisation to which the record publishers’ routine had brought it” (Fabbri 1982, 17). The literary quality of the *canzone d'autore* was therefore the major means adopted to draw the *cantautori* to the rank of highbrow artists (Santoro 2010, 193–217).

CANTAUTORI AS PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS

The emphasis placed on the importance of the literary dimension was crucial for the evolution of the protest aspects of the *canzone d'autore*, as it led both commentators and fans to hail *cantautori* as, by extension, politically and socially committed intellectuals. This link between literary quality and socially committed intellectualism has always been a key point in Italian culture. It has been argued (Ward 2001) that within the context of Italian cultural history, the Italian intellectual is principally characterised by the emphasis placed on promoting social change. More specifically, the literary intellectuals—that is to say the major poets of the Italian tradition—have been forced by cultural circumstances to perform this civic-political role since Italian Unification (1861)⁵. This link between literature and Italian identity created, as Jossa (2006, 27) argues, “the myth of the intellectual that leads the people, that characterise Italian culture throughout the 19th and the 20th century” (Jossa 2006, 27). Recent studies on social and political commitment in Italian culture confirm that literature is the major way to achieve the status of committed intellectual: “in the Italian contexts exists the humanistic and romantic prejudice that literature is the best intellectual practice to understand local and global phenomenon, the compass to critically direct the public opinion. Literary writing is thus the main way, almost a sort of ‘permit’, to achieve the status of public intellectual” (Antonello 2012, 50). This quote highlights

how success within the literary arts is perceived as being the primary means of achieving intellectual status in Italian culture and how “[the] Italian intellectual has always been constituted through his occupation of a civic/political role” (O’Leary 2009, 221). For this reason, designating the *cantautori* as poets and intellectuals and emphasising their literary quality resulted in a political role being thrust upon them.

Political commitment was established as one of the most relevant features of *canzone d’autore* by virtue of the importance of lyrics especially during the 1970s, which was a highly politicised period in Italy characterised by social unrest among students and workers. The politicisation of *canzone d’autore* needs to be read against the fact that, after 1968, Italian society was shaken by the protest of students and workers at a time when it seems that every form of art became politicised. This revolt was directed against the “cultural and political parent-figures” (Ward 2001, 310), namely both the Christian legacy of Italian culture and the Communist intellectual environment. Ecological, feminist, and gay liberation movements began to enter the social arena; alongside these movements, new cultural spaces such as publishing houses, journals and film clubs emerged. This new cultural environment began to influence the *impegno* of intellectuals, requiring their politicisation. According to Robert Lumley, “intellectuals felt that they only had a right to exist in so far as they were being useful, and usefulness was defined narrowly. Cultural practices had to produce political messages. Pedagogic modes prevailed, and a moral universe was created with its good and bad characters” (Lumley 1990, 133).

Since they had been constructed as intellectuals, the *cantautori* were involved in this new logic of political commitment. Fabbri outlines that the 1970s constituted “a period during which the *canzone d’autore* was the object of attention by critics in a very pedantic, ideologised way, and in which the *cantautore* had to learn to act like a politician or a philosopher” (Fabbri 1982, 13). In this context, Fabbri argues, lyrics became more and more important as the audience of *canzone d’autore* considered them to be the only way of expressing a political message in a song (Fabbri 1982, 18). The *cantautori* were explicitly required by the cultural leftist environment to adhere to the protest; if they did not do so, they were accused of being bourgeois and reactionary (Santoro 2010, 171–92). During the 1970s, the lyrics of *cantautori* thus became the supposed principal means to achieve social impact through their songs.

LYRICS AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The idea that music’s influence on listeners is mainly related to the semantic value of lyrics is especially present in an Italian context, mostly because of the historical importance attributed to the literary arts and thus to the lyric,

which, in the context of the *canzone d'autore*, is accorded pride of place by the constitutive discourse surrounding the genre. While the lyrics of a song are undoubtedly important in this regard, there is perhaps a less widespread understanding of the role of music. As various scholars have argued, “discussions of political music, in particular, still tend to establish an artist’s meaning and significance predominantly or exclusively by citing the lyrics of their songs” (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011, 24). In contrast, my argument draws largely on Frith who points out that “song words work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning not just semantically, but also as structure of sounds that are direct signs of emotion and marks of character” (Frith 1986, 98). It is clear that an approach to the relationships between songs and politics must therefore involve more than just lyrics, even if the sole consideration of lyrics as vehicles for political and social motivators is still widespread. And Rosenthal and Flacks (2011, 39) do point out the fact that many studies (for example Denisoff 1970 and 1983), demonstrate a particular trend relating to music and lyrics with the following two points:

1. Most people don’t know the lyrics of even the songs they say they know and love;
2. Even when they do know the lyrics, most people have little conception of any meaning [...]; by and large, most people don’t care much about lyrics or semantic meaning (Rosenthal and Flacks 2011, 44).

This perspective encourages the adoption of different perspectives when looking at the potential for social impact of a song. Specifically, I now look at how Fabrizio De André’s work can impact the social conscience of the listeners through different means, and not just through the explicit political lyrics, which are undoubtedly important.

FABRIZIO DE ANDRÉ

Fabrizio De André (1940–1999) was musically active as a professional for almost forty years, from the start of the 1960s until his death on January 11, 1999.⁶ He released thirteen studio albums, the particular thematic features of which include pacifism, sympathy for the downtrodden, anarchism, and hostility towards established powers. He remains greatly appreciated by the Italian public as a central character in Italy’s popular music and cultural history. Fernanda Pivano⁷ (2004) defined him more than once as the best poet of the twentieth century. De André is also widely considered as the epitome of the *cantautore* since his music shaped and embodied the basic features of this category, namely the quality of lyrics, authenticity and social commitment.

As I have argued, the literary value of *canzone d'autore* is interlinked with its supposed social impact. Specifically, in order to achieve the status of socially engaged intellectuals, the *cantautori*'s literary value was emphasised. This emphasis was achieved by adopting the label of 'poet' which is linked to the discourse constituting the Italian intellectuals. After De André's death this label, has become "the almost necessary refrain to exalt him, as if calling him 'poet' was the only way to dignify his lyrics" (Cosi and Ivaldi 2011, 32)⁸. Being the *cantautore* par excellence, De André's myth greatly contributed to the cultural elevation of the *canzone d'autore*, with Plastino and Fabbri (2014, 86) arguing that when he died, "the public debate about *cantautori* and *canzone d'autore* was strongly revived" and that "the issue of whether "*cantautori* are the modern poets" was raised even by literary critics. [...] the result was that an aura of cultural respectability was created around the genres involved". De André is at the same time the best example of a *cantautore* as well as one of the mightiest forces that shaped the very construct.

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF DE ANDRÉ'S WORK CONSTRUCTED THROUGH HIS LYRICS

The fact that most of the *cantautori*, and De André himself, refused the label of poets (Santoro 2010, 196–97) demonstrates the power of and momentum behind the cultural construction of *cantautori*. Their opinion seems to be less important than the tendency to create a high cultural product within the popular music field. Particularly, De André has been defined by many critics as "a writer who used to sing" (Fossati 2003, 140) rather than as a musician, even if his work covers a wide range of musical genres. The analysis I have proposed of the public role of intellectuals in Italy, the emphasis placed on the literary quality of *cantautori*, and the specific construction of De André as poet explain why commentators on De André's work sought his political commitment almost entirely in the explicit meaning of his lyrics. In the following section, I explore this lyrical approach through examining De André's two allegedly most political albums. This, in turn, leads me to propose a new perspective on the social influence of his work that challenges the pervasive discourse where lyrical meaning dominates.

STORIA DI UN IMPIEGATO (STORY OF A WHITE-COLLAR WORKER)

In the earliest stages of his career, De André was acknowledged as a *cantautore* who cared about social issues but did not actually engage with the

urgent social issues of those years, especially the aforementioned unrests of 1968. Until 1973, De André did not release any explicitly political albums. Immediately after 1968, he released *La buona novella* (1970; *The good announcement*) and *Non al denaro non all'amore né al cielo* (1971; *Neither to money, nor to love, nor to Heaven*), two albums that were constructed as broadly engaging with revolutionary topics, without explicitly dealing with them. *La buona novella* is a narration of Jesus Christ's childhood and Passion based on the apocryphal gospels; *Non al denaro non all'amore né al cielo* consists of nine songs that reinterpret Edgar Lee Masters's characters portrayed in the *Spoon River Anthology* (1915).⁹ Each poem is an epitaph that tells the story of one of Spoon River's citizens, focusing on their problematic relationships with society and power. As with *La buona novella*, this album criticises power and exalts the libertarian solidarity between human beings. In both these albums, then, De André indirectly engaged with the revolutionary atmosphere of the years following 1968, through allusion rather than literal representation.

Until 1973, De André managed to keep his political commitment somewhere between actual criticism and artistic sublimation. When *Storia di un impiegato* was released in 1973, however, De André's position became more explicit. In this album, De André tells the story of a thirty-year-old employee who decides, five years after the events of 1968, to launch an attack against the establishment. The worker wants to act alone, since he believes that only an isolated attack can upset the power balance. His attack fails and it is only when he is incarcerated that he becomes aware of the importance of collective actions against power. As far as his lyrics are concerned, Fabrizio De André was supported in the process of writing by Giuseppe Bentivoglio, a Marxist who wanted to write songs which displayed his ideology clearly. De André stated that he wanted to create "a human discourse" (Viva 2000, 156), revealing that he wanted to tell a story permeated with social criticism while focusing on the psychological analysis of the main character. The album—the first in which De André directly engages with current social and political issues—was harshly criticised by critics and even some fans because of the obscurity of its language. Contemporary reviews defined it as "a horrible album", "extremely fanciful and confused" and even as "a limp firecracker", "that was explosive only in the intention" (Pistarini and Sassi 2008, 150). De André himself, years later, confessed that he considered the album "quite a mess" in both artistic and conceptual terms (Pistarini and Sassi 2008, 337). However, the significance of this critique lay not in whether lyrics were right or wrong, accessible or opaque, but rather that listeners were looking for clear meaning in the lyrics, for slogans and explicit political declarations, in order to evaluate the impact of the album.

LE NUVOLE—A SIDE

De André did not attempt to release another patently political album until 1990, entitled *Le nuvole*. This was hailed as “a protest album” (Pistarini 2010, 252) and as “De André’s most political album” to date (Premi 2009, 93). After the end of decades of social unrest in Italy, Italian culture had entered the so-called *riflusso* phase, a period that featured greater indifference to politics, more disillusionment, a withdrawal into the private sphere, the pursuit of one’s wealth and career, and the losing of working class collective conscience. Against this backdrop, *Le nuvole* was conceived, divided into two sides, each comprising four songs. Side A features songs that explicitly declare De André’s disillusioned standpoint on the politics of the 1980s, characterised by the *riflusso* (reaction, resurgence). Side B features four songs that feature lyrics in Italian dialects, which I explore in due course.

In terms of the album’s A side, there are two songs that are regarded as most politically significant. The first song ‘Ottocento’ (nineteenth century), is a parodic representation of contemporary Italian society which De André sought to criticise by adopting clichés typical of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. De André sings in the style of opera, personifying a bourgeois who lists his belongings, including his sons and daughters and their body parts. De André stated that his way of singing was “a style of singing falsely cultured, a parody of opera” (Pistarini 2010, 255). There are also literary references: the song opens with ‘Cantami’ (‘Sing to me’), which echoes the ‘Cantami o Diva’ (‘O Goddess, sing!’) of the famous Italian translation of *The Iliad* written by Vincenzo Monti in 1809. The second reference is a quotation of a line (‘figlio bianco e vermiglio’) from Jacopone da Todi’s ‘Donna de Paradiso’, a *lauda drammatica* which depicts Jesus Christ’s Passion, and was written in the thirteenth century. The references to two important writers of the Italian literary tradition underline the apparently ‘cultured’ tone of the song (a point I expand upon later). The only narrative turning point within the song is given by a cryptic reference to the death of the narrator’s son. The bourgeois protagonist is concerned with his reputation rather than with feeling pain for his son’s death. The song ends with a section sung in German in which the bourgeois exalts the beauty of industrial life that must go on, regardless of the death of a member of the family. The choice of German language might be understood as multilingualism, a further sign of high culture. The exulted mood is underscored by a joyous yodel. The supposed political critique of this song is conveyed by layers of cultured codes that only an erudite listener with cultural capital can fully appreciate; the ironic pastiche of the yodel, the satirical way of singing in an opera-like style, the cryptic narration of the death of the son, the literary references, and the melange of languages, all constitute a refined caricature of the Italian bourgeoisie. But it is only a

description—although an extremely complex—of the decadent Italian bourgeoisie. And De André does not challenge the established power; rather, he limits himself to creating a parody of it. While parody can be an effective means of social critique, it does not necessarily actively challenge the ‘rules’ of society which cause social division.

The second song I consider is ‘La Domenica delle Salme’,¹⁰ which has been hailed as “De André’s most political song” (Pistarini 2010, 259). The song portrays the social situation after the fall of the Berlin Wall. De André’s apocalyptic description is based on a series of images that symbolise various features or events of Italian society of the late 1980s: the Polish beggars (the people betrayed by the Soviet ideal), the Fourth Reich monkey (the neo-Nazi movements in Germany), a new Cheope’s pyramid (the new forms of slavery), the minister of thunderstorms (the new political establishment), and the amputation of Renato Curcio’s leg¹¹ (the failure of the terrorist movement *Brigate Rosse*). The social situation that was established Europe after the fall of the Communist ideal is criticised because, according to De André, it destroyed the possibility of an egalitarian society. As is also the case in ‘Ottocento’, De André himself admits that “there are a number of literary references. I wanted to display a bit of culture” (Fasoli 2009, 68). The most striking of these is a reference to the amputation of a prisoner’s leg taken from the 1832 novel *Le mie prigioni* (*My Prisons*) by Silvio Pellico, an Italian patriot sentenced to prison by the Austrian government. Even if it does not feature any excessive stylistic interpretation, this song evidence layers of intertextual references and an overall surreal style, both traits that make the song a refined intellectual product rather than an overt expression of resistance. Most importantly, the examples of *Storia di un impiegato* and *Le nuvole* and their reception history show how De André’s social impact was assessed by critics and commentators only by focusing on the explicit meaning of his lyrics. Given my position that the lyrics are not the only means of influencing the audience’s perception of social justice, it is equally important to move beyond interpretation, the choice of languages, the sources and the codes adopted, all of which reveal the high culture heritage and which, arguably, actually limit the songs reaching some listeners and directly impacting upon their perception of reality.

DIALECTS AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE: INDIANO AND CRÊUZA DE MĂ

I propose a different way of looking at the social impact of De André’s music. The songs I analyse here employ different dialects and sounds that reference the existence of marginalised sections of society, thus arguably proving more

effective in mediating the social concerns of society. I argue that De André's songs are potentially more effective in the way in which they indirectly influence audience perceptions by challenging and broadening the spectrum of what listeners are used to seeing and, more especially hearing, in Italian musical forms.

The first instance in which De André introduces elements to rupture the established and accepted Italian musical landscape is on an album (usually referred to as) *Indiano*, which was released in 1980. The whole album is based on making a parallel between the culture of American Natives and Sardinian people of Italy who, according to De André, shared the same dramatic history of invasion, dominance and marginalisation.¹² The first track opens with a recording of a boar hunt that was organised on the island of Sardinia by some Sardinian friends of De André's. De André describes the hunt as "a socialising episode, which represents a way of living and thinking". This cultural phenomenon unveiled the possibility "of reviving an indigenous culture which is still alive in Sardinia" (Pistarini 2010, 210). Massimo Bubola, another *cantautore* who collaborated with De André, recounts that they decided to open the album with this recording because the boar hunt was "the ancient rite, the archaic, sacred and religious representation" of the Sardinian people (Bubola and Cotto 2006, 73). The recorded boar hunt is thus a moment of high symbolic value, not just a folkloristic *divertissement* or a nineteenth-century-like romantic exploitation of an 'other' culture. Rather, it is a material presence of a specific culture. We can hear shouting, gunshots and dogs barking. The words and the noises we hear do not convey a literal meaning that we can understand. The only relevant meaning is what the noises evoke in our minds, that is to say the presence of Sardinian culture and its rites.

The fourth track of the album, 'Ave Maria'¹³ features lyrics in Sardinian, a dialect which is almost incomprehensible to most Italian listeners. Just like the noises of the hunt, dialect is used here just to show its very existence, to make it heard, and to make the listeners aware of its actual sounds and therefore of its materiality. De André does not use the lyrics of 'Ave Maria' to tell the listeners something about the social situation of Sardinia. Rather, he shows and sounds out Sardinian dialect. The listener experiences its sonic qualities, its musicality, and its utter difference from Italian. The recording of the boar hunt has political power as its presence occupies a space in a work of art that has national resonance and can reach hundreds of thousands of people, thus challenging and redefining the field of possible aesthetic representations in relation to what constitutes Italian song. In *Indiano*, the presence of real noises of a traditional rite of the island and of the Sardinian language become representative of the minority section of society, thus modifying the audience's awareness of social divisions, which, perhaps is the ultimate political act of a song.

De André extended his use of dialect and foreign sounds in his eleventh studio album, *Crêuza de Mä*, released in 1984. De André and Mauro Pagani (founder and former violinist of Premiata Forneria Marconi, one of the most influential progressive rock bands in Italy) shared the same interest for Mediterranean cultures and music and this led them to create an album grounded in the ethnic sounds of the Mediterranean, in opposition to the hegemonic American sound of the time. Their research for a new approach to music is not about style but is also directly related to their quest to challenge hegemonic society precisely and breaks down cultural walls and redefines borders. The Thracian¹⁴ bagpipe solo that opens *Crêuza de Mä* is the first element to burst into the established aesthetic coordinates of Italian music. Although the novelty of this may not immediately strike the modern listener, in 1984, world music was not yet properly established or experienced as a distinct category, and therefore such ‘native’ sounds were perceived as highly innovative. Scholars have noted that the Thracian bagpipe solo “bear[s] direct witness to the *mediterraneanity* of the album” (Plastino 2003, 275), thus flagging the presence of an identity that is broader than the national Italian identity. The creation of a Mediterranean identity exposes to the public the great number of traditions that converge in the Mediterranean world. The problem of immigration to Italy from North Africa, Albania and the Middle East was not a concern in 1984, but it began to be considered as problematic when immigration increased from 1990s onwards (the first law that attempted to regulate immigration to Italy was promulgated in 1990). With *Crêuza de Mä*, De André revealed the multifaceted identity of Mediterranean culture, and, to a certain extent, foretold the necessity for integration and acceptance, and as Frith writes, “musical response involves recognition, sympathy, and commitment” (Frith 2000, 318).

Along with music, language provides an important aspect of the album’s potential for social impact. The songs of *Crêuza de Mä* are composed in an artificial language based on an ancient type of Genoese dialect, a mixture of languages widely used by merchants and sailors during their travels in the Mediterranean up until the eighteenth century. This language does not connote the importance of Genoa only: it “embraces the entire Mediterranean through its inclusion of an Arabic-derived vocabulary” (Plastino 2003, 281). Again, the artist’s use of this language is striking for listeners, and the lyrics’ actual meaning becomes secondary in importance. Understandably, Pistarini observes that in such contexts “Fabrizio’s voice should be listened to as if it was an instrument rather than paying attention to what it says” (Pistarini 2010, 233), endorsing my argument about the use of dialect in *Indiano*: explicit meaning is secondary, and the most subversive features of De André’s dialects is that they force us to acknowledge their presence. This sonic-linguistic power discloses a Mediterranean reality and exposes

to the public the great number of traditions that converge in Mediterranean identity.

LE NUVOLE—B SIDE

Returning to *Le Nuvole*, the entire B side features songs performed in regional dialects. ‘Mègu megùn’ is sung in the Genoese dialect and is about a socio-pathic person who does not want to have any contact with the world; ‘La nova gelosia’ is an eighteenth-century Neapolitan folk song; ‘A çimma’ is a song about a typical Genoese dish (and is also sung in Genoese); and ‘Monti di Mola’ is a song sung in Sardinian that talks about the impossible love between a man and a donkey. The dialects here hold the same subversive power that I have highlighted in the previous section when discussing *Crêuza de Mä*. These songs do not engage *literally* with political issues; rather, they present the sounds and features of minorities, making the audience aware of their presence and their concreteness. In this way listeners are exposed to the ‘other’ in very effective ways. *Le Nuvole* is therefore an album neatly divided in two: a first part that consists of songs whose political intent is based on what Bracher (2013) calls “prepositional knowledge”, that is to say the explicit meanings of political statements, while the second section consists of songs that show new dialects and sounds as a means of subverting society, or, at the very least, drawing attention to those outside the mainstream.

The songs I have analysed from *Storia di un Impiegato* and the A side of *Le Nuvole* are based on a purely intellectual approach rather than effective means of resistance. The representation of actual events that occurred in Italian society during the late 1970s and the 1980s in the complex and obscure dreamlike narration of *Storia di un impiegato*, ‘Ottocento’ and ‘La Domenica delle salme’, do not necessarily add any new element to the audience’s perception of the complexity of social reality. Rather, the songs that convey a political value are those which show hidden sections of the world, drawing attention to ‘otherness’. This does not mean that De André employs two radically different approaches in order to engage with politics. His art is multifaceted and his approach, in some cases, contradictory. In *Indiano*, *Crêuza de Mä* and the B side of *Le Nuvole*, other types of nuanced social critique, besides the productive aesthetical resistance I underline, are apparent. In *Indiano*, the artist’s depiction of the common place of the primordial and rural culture being threatened by economic and military progress is arguably simplistic and might be viewed as conservative rather than subversive. Likewise, the linguistic research of *Crêuza de mä* has political power insofar as it shows the complexity of Mediterranean identity. But it is also an artificial operation of ethnic and linguistic creation “in vitro” (Plastino 2008, 281).

Thus De André's potential for social impact is dependant on the ears and positionalities of listeners, regardless of how much he consciously crafts his songs.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have endeavoured to outline the two ways of influencing reality, especially in terms of social justice as evidenced in Fabrizio De André's work and its reception history. The first looked at the denotative, the explicit meanings of lyrics, which I argued do not tell the full story and hence form an incomplete and therefore somewhat ineffective mode of analysis. The second examined how, through the generation of new elements that modify the established soundscape, De André challenged the status quo and made his audience acknowledge both the presence of marginalised sections of Italian society (such as the Sardinian people) and also the complexity of regional, national and ethnic identities in general. In terms of De André's work, the subversion of the established perception of 'society' can also be traced to choices he made that, at first glance, appear to be politically neutral but which prove not to be the case. These include the selection of instruments with particular regional and ethnic associations and the adoption of certain minority languages. My core argument is that, through his or her use of a variety of elements, and not just the explicit meanings of lyrics, an artist may challenge social norms through musical sounds and through the connotative meanings of the sonic characteristics of languages. The impact of a song of social protest is therefore often nuanced and complex and cannot always be grasped if one only looks for a literal reading of the lyrics.

NOTES

1. The Marshall Plan was a plan set up by the US to financially help its allies to recover after World War II. After the end of the war, Italy was in ruins as it had undergone invasion by the Allies and civil war between *partigiani* and *fascisti*. The US considered Italy a strategic country as it was placed between the Soviet Union and the Western world, therefore Italy was admitted into the Marshall Plan and was given 1.5 billion dollars up to 1952.

2. The discourse constituting the *cantautori* is extensively explored in Fabbri (1982), Santoro (2002; 2010), Tomatis (2010; 2014), and Haworth (2015).

3. There is an obvious tension in this, given there was a critique of the commercial naivety of *canzonette* but the *cantautori* still used the industry mechanisms to circulate their songs.

4. The most important account of *canzone d'autore* can be found in Jachia (1998). In this chapter, I use the term *cantautore* as it is used now in the Italian musical scene; that is to say, with the meaning of 'author of *canzone d'autore*'.

5. Following Unification, a canon of Italian literature was created, partially influenced by Francesco De Sanctis's *Storia della letteratura italiana*, a history of Italian literature that was released in 1870 with the aim of creating national unification through literary tradition. This work and the broader debate of that time around the link between literature and Italian national identity created a canon that is dominated by politically motivated writers, namely Dante, Petrarca, Machiavelli, Alfieri, Foscolo, Leopardi and Manzoni to name but a few.

6. De André was born in Genoa on 18 February 1940, into a wealthy bourgeois family. His father, because of his *antifasciste* ideas, had to take refuge during the war in Piedmont but eventually got back to Genoa in 1945. Fabrizio grew up there, and used to frequent working class neighbourhoods in the poorer areas of the city. When he was a teenager he started learning the guitar and writing songs. He released his first works in the early 1960s and achieved his first success in 1968. De André subsequently gave up his almost completed Law degree and pursued a career as a singer-songwriter. Between 1967 and 1973, De André achieved huge national fame thanks to four concept albums (*Tutti morimmo a stento* (1968), *La Buona Novella* (1970), *Non al denaro, non all'amore né al cielo* (1971) and *Storia di un impiegato* (1973)). By the early 1990s, De André's ability as songwriter and singer was established and acknowledged almost unanimously in Italy. In the 1990s he released two albums, *Le Nuvole* (1990) and *Anime Salve* (1996). A tour in the summer of 1998 had to be interrupted and cancelled because of health reasons. On January 11 1999, De André passed away in Milan. Two days after, thousands of people attended his public funeral in Genoa and he was praised as one of the most influential singers and one of the best poets of the last fifty years. The most detailed biography of De André is by Viva (2000). Pistarini and Sassi (2008) gather the most important articles released in the print media during De André's life; The most critical overarching analysis of De André's life and works is Cosi and Ivaldi (2011).

7. Fernanda Pivano (1917–2009) was a major intellectual of post-war Italy and the most influential translator of the American writers of the beat generation.

8. This process of exaltation has occurred to other singer-songwriters, most notably Bob Dylan (especially with the Nobel Prize in 2017) and Leonard Cohen. Nevertheless, even if the identification between singer songwriter and poet is a global phenomenon, in the Italian context this linkage has a specific cultural significance as it connects the singers with a literary tradition that is hegemonic in Italian culture.

9. *Spoon River Anthology* is a collection of poems written by Edgar Lee Masters in 1915. Each poem narrates how a specific citizen of the fictional city of *Spoon River* has lived and died.

10. The title literally means 'Corpses Sunday' but it's a play on words, as 'Domenica delle Palme' (Palm Sunday) sounds almost the same.

11. Curcio was the leader of the *Brigate Rosse* (The Red Brigade), a left-wing paramilitary organisation established in Italy in 1970 that used violent means to seek Italy's removal from NATO (see Ginsborg 1990).

12. Sardinia has been constantly seen as an autonomous region with its own identity forged by the numerous invasions and colonisations by different civilizations and nations throughout the centuries. On this point, see Lilliu (2002).

13. The lyrics of this song are an excerpt from a traditional Sardinian folk song inspired by a seventeenth-century prayer composed by a Jesuit priest.

14. Thrace is an area which covers parts of southeastern Europe, including parts of Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria.

Chapter 14

The Trajectory of Protest Song from Dictatorship to Democracy and the Independence Movement in Catalonia

Lluís Llach and the Catalan Nova Cançó

Núria Borrull

Protest song is usually linked to a movement for social change with the objective of persuasion and the diffusion of ideas. Eyerman and Jamison (1998) point out that social movements are not only political activities, “they also provide spaces for cultural growth and experimentation, for the mixing of musical and other artistic genres and for the infusion of new kinds of meaning into music” (1). In the 1960s, a group of intellectuals in Catalonia, an autonomous region in the north east of Spain experiencing a major independence movement¹, initiated a movement of Catalan song, with the aims of vindicating the presence of Catalan language in the media and popular culture, recovering the memory and poetry of Catalan poets that had been banned by the Franco regime and, in a wider sense, protesting against the dictatorship of General Franco. Focusing on the context of the emergence of “L’Estaca” (The Stake), a song composed in 1968 by Catalan singer-songwriter Lluís Llach (born 1948), this chapter examines the impact of the Catalan song movement, *La Nova Cançó* (New Song), and particularly one of its members, Llach, in the mobilisation of large numbers of people to protest against political repression in Spain. The chapter begins by highlighting two events in recent Spanish history which demonstrate the continuing relevance of “L’Estaca”, years after its release.

In October 2014 a member of the Spanish conservative political party in power at the time, the *Partido Popular* (the *PP*), tried to forbid the performance of “L’Estaca” during the opening ceremony of a short-film festival (Filmets) in Catalonia. Historically, this song had always been played whenever a Catalan short film received an award at this festival. As Rodriguez noted in an *El Món* article on October 26, 2014, on the evening of the opening ceremony, one of the musicians made an announcement: “this morning something very serious happened. Someone who thinks he is in charge has

forbidden us to play “L’Estaca”. I think you should know this”.² Then he started to play the song and, in response, the audience started to sing the lyrics while cries in support of independence were heard.

The same month, *Podemos*, the new Spanish political party, founded in the wake of the anti-establishment, anti-austerity *Indignados* movement of 2011, held their first assembly³. At the closing session, one of the main members gave a speech in which he declared that it was now the time to topple the *PP* because it was endangering democratic freedom in Spain and therefore it was also time again to sing “L’Estaca” by Llach. He explained that the party had decided to play “L’Estaca” to remind the older generation that Spaniards had once been united in the fight against Franco’s regime, and to show the younger generations that the current fight is a legacy of the one that took place forty years ago (La Informacion 2016).

Llach composed “L’Estaca” at the beginning of his career; the song became the hymn of the resistance to Franco’s regime. Since then it has been performed by many singers in Catalonia and the rest of the Spanish state. It has also had considerable international impact, including in the form of a Polish adaptation which became an anthem for the *Solidarnosc* movement⁴. The lyrics of this adaptation, *Mury* (Walls), were written in 1978 by Polish songwriter Jack Kaczmarski, inspired by Llach’s song. According to an interview with Kaczmarski published by the journal *INDEKS* in 1987, the intention of his lyrics was to examine how a song can cease to be the property of its author once it has been appropriated by the masses, who can use it in support of causes which the author had not initially envisaged. Llach himself corroborates this interpretation, explaining that in the 1970s a group of university students from Poland went to Barcelona and bought some of Llach’s records in order to translate them (Baudriller 2000). The song gradually became popular in the streets of Poland as a symbol for the workers’ fight and finally it was chosen as the anthem for Lech Walesa’s trade union. Similarly, “L’Estaca” has been used in Corsica, translated as ‘chains’. Yasser Jerade produced a Tunisian version called “Dima, Dima”, as an anthem for the Tunisian revolution in 2011.

I’ve heard L’Estaca in Spanish, Greek, Lithuanian, Japanese, Swedish. I feel very honoured. (Llach in Baudriller 2000, 61)

When an adaptation of “L’Estaca” is sung, most people may not be aware of its origins. Eyerman and Jamison point out that songs that have had great impact have often appropriated tunes which are embedded in cultural traditions: “In social movements, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade, and after the movements fade away as political forces, the music remains as a memory and as a potential way to inspire new waves

of mobilization” (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 1–2). Elaborating on this theme, this chapter will consider why a song, which was composed in 1968 to protest against a dictatorial regime in Spain, has had and still maintains such a powerful resonance both inside and outside Spain; and why, given its history and diffusion, anyone would try to ban it now. I argue that the answer to these questions lies in the trajectory of the political relationship between Spain and Catalonia since 1975, culminating in the independence movement in Catalonia, and the resistance to this movement on the part of the governing *PP*. I briefly summarise the beginnings of Catalan New Song and its trajectory, focusing on Lluís Llach, his role and the role of his songs, in popular protest during the dictatorship and the transition to democracy. Having elaborated the significance of Catalan New Song to historical protest, I outline the development and character of contemporary protests movements in the region with particular reference to the Catalan independence movement. I argue that Catalan New Song has played a pivotal role in the survival and normalization of Catalan language, Catalan identity and Catalan music and conclude by arguing for the ongoing relevance of Catalan protest song in the current political context.

CATALAN NEW SONG, THE BEGINNINGS

After the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the advent of the dictatorship of General Franco (1939–1975), public use of languages other than Spanish was banned amid heavy censorship and repression. In 1961 a group of Catalan artists and intellectuals, *Els Setze Jutges*, initiated a cultural and political resistance movement through song, *La Nova Cançó*, arguably marking the first protest song movement in Spain⁵. Originating amongst the bourgeoisie of Barcelona, Catalan New Song was sparked by a seminal article by Serrahima, entitled *Ens calen cançons d'ara* (We need new songs for our times), published in 1959 and spread by two recording companies which were founded with the aim of promoting Catalan singers/songwriters: *Edigsa*, founded in 1961 and *Concentric*, established in 1964.

Fischlin and Heble (2003, 9) point out that “music making is the most universal form of human expression besides language and therefore that it must play a key role in imagining what it means to achieve social justice, freedom and meaningful community”. Catalan New Song contained both elements; music⁶ and the linguistic component—the lyrics were in Catalan which was, and still is, a strong symbol of Catalan identity. Catalan was a repressed language at the time and therefore the use of Catalan was in itself subversive. Thanks to this movement, Catalonia experienced a renaissance of its language and culture through song, which, at the time, was the means

of expression least controlled by the regime's extreme censorship (Baudriller 2000). I argue that Catalan New Song, in opening up new ground for public discourse, raised political awareness amongst a generation that had not endured the suffering of the civil war (1936–1939) and its aftermath but had been brought up in a 'normalised' dictatorship. While its roots lay with intellectuals, in some cases with little formal musical background, the movement soon managed to attract young, talented musicians and songwriters who were instrumental in its popularisation.

Llach joined *Els Setze Judges* in 1967 and his career as a singer/songwriter was launched. At a personal level, he became immersed in the highly politicized sphere of the intellectual bourgeoisie. As Llach attests:

Els Setze Judges were for me my university education. I learnt a great deal from them. They showed me that I had a country, and a culture and the merit and courage to sing in the language that you express yourself in". He adds: "My first steps as a songwriter were motivated by a mixture of needs, the need to express myself and the need to satisfy my own curiosity and it wasn't until later that I discovered the power and efficacy that a songwriter can have. (in Vileu 2014, 18–21)

Llach has demonstrated longstanding commitment to struggle against social injustice and the preservation of minority cultures. Vileu (2014, 9) describes Llach as "our warrior of Catalan song". The songwriter himself verbalised his commitment in the album *Viatge a Ítaca*, an adaptation of the poem "Ithaca" by the Greek Constantin Kavafis, in which he expresses the essence of his philosophy of life: life as an adventure in search of utopia and the firm decision not to give up on that goal either as a community or as an individual (Jurado and Morales 2006, 162). "Further, we should always go much further, further than the present that chains us" (Llach 1975, *Viatge a Ítaca*).

Llach reflects on the power of music and song, specifically on why certain musical notes, harmonies, rhythms, provoke an emotion:

It's magic, it's an irrational path. The composer is caught amongst sounds, harmonic nuances, a voice, and three minutes, the time to be touched by it, three minutes in which to express an idea, create a melody and create a means of popular communication but at the same time three minutes to liberate oneself and escape. Afterwards it is down to the listener to imagine, recreate the melody that the composer wrote. Music must always be an irrational, emotional and direct language. (in Baudriller 2000, 60–61)

Llach uses the words emotional, irrational and even magic. In a similar way, Peddie explains that our relationship to music is "never quite as palpable as we would wish, never quite as definable as we would want". This is

particularly true when popular music and social protest are brought together because both are “too diffuse, too widespread a dissenting tradition to be confined to a genre, a category or a time period” (Peddie 2006, xvii).

“L’ESTACA” 1968. THE MUSICAL AND LYRICAL APPEAL OF THE SONG

“L’Estaca” belongs to Llach’s third LP, *Els Éxits de Lluís Llach* (Llach 1968). The main character of the song, old Siset, makes a young boy aware that we are all tied to a stake, which functions as a metaphor for the dictatorship.

Old Siset used to talk to me early in the morning
while we sat at the doorstep,
waiting for sunrise and watching the carts go by.

“Can’t you see the stake where we’re all tied up?
if we cannot topple it, we will never be free
if we all pull hard, we will knock it down, it cannot last much longer
we will knock it down.”

“It must be quite rotten by now,
if I pull hard from one end, and you pull hard from the other,
we will knock it down and we’ll be able to walk free”

“But Siset, my hands are worn out and when my strength fails me
the stake seems bigger and heavier. I know for sure it must be rotten,
but it’s still so heavy that often my strength fails me.
Please, Siset, sing me your song again”

Old Siset is no longer singing, death took him away
and now I’m all alone sitting at the doorstep.

But when I see the youngsters go by, I get up to sing
The last song from Siset, the song that he taught me.
If we all pull hard, we will knock it down...⁷ (Llach 1968).

“L’Estaca” takes the form of a popular waltz. The pianist for the LP increased the tempo slightly in order to make it livelier while maintaining the strong pulse of the waltz. Levitin (2008, 232–34) explains that the choice of music is strongly linked with the search for identity, noting that “this ties into the evolutionary idea of music as a vehicle for social cohesion”. Therefore, he continues, “we are more likely to enjoy music that belongs to our background and cognitive schemes”. He adds that “tempo is also a major factor in conveying emotion and that songs with a fast tempo are usually regarded as happy” (61) and that we listen to music that has a pulse, “something you can tap your foot to” (169). The music of “L’Estaca” has all the above characteristics. The simple, repetitive rhythm with a euphoric crescendo at the end,

which becomes almost hypnotic, is probably one of the characteristics that helped the song to become an anthem against the dictatorship in Spain. The waltz format may explain the success of the song in many countries where such a form is familiar and loved.

The lyrics' universal metaphors of solidarity against repression helped the song to become a theme of a universal struggle against injustice and finally transcend the author himself. However, in the context of Spain and the time period in which the song was released, the most important aspect of the song is probably the preservation of memory and breaking of a silence imposed by the dictatorship. Llach was brought up in a conservative and religious household. His father was the mayor of his town and a Franco supporter. Nevertheless, when Llach reached adolescence, he began to question the values he had been brought up with. At that time he met the grandfather of one of his close friends who, before the civil war, had been a member of the Republican left party, and who became the inspiration for old Siset. Llach and Siset used to have long conversations through which he learned of events that had been totally silenced. Llach states: "I would say that fear provoked this attitude. The dictatorship provoked fear amongst the left wing members of society, but even amongst the very ones that supported Franco. Fear was absolute: it existed" (in Jurado and Morales 2006, 36).

By the 1950s, Franco had consolidated his absolute and undisputed power in Spain. As Preston points out "He had tamed the monarchist opposition, crushed the guerrilla resistance, and seen the Church and the Army become more Francoist in their loyalties. A fearsome apparatus of repression remained in place" (Preston 1993, 603). Surprisingly, "L'Estaca" was not banned until a year after its release. Ironically, its prohibition was probably the main reason why it was appropriated by the people. At the end of a concert in 1969, Llach decided to play the song and not sing it as it was only the lyrics that had been banned, spontaneously, the audience started to sing it and light candles; from then on this used to happen continually at his concerts; the audience had appropriated the song. Llach joked that "the royalties for the copyright of the song should have gone to those who for years censored it" (Mainat 1982, 37).

It is clear that memory is still an issue in Spanish politics. Unlike other countries in the world, which have decried events from their past, the Spanish government has never condemned Francoism. The basic principles of the Spanish constitution ratified in 1978, with the tacit 'Pact of Oblivion' as a backdrop, cannot be challenged or changed in any way. During the period of transition to democracy, bitter divisions still existed between the victors and the vanquished of the Civil War with several tragic incidents and attacks, many resulting in deaths. The majority of politicians at that time felt that the only way forward was a mixture of amnesty and amnesia and

it was decided that all groups would share equal responsibility for the Civil War. As Preston notes: “The pact of oblivion saw a curtain of silence drawn over the past in the interests of a still-fragile democracy” (Preston 2007, 12). Nowadays, the main democratic parties in Spain seem to have accepted the status quo, but newer parties challenge it, supporting projects which seek to uncover the past; that is why *Podemos* claim they decided to play “L’Estaca” as the hymn for the closure of their first Assembly. In an article in *El País* on December 12, 2009, Muñoz Molina (born 1956), a Spanish writer and journalist, elaborates the importance of the preservation of memory: “One has to explain sometimes to the new generation that, before they were born, freedom, culture and the Catalan language were all part of a common cause that we—the anti-Franco—defended”, significantly he adds: “the Spain that is always confronting the Catalans and behaves in a hostile manner towards Catalonia is an invention of the major present political forces”.

AFTER “L’ESTACA”: REPRESSION OF CATALAN NEW SONG

In 1969, Llach gave his first concert in the *Palau de la Música* in Barcelona signalling his definitive move towards a professional career as a songwriter. He also made his debut in Madrid, where the audience gathered at the doors of *Teatro Español* amongst a display of police force. By the mid to late 1960s Franco’s brutal and anachronistic regime was increasingly under siege from within, both politically and culturally, and as a consequence, censorship became more systematic and stringent. Soon Llach started to experience the oppression of the regime, as did most members of the movement. Most of his concerts were prohibited. His songs were banned on radio and television. Llach’s artistic career became impossible, particularly after a concert in Havana, Cuba, where he discussed the repression of the regime in Spain. As a result, he went into exile in Paris. Llach consolidated his reputation as a songwriter in France through several concerts at the Olympia Theatre. Vileu (2014) describes them as “a definitive triumph of Catalan New Song in Paris”. In 1974, a year before Franco’s death, Llach returned to Barcelona and to the *Palau de la Música*. The audience received him with a long ovation.

One of the reasons why Llach has become such an emblematic figure of Catalan popular culture is that, throughout his artistic career, he has acted as a chronicler of events, from the dictatorship through the transitional period and democracy itself. His repertoire encompasses songs that cover life and love, but also bitter criticism of key events in Spanish politics. The song “I Si Canto Trist” (1974; if I sing in a sad tone), for example, is a homage to the memory of Salvador Puig Antich, an anarchist student garrotted in 1974⁸,

which Llach lyrically responded to by penning: “If I sing in a sad tone is because I cannot erase the fear from my poor eyes” (Ibid.).

THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AND DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN

There is a widespread perception that Spain transitioned from a dictatorship to a democracy without difficulty after Franco’s death in 1975. However, this was not strictly the case; for example, in 1976 during a general strike in response to the sacking of 70 steel workers in Vitoria (Basque Country), members of the police forced the strikers to leave the church where they were holding an assembly using tear gas and then opened fire on them, killing five protesters and badly wounding many others. For Llach this event was proof that the transitional system was flawed and was, in some respects, fighting for the survival of the old regime (Borrull 2014). Once again, he responded musically to the tragic events, and using the requiem form, he composed a song called “Campanades a Morts” (1977; Bell Tolls for the Dead). Amongst the artist’s songs, this is the one that shows most fury: “Assassins of reasons, assassins of life. May you never find peace for the rest of your days, and when you die, let our memories haunt you forever” (Llach 1977).

1975 and 1976 were the years when the most famous mass concerts by various members of Catalan New Song were held. Soldevilla (1993), Jurado and Morales (2006) and Vileu (2014) point to those concerts as the culmination of Catalan New Song gathering, one last time, all the political factions opposing the regime. Llach declared to Vileu (2014) that he did not mind that his concerts were understood as political acts. Vileu maintains that Llach’s concerts in the *Palau d’Esports* in 1976, attended by 25.000 spectators, made him not only the most important referent of Catalan song, but the man with the greatest capacity to gather political forces and mobilise large groups. He states that Llach’s only weapons were “his music and his lyrics full of sensibility, tenderness and a strong message. But his songs have been more than mere music and lyrics, they’ve provoked an almost inexplicable phenomenon in the world of communication, because they’ve become an irrational and magic nexus” (Vileu 2014, 9).

In 1977 Spain held the first democratic elections since the dictatorship. However, repression continued in the artistic scene: Albert Boadella, the theatre director, was imprisoned for his play “La Torna” (1977)⁹ in which he questioned the reasons for Puig Antich’s execution. Again, as a response to this event and to protest against limitations on the freedom of speech, Llach composed a song “Companys no és això” (El Meu Amic El Mar 1978; This is not it comrades).

REJECTION OF CATALAN NEW SONG: IS THERE A PLACE FOR PROTEST SONG IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY?

In 1985, while some factions of the media stated that Catalan New Song was at its end and that there was no point to Catalan song anymore, especially protest song, Llach gave a concert in the *Camp Nou* to an audience of 103,000. At that time, it was considered to be the concert with the biggest audience ever gathered by a popular music singer. Llach performed songs from “*Campanades a morts*” with an interlude of strong, critical messages against the Spanish government’s behaviour during the tragic events of 1976 in Vitoria and their failure to take responsibility for the killings. Llach described the concert as “a victory over those who believe that euphoria and will are a thing of the past and over the political mediocrity which is being fomented from officialdom” (Vileu 2014, 137).

By the 1990s the movement of *La Nova Cançó* had been abandoned even by Catalan politicians, most of whom had supported it during the dictatorship. Once democracy had been established and many of those politicians had acquired positions of power, they were no longer interested in protest song. A member of the Catalan Socialist Party, for example, questioned the fact that Llach was still writing protest songs when there was ‘supposedly’ nothing to protest about (Jurado and Morales 2006).

The 1990s saw the emergence of Catalan Rock, with a concert in the *Palau Sant Jordi* in Barcelona involving several Catalan rock groups who sing exclusively in Catalan. For the first time there was a generation that had been educated in Catalan and wanted to listen to rock songs sung in their mother tongue. The young generation of the 1990s needed to find another referent to express their rebellion and they embraced rock music as it differentiated them from their parents’ generation who had embraced New Song. As Stenmeijer (2005) argues “Rock music symbolised everything the Generalísimo (Franco) had gagged, muzzled and even tried to eradicate root and branch: hedonism, hybridity, change, freedom; in short, everything Franco considered to be non-Spanish” (245). Catalan rock groups had the support of many Catalan politicians of the party in control of the autonomous Catalan government given that they seemed to have a less earnest discourse than New Song (although some of them also contained significant elements of protest; Borrull 2014).

Llach continued his trajectory through the nineties producing a variety of albums, some of them in collaboration with the Catalan poet Miquel Martí i Pol. *Un Pont de Mar Blava* (Picap 1993) is an album that defines the Mediterranean identity, identified through the triangle formed by Greece, the Maghreb and *Els Països Catalans*¹⁰. In this album, Greece represents the

foundations of Occidental culture, the Maghreb symbolises the future of hope and change, and *Els Països Catalans* represent minority cultures¹¹. In 2000 with a show entitled *Germanies*, Llach expressed the need to reconceptualise *Els Països Catalans* as an expression of the future and not just a concept belonging to the past: the show is an allegorical tribute to the unity of *Els Països Catalans* but also recognition of their new and diverse reality (Vileu 2014). According to the Statistics Institute of Catalonia, there are over one million immigrants living in Catalonia at the time of writing. Llach explains that “from time immemorial, Catalonia has been a welcoming country of cultures in transit, of ‘mestizaje’ of human beings that have a dream and are in search of security and that his idea of nationalism does not carry flags, nor vindicates borders or particular ethnic backgrounds” (Vileu 2014, 85).

In 2007, Llach gave his farewell concert in his native town Verges. That same year the Catalan Parliament presented *Els Setze Judges* with an award. For the first time, the pioneering work of singers/songwriters of Catalan New Song received institutional recognition.

THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN CATALONIA

Although Llach is considered as a pioneer of *La Nova Cançó* (Mainat 1982; Braudiller 2000; Jurado and Morales 2006; Vileu 2014), he has also continually demonstrated his commitment to activism, first against Franco’s regime and later defending what is nowadays the cause of Independence for Catalonia. He is one of the founders of the ANC (Catalan National Assembly), an organization whose objective is to gain independence for the region; he has permitted the ANC to use his popular image and songs. In 2015 Llach ran for political office and was elected as a member of the Catalan Parliament in the regional elections of September 27, 2015, which the Catalan Parliament took to be a plebiscite for citizens to decide on independence since the Spanish government had forbidden an ‘official’ referendum (Parlament.cat).

The Spanish Constitution of 1978, required Catalonia and the Basque Country to remain within the Spanish state and contribute to its modernisation in exchange for a certain degree of autonomy and respect for their own culture and institutions. Guibernau (2012) points out that Catalonia played a key role in the democratization of Spain by strongly supporting EU membership, providing economic and industrial leadership and committing to support the unity of the Spanish state. However, loyalty and support did not pay off as Spain reinforced centralism. According to Guibernau (1996), the common impetus for any movement calling for a minority’s independence or greater autonomy is dissatisfaction with its current situation. And this is certainly the case in Catalonia at the time of writing. In Partal’s view

There's no alternative. With the pact of the Transition so broken, so misinterpreted in such a savage way, what is the point of remaining in a state that does not respect us, that steals from us, that treats us badly and is disloyal to our institutions? The Spanish problem is not us the Catalans, or the Basques, or the Galicians, the worst problem that Spain faces today is Spanish nationalism. (Partal 2013, 20–21)

Guibernau (2013) states that “We are living through a period defined by a ‘downgrading of democracy’ and that the dynamic, progressive nature of democracy is often turned into an ossified set of principles presented, by some as ‘static’. Dialogue as a means of reaching agreements and as a method to resolve disputes is often replaced by arguments and actions forced upon people” (73). In my opinion, this characterisation describes the approach taken by the *Partido Popular* in responding to Catalan calls for independence.

Many politicians, academics (Colino 2009, Muñoz 2013, Strubell 2011), and members of the general public, take the view that the beginnings of the independence movement in Catalonia can be traced back to the year 2000, and the mandate achieved by President Aznar and the centralist (i.e. anti-devolution), neoliberal *PP* via a landslide victory. The then president of the Catalan autonomous government, proposed a new statute for Catalonia which was supported by 90 percent of the Catalan Parliament. Subsequently it was approved by the Spanish Parliament and the Senate after going through significant modifications in order to comply with the Constitution (Colino 2009). Finally, it was endorsed by Catalans in a referendum in 2006. The *PP*'s response was to immediately challenge it and in 2010 the Spanish High Court suppressed 14 articles and modified 30 more (Nationalia 2010). In response to that event and just a year before retiring, Llach composed the song “Toçudament Alçats” (2006; Stubbornly Risen): “Once again and free from nostalgia we give ourselves the right to write our own future.”

In 2012, the Spanish Minister for Education, introducing educational reforms, provocatively declared that one of their objectives was to make ‘Catalans more Spanish’. The reforms set out to make the official languages of the state other than Spanish optional in schools, when for example Catalan had been the language of education since the establishment of democracy. The minister was accused by left wing parties of behaving in the spirit of Franco's education system. The proposed reforms bring to mind the words of a Valencian songwriter, and member of the New Song movement, Ovidi Montllor (1942–1995): “There are people that don't like that other people speak, write or think in Catalan. They are the same people that don't like that other people speak, write or think” (Viasona 2001).

The *PP* has also been very active, in their objective of dividing *Els Països Catalans*, campaigning in Valencia against what they label ‘Catalan

supremacy', limiting the possibilities of education through Catalan, and terminating the transmission to the Valencian geographical area of Catalan TV3, the primary public broadcasting television channel of Catalonia. In the cultural and musical sphere, TV3 used to be the medium in Valencia whereby songwriters could disseminate their albums, video clips and concerts to all Catalan-speaking areas. According to another Valencian songwriter, Per Xambó, the disconnection of TV3 does not make sense even from a political point of view as it goes against freedom of information. He also points to the absurdity of the situation when "one can view TV channels from around the world but cannot view one in your own language and from a neighbour's community" (Viasona 2001).

In the Balearic Islands, a judgement by the Spanish Constitutional Court, backed by the *PP*, has removed any requirement for civil servants to have Catalan. The teacher's strike in 2014—the largest in the contemporary history of the Balearics, reflected the social movement against these measures, particularly the reduction of hours allocated to the teaching of Catalan and its use as a vehicular language in schools. The *PP* has exercised considerable pressure on other political parties in the Balearics to reject the notion of *Els Països Catalans* (Nichols 2013).

After a referendum on sovereignty proposed by the Catalan government was banned by the Spanish government on September 2014, the then Catalan president, Artur Mas proposed a non-binding referendum backed up by a clause in the statute of autonomy where there is provision for consultation. On November 9 2014, Catalans were invited to polling stations to give their opinion on whether the region should become a state and whether it should be an independent one. According to Catalan authorities, 2.32 million voted—a turnout of 40 percent—with 81 percent answering affirmatively to both questions. The non-binding referendum was deemed unconstitutional by the Spanish government which immediately proceeded to pass a bill through parliament which would give the Constitutional Court the power to suspend elected officials while their actions were being reviewed as potentially unconstitutional. Two days after the controversial referendum, Mas and two other members of his government were summoned to appear in court to answer accusations of civil disobedience and they were accused of several crimes, including the misuse of public funds in the organisation of the vote (Jones 2017). On the day of Mas's appearance before the tribunal a crowd of about 6,000 people gathered outside the court building and received him with cries in favour of independence, singing both the Catalan national anthem and "L'Estaca". The song, which Llach had not sung for many years, was again used as a form of protest but also to emphasize the perceived authoritarianism of the party in power. It is evident that a movement that started in the 1960s and, in particular, the song "L'Estaca" are again becoming relevant.

CONTEMPORARY CATALAN MUSICAL PRODUCTION

As mentioned before, the production of Catalan protest song diminished by the 1990s; it was displaced by Catalan Rock, a genre which also evidenced elements of protest, and later by new movements such as ‘Ska Rock’ and also Catalan Pop. *Obrint Pas* is an example of the Ska Rock movement which is very indebted to Catalan New Song. *Obrint Pas* is a musical group from Valencia which was formed in 1993. It followed in the footsteps of a very successful Catalan group *Companya Eléctrica D’harma* which appeared at the end of the New Song movement, a mainly instrumental band that started to fuse Catalan folk with jazz and rock in the 1970s. Similarly, “Obrint Pas” (2000) fuses Valencian folk music with rock, ska and reggae using a mixture of electrical instruments and traditional Valencian ones. Their song lyrics are an expression of social and political protest, as well as a vindication of cultural and linguistic rights, defending the unity of *Els Països Catalans*. In an interview with *El País* in 2013, Xavier Sarrià, the singer, states that he feels extremely proud of the fact that the band has always sung in Valencian and of creating an alternative musical scene in Valencia, “something which seems impossible, in the particular hostile political context of the moment”.

Xeic, a band from southern Catalonia describe themselves as performers of festive protest music, a term that refers to the popular music used during the celebration of popular festivities. In 2013, their song “Tornarem” was used to promote *La Via Catalana* (the Catalan Way), a 480-kilometre human chain in support of the right to self-determination in Catalonia. The promotion video starts with images on a TV set of the Minister for Education, asserting in a session of the Spanish Parliament that one of the purposes of the education law of 2012 was “to make Catalan students more Spanish”. Subsequently, the music starts: “We will sing victory again, we will be what we used to be again ...language on the attack” (*Xeic Tornarem*”; Batecs 2000). In Catalonia, the reforms to education law were perceived as an attack on efforts made in Catalonia to make Catalan the language of daily use with the program of *Normalització Llingüística* (the normalisation of Catalan language) that started at the beginning of democracy in Spain (Llengua.gencat.cat Act no.1/1998).

The *ANC*, together with *Omnium Cultural*, an organisation that promotes Catalan culture and the arts, have been organising mass events to demand the right to decide on independence for Catalonia. In 2010 *Omnium Cultural* was involved in the filming of a television advertisement in which around 40 famous people in Catalonia asked citizens to participate in a demonstration with the slogan “Som una nació” (We are a nation). This demonstration, held on July 10, was organised to highlight popular rejection of the constitutional challenge presented by the Spanish Constitutional Court to the text of the

Catalan statute and to demonstrate in support of the right to vote for Catalan independence. The song “Somniem” (1979; We dream) by Llach was used as the soundtrack of the television advertisement (El Periodico 2010). Once again, the relevance of Catalan protest song is evident; it continues to be used by organizations and political parties to mobilise its citizens. “We dream, of course we do. We dream constantly...we want the impossible in order to achieve what is possible” (Somniem 1979).

Statistics show that Catalan music production has increased significantly since 1990, with 57 albums recorded, 147 albums in 2000 and 422 in 2010 (Viasona 2011) coinciding with the increased momentum of the independence movement in Catalonia, which has also sparked several new versions of Llach’s songs and those by other members of *La Nova Cançó*. It may be, therefore, that the present context provides for the renaissance of a genre, and the advent of newer, related types of Catalan song, whose significance some had imagined to be a thing of the past. Llach’s legacy will endure regardless. In the words of Jurado and Morales “when Llach retires from the stage we will feel a bit more lonely, but his example and his music will remain with us. We will have his music and the lyrics that he wrote on his personal journey to Ithaca, which has also been our collective journey” (Jurado and Morales 2006, 411–12).

NOTES

1. For information on the process of nation building in Spain see Borrull (2014, 189–93).

2. All translations of lyrics (for academic purposes) and quotes are my own.

3. The movement of the Indignados, also known as the 15-M movement, was an anti-establishment and anti-austerity civil movement, named after a protest that occurred on 15 May 2011. For further reading see D. Beas, “How Spain’s 15-M movement is redefining politics”, *The Guardian*, October 15, 2011.

4. *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity). Founded in 1980, it was the first independent Polish Trade Union in a Soviet block country (Britannica 2017, accessed October 1, 2017).

5. For more information on the Catalan New Song movement and its beginnings, see Borrull (2014).

6. Catalan New Song was initially inspired by the French *Chançon*, and drew on old Catalan ballads and Mediterranean musical influences, which are quite distinct from Spanish music. On musical influences on Catalan New Song, see Borrull (2014, 192–93).

7. Copyright 1968 by Lluís Llach Grande, Barcelona (España). Edición autorizada en exclusiva para todos los países a EDICIONES QUIROGA, Alcalá, 70, 28009 Madrid (España). Copyright cedido en 1985 a SEEM, S. A., Alcalá, 70, 28009 Madrid (España).

8. Salvador Puig Antich (1948–1974) a member of the Iberian Liberation Movement, executed by Franco’s regime after being tried in a court martial, accused of having fired the shots that killed a civil guard. This event stirred international uproar, but Franco dismissed all petitions for the commutation of the execution. Puig Antich was executed along with Heinz Chez, an East German citizen who had also killed a civil guard but with no political reasons. This was the last use of the *garrote* as a method of execution in Spain. See Kate Sharpley Library, “Thirty years on from the execution of Salvador Puig Antich his sisters are to try to reopen the trial that led to his being garrotted”.

9. “La Torna”, 1977. Theatre production by Albert Boadella and his company *Els Joglars*. A farcical recreation of the last days of Heinz Chez. His execution was seen as an excuse for Franco to dismiss the political relevance of Puig Antich’s execution. The play was prohibited, Boadella imprisoned and a court martial was initiated against him and other members of the company. Boadella escaped from hospital and went abroad. He was not formally acquitted until 1981 (elsjoglars 2017, “La Torna”, accessed October 1, 2017).

10. A non-official term which defines the territories where different varieties of Catalan are traditionally spoken (Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic islands, some territories of the south of France and the city of Alguero in Sardinia) (Encyclopedia.com 2017, “Països Catalans”, accessed October 1, 2017).

11. Although Catalan is spoken by around 9 million people, Catalonia does not have the status of state, and therefore Catalan is considered a minority language and culture within the Spanish state (Encyclopedia.com 2017, “Països Catalans”, accessed October 1, 2017).

Chapter 15

Making the Everyday Political

The Case of Janāpādā Geyalu [Folk Songs] as Protest Songs in Telangana State Formation Movement in India

Rahul Sambaraju

In this chapter, I examine what I term “protest song-performances”¹ in the context of a protest movement for the formation of Telangana state in the southern part of the Indian Republic, which was subsequently achieved in 2014. These folksong performances are in a style that is indigenous to the region of Telangana and are routinely used for a range of social and political situations such as news announcements, festival occasions, and political mobilizations (Thirumali 2013). I show how such performances incorporate and transform everyday actions and activities into protest actions and do so through an analysis of in situ performances during marches, sit-ins and other protest-related political events. Since these protest performances are also, following Feld (1984), “texted-performed”—in having a life as texts and also being occasioned in specific instances—the chapter examines how these particular song-performances construct and constitute the protest.

Traditional music of this part of South India can be broadly classified into classical and what might be termed ‘folk’ music. Roghair (2000, 891) argues that the actual term ‘folk’ music is not ‘endogenous’ to this region and that it is common to refer to these musical practices as ‘*janāpādā geyalu/geetalu*’, which derives from the terms ‘janā’—people, ‘pādā’—ways/practices, and ‘geyalu/geetalu’—music/songs: ‘songs in the ways of people’ (also see: Sadanandam 2008). In other words, these musical practices are intertwined with peoples’ ‘everyday’ practices and actions. As a result, throughout this chapter I have decided to use the term ‘folk’ music and musical practices to refer to song-performances.

The distinctions between ‘classical’ and ‘folk’ musical practices are circumferentially involved in the protest events being examined here. First, folk music practices are oral tradition practices and involve sounds of daily life such as those of agricultural and field work tools or livestock and deal

with work and religious rituals (Roghair 2000). Second, classical music is routinely intertwined with the linguistic practices of Sanskrit, which was a language of the elites (Anand 1999), and associated with 'classical' epics or standardized religious practices ordained by those in socially powerful castes² (Sadanandam 2008). Folk musical practices are divorced from the language of Sanskrit, and are in languages or language forms spoken by those who are not elites and are rarely from socially powerful castes. Their religious practices are also different in involving different gods, religious affiliations, and rituals (Säävälä 2001). Third, while the oral narration of mythologies, historical events, and heroic tales is common to both classical and folk musical practices, in the folk musical tradition the narrations are different, either in content or form, from those in the classical music tradition (Beck 2000). Folk music practices then, may be best understood as being closer to people's everyday lives. These music practices are functional in constituting religious, festive and other practices (Roghair 2000; Sadanandam 2008). Perhaps for these reasons folk music practices are routinely involved in protest movements.

Examining earlier peasant movements against the then feudal practices between 1946 and 1951 in Telangana region, Dhanaraju (2012) shows the central involvement of various forms of folk art in these movements. He argues that folk music and popular songs³, such as religious and devotional songs, romantic songs and lullabies were imbued with or transformed into political messages in protest movements. Dhanaraju claims that one reason for this is that these forms of folk music involve routine aspects of people's lives and so were easily available for mobilisation in times of political instability. Dhanaraju (2014) ascribes this to features of the social context, such as those of pervasive illiteracy and poorer conditions for many due to the then ongoing feudal practices. He argues that the everyday embeddedness of these musical practices, such as their involvement in work rituals, religious and social activities and even personal or familial activities, was one reason why folk art including musical practices was a vehicle for expressing and addressing people's concerns.

While music and musical practices can be examined for their relations with political actions, the forms and properties of these relations have received varying treatment from researchers. Some examine how song structure reflects aspects of social structure (Lomax 1962) or illustrate how songs and musical practices maintain social structure and organisation (Feld 1984). Other researchers treat music and musical practices themselves as specific instances of social action (Small 1998). On the latter approach, musical practices are examined for their in situ uses that are not necessarily linked to forms of social structure or organisation. Christopher Small argues for treating music as doing actions just as words may be used to perform actions

(Austin 1962). This “musicking” is defined as “...to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance” (Small 1998, 12). A central claim in Small’s argument is the shift from focusing on music as representing or expressing some content to considering it as *doing* things and accomplishing social action in its own right. Rather than ascribing unique properties such as those of bringing people together (McNeill 1995), this approach foregrounds how the production and consumption of music work to construct, promote, and maintain particular forms of social organisation such as class (Small 1998) or race/ethnicity (Roy 2004).

What this means for protest songs and musical practices is that protest itself maybe be accomplished in and through these practices. For instance, researchers show how musicking embeds either mundane activities, such as running and exercising, or political activities such as protesting (DeNora 2002). Hagen (2011) shows how in late 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia, mundane musicking activities such as listening to compact discs or limited play records was an act of resistance against the ongoing hegemonic culture. Likewise Paretskaya (2015) illustrates how a particular protest group for democratic citizens’ rights in Wisconsin, United States of America, employ music in their protest. She particularly draws attention to how protest music embeds activities for redressal seeking. Protest music can then be thought of as a performance that accomplishes various protest-related actions. For current purposes, this means that protest song-performances are both embedded in particular socio-political contexts and, because these afford the accomplishment of particular social actions, also constitute and construct contexts. In the following section I apply these ideas to the broader socio-political context of social movements and the Telangana State in India.

STATE FORMATION: A HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXTUALISATION

Telangana State was officially founded on June 2, 2014 with Hyderabad as its capital. State formation in independent India involved the amalgamation and division of erstwhile governed geo-political entities into states based on aspects of regionalism or regional identity (Forrester 1970); access to resources such as water (Celio, Scott and Giordano 2010); and linguistic identities (Suri 2002). Telangana region was part of Hyderabad Princely State under the rule of Nizams⁴ until 1948, when it was annexed into the Union of India via political and military means, usually referred to as ‘police action’ (Seshadri 1970). From 1956 until 2014, this region was part of Andhra Pradesh (AP).

Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956, and included areas under the Madras Presidency and the Telangana regions of the Hyderabad Princely State⁵, to include peoples who primarily spoke Telugu. A prominent feature of this amalgamation was ensuring that the people of Telangana were accorded appropriate political representation, administrative control, and access to guarantees in education and public sector employment (Ram Reddy and Sharma 1979)⁶. However, several of these assurances were voided in subsequent years leading to apparent problems for the people of Telangana (Acharya 1979). While demands for rights and access, and against feudal oppression, were ongoing since before the formation of the Indian Republic, the demands for a distinct state only started in 1969 (Ram 2007). Agitation and protests for the formation of Telangana State intensified under the political banner of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) from 2009 (The Hindu 2014) culmination in various marches and non-cooperation movements. After many high-profile protests, the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Bill was approved by the president of India, making Telangana the twenty-ninth state in the Indian Republic in March 2014, with its official founding on June 2, 2014. Against this backdrop I examine song-performances in settings where folk musical practices attended to the demands for the formation of a separate Telangana State.

SAMPLING METHODS AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

I have examined video recordings of protest song-performances during the protests for the formation of Telangana State. The performances were accessed from the video-hosting site YouTube⁷ using the following search terms: “Telangana”, “udhyamam” [protest], “songs”, “paata” [song] and with any of these terms “Gaddar”, “Goreti”, and “Vimalakka”, for the period between January 2009 and January 2014, as the protests intensified during this period. The latter set of terms refers to names of well-known poets and singers associated with the protest movement.⁸ While the search yielded several ‘hits’, such selection criteria ensured, where possible, that these were indeed live performance recordings in protest situations such as gatherings, sit-ins and marches that were applied to 200 videos. This procedure yielded a final sample of eighty-six videos of varying lengths. A random sampling procedure was operationalised to select one third (24) of these recordings. From those selected the video recordings were further assessed for their clarity, content, and contextual fit. Particular sections of the videos were then transcribed using the Jeffersonian Lite (Jefferson 2004) system of transcription. The video transcripts in Telugu were translated into English and a sample of these was ratified by a professional English-Telugu translator for accuracy

and in order to retain the sense of descriptions. Select parts, which attended to the protest and the concerns of those involved in protest, were chosen for a detailed analysis using the procedure outlined below⁹.

I analysed song-performances as texts and performances and my focus was on the sorts of social actions accomplished. I employed techniques of discourse analysis (McKinlay and McVittie 2008), which allow for an explication of social action through treating discourse, in the form of talk or text, as a topic of study in its own right. Discourse analysts examine how people use discourse to construct various versions of actions, events and people in accomplishing social action. Therefore social actions are examined from the perspectives of people themselves rather than from that of the researcher¹⁰.

My analysis of the video transcripts examined these as accomplishing ‘protest-related actions’ through the perspectives of what the singer-performers and audience members or chorus were accomplishing. I looked at how these song-performances construct particular events as related to the claims and demands of the protest, how actions and activities were constructed and legitimized, and, how the outcomes of the protest were managed. In this way, I treated the song-performances as “live” actions that attend to the concerns of the song-performers, fellow protest participants, and other audiences (Roy 2010; Small 1998). However, I treated the video-recordings as stable reproductions of the song-performance and, at this stage, did not interrogate the production of the song-performance as a particular kind of song-performance, through video editing and other procedures.

SONG-PERFORMANCES IN THE PROTEST MOVEMENT FOR TELANGANA STATE FORMATION: GADDAR

In the following section I examine four song-performances for the ways in which they accomplish protest. These four examples were chosen to show how prominent features of the demands for statehood and the protest movement were incorporated in routine song-performances.

In the first of these, protest singer Gaddar configures the people of Telangana as being in distress and therefore in need of help. An appeal is made to Mother Telangana. In this way, the performance is situated within the practice of the deification of Telangana. Pingle (2011) documents issues relating to agriculture and water allocation in Telangana. He shows that while the two main rivers in the region, Godavari and Krishna, flow through Telangana and other regions of AP, and 68 percent of the catchment area is in Telangana, it only gets 10–11 percent of the water because of how dams and canals have been constructed (Celio et al. 2010). This problem is compounded by the fact that irrigation through other means is very expensive. Nag (2011) correlates

this factor with increasing numbers of farmer suicides in Telangana. Between 1985 and 2005, 68 percent of those who had committed suicides in the united AP were from Telangana.

In this and other song-performances discussed here, the video transcripts are shown first in Telugu, then in their English translation (in *italics*). This particular song was performed at a sit-in in 2009 at what appears to be an educational institution. The performer, Gaddar, is appealing for leadership to promote Telangana state formation and calls for increased participation by students, intellectuals, and professionals.

Song-performance 1¹¹

Table 15.1 Song-performance 1. Constructed by author.

1	Gaddar	talli neeku andanaalu talli vandanaale ma yamma Telangana <i>greetings Mother greetings to you Mother Telangana</i>
2	Chorus	(with rhythmic claps) talli neeku andanaalu talli vandanaale ma
3		yamma Telangana
4	Gaddar	godaavari talli kollu [mani] [edsi]naadi
5	Unseen	[hai] [hai hai] <i>Mother Godavari sobs</i>
6	Chorus	godavaari talli kollu mani edsinaadi
7	Gaaddar	krishnama talli chuudu kanniillu ralchinaadi <i>Mother Krishna is in tears</i>
8	Chorus	krishnama talli chuudu kanniillu ralchinaadi
9	Gaddar	singaareni talli sinaapoyiii naadi <i>Mother Singareni is shrivelled</i>
10	Chorus	singaareni talli sinaapoyiinaadi
11	Gaddar	six ten GO chuudu zero ayiinaadi <i>610 GO has become null</i>
12	Chorus	six ten GO chuudu zero ayiinaadi
13	Gaddar	kaniillu tappa maakem migilinaaye ma yamma Telangana <i>Mother Telangana we have nothing left but tears</i>
14	Chorus	kaniillu tappa maakem migilinaaye ma yamma Telangana

This song-performance involves the lead singer-protector Gaddar and others who variously join in, denoted here as “chorus”. The chorus engages in rhythmic clapping, shouts at certain moments, and verbatim repetitions of the lines sung by Gaddar. Song-performances in the folk tradition routinely have a ‘lead’ singer and a few follow-up singers who repeat specific parts of the song (Thirumali 2013). The present song-performance is framed as celebrating Telangana as a deity (lines 1–2). This constructs the song-performance as situated in routine settings where regions and regional deities are celebrated (Blackburn 1986).

Gaddar also invokes other deities, such as the Godavari and Krishna rivers and the coal mining region Singareni, all of which are geographically situated in Telangana. In presenting the latter as in distress, through descriptors such as sobbing, being in tears or being shrivelled, Gaddar constructs the Telangana region as also being distressed. This suggests that for people of Telangana their routine occupations of farming or mining coal are under threat. Gaddar also offers similar implications for those pursuing other forms of occupation, such as those in public sector. This is done through the last item that refers to contemporary policy issues: ‘six ten GO chuudu zero ayiinaadi’. Government Order 610 was passed in 1985 with an aim of ensuring that those treated as “locals” in Telangana will be given priority in job allocation over those who were from other parts of united AP (The Hindu 2004). By suggesting that this order is voided, Gaddar suggests that people of Telangana are in severe distress because livelihoods in routine farming and mining occupations, or that public sector employment, are under threat. His appeal to Mother Telangana at line 13 then is a plea for help. In appealing to Mother Telangana, Gaddar treats these issues as possibly resolvable through addressing key issues for Telangana, such as the necessity of statehood and autonomy.

Demands for statehood have also involved claims of economic dispossession for the people of Telangana. India’s economic reforms during the early 1990s allowed for increasing private investment in its economy. This, known as economic liberalisation, had a tangible effect on the rural and urban poor, especially in areas with limited educational resources such as Telangana (Maringanti 2010)¹². Traditional occupations in India are routinely taken-up along lines of hereditary membership into particular castes. The economic policy changes at national and global level have had a notable impact on the continuance of caste-based occupations (Carswell and Neve 2014). Below, the impact of these reforms is constructed as severely problematic. The following song-performance took place in the same setting as above, again with Gaddar as the lead singer.

*Song-Performance 2*¹³

Gaddar’s performance relates the displacement of people(s) working in traditional occupations to modernisation, represented here by particular private manufacturers. The sense of displacement is performed through treating mundane items related to these occupations, such as earthenware, clothing and brushes and soap, as out of reach for workers in these occupations. Since these lines of occupation are fixed along castes, Gaddar’s performance employs caste names.

In the first, at lines 1–2, Gaddar introduces concerns for someone born into a *Kummara* family, who are traditional potters. The concern is that those

Table 15.2 Song-performance 2. Constructed by author.

1	Gaddar	pindakuudu kunda ledu
2	Chorus	kummaroni intla putti pindakuudu kunda ledu (with rhythmic claps) <i>born into a Kummara (potters) family but you don't even own a funeral pot</i>
3	Gaddar	*yaaduntadi plastic bucket kunda get out* <i>why would you have it plastic buckets are in and earthen pots are out</i>
4	Chorus	hahaha
5	Gaddar	saalonni intla putti saavubatta sutaleedu <i>born into a Saala (weavers) family but you don't even own a funeral shroud</i>
6	chorus	saalonni intla putti saavubatta sutaleedu (with rhythmic claps)
7	Gaddar	*yaaduuntadi Reliance [company aa (shirt)
8	Chorus	hahahaha] <i>why would you have it you have shirts being made by Reliance Company *points to his own shirt in an appreciative way*</i>
9	Gaddar	yem manchigundi battaa aa chandana pandana bondana brotherssu (.) ayipoindi
10	Chorus	hahah <i>this cloth is very good we now have Chandana pandana and Bondana Brothers (retail manufacturing company names used ironically)</i>
11	Gaddar	iga veedu battalnu eeskuntu kuukunna Sircilla saalodu aakharku uresukoni chachipoyaadu*
12		<i>the guy in Sircilla who used to weave has now hanged himself to death</i>
13	Gaddar	mangalooni intla putti burushu ledu sabbu ledu <i>born into a Mangala family (barbers) but you neither have a brush nor a</i>
14	Chorus	<i>shaving soap</i>
15	Gaddar	mangalooni intla putti burushu ledu sabbu ledu (with rhythmic claps)
16		*yaaduntadi mangalooda Reliance oodu mangali shop pettindu aadiki
17		poovalsina avasaram ledu computer la manam feed cheyaale this is
18		Mr Gaddar na gaddam inta poduvundi
19	Chorus	hahaha <i>why would you have it Reliance has set up a barber shop where you don't even need to go to the shop you just tell the computer that this is Mr. Gaddar and my beard is ye long</i>
20	Gaddar	what is to be done vaadu akkada(h)nunde (h) compu(h)ter anta ii
21		gaddam kinda uudi padipothadanata*
22	Chorus	hahaha (claps) <i>what is to be done the company man can (with laughter) program the computer and my beard just falls off</i>
23	Gaddar	ha ahhh
24	Gaddar	goundloni intla putti lotti ledu chettu ledu
25	Chorus	goundloni intla putti lotti ledu chettu ledu (with rhythmic claps) <i>born into a Gound's (palm-wine makers) family but you neither have an</i>
26	Gaddar	<i>wine pot nor a palm tree</i> *aree Devendar Goudu yaadunnav ra nuvvu* <i>O Devender Goud where are you mister</i>
27	Chorus	hahaha

born into these families cannot access pots used in funeral ceremonies. Gaddar attributes this to the replacement of earthen pots with plastic pots. The second, at lines 5–12, is where Gaddar sing-performs similar concerns for those born into a *Saala* family, who are traditional weavers. Here, he shows concern for lack of access to funeral shrouds. In both these instances, Gaddar's references to funeral-related items, pots and shrouds, raise the issue of poverty. While other items, such as pots for storing speciality foods or cloth for other ceremonies such as marriages, may be normatively expected to be out of reach for a 'poor' person, his specific reference to funeral-related items suggests that lack of access to these basic items is particularly problematic.

At lines 6–12, Gaddar introduces reasons for this, which point to the role of a particular company, namely Reliance Industries Limited,¹⁴ in contributing to the current state of affairs. The introduction is done in a comic fashion, reflected in the laughter of those present. In interpolating musical performance with comic acts and storytelling, Gaddar offers a narrative that supplies explanations and understandings of the states of affairs that are sung-performed. Gaddar points to his own shirt in a seemingly favourable manner to show that using products from Reliance has become routine. Alongside this particular company, he lists other retailers such as Chandana Brothers and Bommana Brothers. Both of these companies are known for their mass-produced clothing outlets and are routine go-to places for many people in cities and towns in AP and Telangana. Gaddar seems to blame these companies and multinational organisations for creating insurmountable challenges for those weavers from small towns like Sircilla (lines 11–12), in some cases leading to death.

In the third instance at lines 13–22, Gaddar sings about the *Mangala* community, who routinely take up the barber profession. He argues that those born into a Mangala community do not have access to mundane objects related to their work such as brush or shaving soap. His explanation for this is given a magical formulation. Gaddar describes a comic scenario where instead of a customer going to a barber shop they can avail of the online services of the Reliance barber service. This involves informing the service provider of the length of "Mr. Gaddar's" beard and then the beard automatically falls off through some form of automated barbering service. The comic aspect of this is readily recognized by Gaddar and fellow protest participants, which rhetorically serves to align the audience with the ongoing claims and attributions of blame (cf. t'Hart and Bos 2008).

In the last instance, at lines 23–26, Gaddar sings about the case of *Goud* peoples who are routinely associated with producing palm wine. Here he presents their concerns as directly related to their profession: not having access to wine pots or palm trees. While no explanatory account is given for this, Gaddar appeals to a political leader for the Goud community: Devender

Goud¹⁵. This appeal beyond ones group works to undermine the importance of identity politics (Pandian 2002), which are routinely treated as routes to emancipation for those in the oppressed castes.

In sum, the systematic formulation of music performance followed by a comic or magical narration that explains the problems for various occupational communities constructs aspects of modernization as similarly affecting people of various castes and occupational communities. Here, making relevant mundane activities and items that are associated with these occupations allows for alternative explanations for displacement, such as modernization than those along caste-based lines (cf. Vaid 2014). In this way, problems with the mundane and everyday are highlighted (cf. Dhanaraju 2012), offering a critique of ongoing modernization and the associated neglect of those in regions such as Telangana.

The liberalisation of the Indian economy and the subsequent ‘modernization’ led to an ‘information technology boom’ in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Kapur 2002). This had a unique impact on Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana State. The already wealthier population of people from AP (Ram 2007) made significant gains during this period as they could readily access resources that further enabled employment that required skills in information technology (Maringanti 2010). Telangana state formation need to address issues of power and the future in Hyderabad.

VENKANNA AND THE PERFORMANCE OF BOUNDARIES

The following song-performance happened in 2010 at an arts gathering to commemorate the birth of Komaram Bheem, a Tribal leader who fought against the Nizam rule for land and tribal rights¹⁶. The commemoration is an annual ceremony and this particular event was attended by various stakeholders, including elected politician Devender Goud (as proclaimed in the banner in the background). Such events were increasingly held to promote demands of a separate state as they offered ready opportunities for bringing up and reinforcing such ideas.

*Song-Performance 3*¹⁷

Here, the singer-performer Venkanna makes the point that the establishment of a Telangana state, which involves a ‘separation’ from AP, most likely will have implications for people from AP living in Hyderabad, which will be in the new state. In particular, there is a suggestion that those from AP are expected to leave Hyderabad. But this is apparently

Table 15.3 Song-performance 3. Constructed by author.

1	Venkanna	iddaram vidipothe bhoomi bhaddalaithunda
2		<i>Will the earth shatter if we separate</i>
	Chorus	iddaram vidipothe bhoomi bhaddalaithunda
3	Venkanna	indiya paakisthanole inapa kanja paduthunda
4		<i>Will there be an iron fence as between India and Pakistan</i>
	chorus	indiya paakisthanole inapa kanja paduthunda
5	Venkanna	raavochu poovachu royyalammu kovachuu
6		<i>you can still freely move and sell your prawns</i>
	chorus	raavochu poovachu royyalammu kovachuu
7	Venkanna	*nee edlabandi nee idli bandi adda jaaga neeve nilupukovachu
8		<i>Park our bullock cart your idli (food) cart as you like</i>
	Venkanna	aa kukatupally housing boardula haayiga nuvvu kunukochu
9		<i>rest comfortably in Kukatapally Housing Board Colony</i>
	Shout	[yaaaau]
10	Venkanna	neeku poobudhi kaakapothe
11		<i>okay if you don't feel like leaving</i>
	Venkanna	yiidane vuntaanukunte
12		<i>if you wish to stay on</i>
	Venkanna	yeedanunchi antaa duuram
13		<i>from here to there</i>
	Venkanna	vanasthali puram annta vanya danupukovachu
14		<i>until Vanasthalipuram you can do as you please</i>
	Venkanna	ma vaarasiguuda kaada
15		<i>at our Vaarasiguda</i>
	Venkanna	ma moorila kampu kaada
16		<i>at our stinking gutters</i>
	Venkanna	ma adda gudda basthilalla
17		<i>at our raggedy slums</i>
	Venkanna	ma pashu gutta ma pashu gutta paatha basthi kaada
18		<i>at our Pashu Gutta our Pashu Gutta and old city</i>
	Venkanna	ma roodla kaada neelu levu
19		<i>we don't have water at our roads</i>
	Venkanna	poni vunta nani vachiinaavu
20		<i>but you came here to stay</i>
	Venkanna	nuvvu vunte vundu kaani idda
21		<i>stay if you want but</i>
	Venkanna	nee idli bandi adda jaaga neeve nilupu koovachu
22		<i>park your idli (food) cart wherever you want</i>
	Venkanna	kukatipally la neevu hayi ga nuvvu kunukochu
23		<i>rest comfortably in Kukatapally</i>
	Venkanna	KAani
24		<i>but</i>
	Venkanna	ma ^secretariyatu la [haayaa] (shout and jumps)
25		<i>at our Secretariat (shout and jumps)</i>
	Venkanna	ma secretariyatu la nuvvu chakram tippina saagam
26		<i>we won't stand for your shenanigans in our Secretariat</i>
	Others	pomante poovera porabok Andhra dora
27		<i>why don't you go when we say so Mr. Andhra Master</i>

not something to be overly concerned about. At lines 1 and 3, Venkanna suggests that the separation of Telangana from AP is relatively unproblematic in comparison with the partition of India and Pakistan¹⁸. The use of such hyperbolic comparison readily treats the proposed separation as less significant and intimates that those from AP can easily move out of Telangana (line 6). In a similar, somewhat understated fashion Venkanna describes other routine activities that those from AP can take up elsewhere, at lines 7 and 8. While such an approach treats state formation as broadly unproblematic for those from AP, he does go on to problematize particular activities.

It is implied that Telangana State formation includes the expectation that people from AP would leave. At lines 10–11, Venkanna concedes that despite this expectation, those people might wish to stay and that this is also unproblematic. He offers a series of concessions (lines 8–14) to those from AP that would allow them to continue with their routine activities, such as selling food on food carts and staying in particular areas in the city. This somewhat problematic status of those from AP who wish to continue living in Hyderabad is further explored in lines 15–19, disparaging descriptions of specific areas of Hyderabad as being unsanitary, crowded and dispossessed, being juxtaposed with people's purported desire to stay on in Hyderabad. Venkanna marks this section of the song-performance (lines 8–22) as different from earlier claims of full Statehood, through changes in his performance style. These lines are performed in his non-singing voice, which is softer, and without the support of a chorus, and therefore not representing consensus but suggesting possibility. In contrast, from lines 23 through 26, Venkanna indicates alternative activities that would not be conceded to those from AP, which refer to legislative or political activities taken up in the Secretariat¹⁹. In this way, Venkanna sing-performs routine activities as notably different to legislative or political activities, with the particular implication that the latter are out of bounds for those from AP.

While the above instances of protest song-performances make the current problematic situation relevant for the people of Telangana, in the following song-performance, the singer-performer and chorus together attend to issues of what it means for protest participants to participate in the protests. It deals with the outcomes for themselves and their kin. Various estimates put the numbers of protestors who had committed suicides between 19 and 200 (Polgreen and Kumar 2010). The song-performance analysed next comes from a meeting to commemorate protestors who had lost their lives in the Telangana agitations on February 26, 2010 at an educational institute in Karimnagar, Telangana.

PADMAVATHI AND STUDENT PROTESTS

This event was part of a series of public rallies to promote the cause of Telangana State formation. The main singer-performer is Padmavathi who is joined by her band on the stage and who act as the chorus²⁰.

*Song-performance 4*²¹

Table 15.4 Song-performance 4. Constructed by author.

1	Padmavathi	mee tyaagala telangana jhandaa ethukunnavo vidyaarathi veerulaara <i>you raise the Telangana banner of your sacrifice O brave students</i>
2	Padmavathi	jagadamaaduthunnavo vidhyaarathi shuurulaara <i>you're taking on a big battle O warrior students</i>
3	Chorus	mee tyaagala telangana jhandaa ethukunnavo vidyaarathi veerulaara
4	Chorus	jagadamaaduthunnavo vidhyaarathi shuurulaara
5	Padmavathi	aluku salli mugguuu pedithe sukkalai suusi nattu <i>as at dawn when the clean porches are looked upon by morning stars</i>
6	Padmavathi	musurukunna mabbu karigi sinukulai raali nattu <i>as at dawn mist forms and falls off as drops</i>
7	Padmavathi	panta cheenu kaapu kaasi inti kundaludikiinattu <i>as when after overseeing a full yield crop cooking pot overflows</i>
8	Padmavathi	sadhi tini potaraa vidyaarathi veerullaara <i>will you leave with just yesterday's food O brave students</i>
9	Padmavathi	sadhuvu cheppi potaraa vidyaarathi amarullara <i>will you leave after having given education O martyred students</i>
10	Chorus	sadhi tini potaraa vidyaarathi veerullaara
11	Chorus	sadhuvu cheppi potaraa vidyaarathi amarullara
12	Padmavathi	mee iruvu kannu kana talli kanti shapam petta patte <i>the Mother for you all is about to cast curses</i>
13	Padmavathi	nadakeragaka kannu tandri tovaakeduru chuuda patte <i>your father who has forgotten how to walk awaits you on the road</i>
14	Padmavathi	malle pulla navvu kosam akka chella adugapatte <i>your sisters await jasmine flowers from you</i>
15	Padmavathi	mandaalichi potarra vidhyaarathi veerullara <i>will you console us and leave O brave students</i>
16	Padmavathi	mataladi pothara vidhyaarathi amarullara <i>will you just talk and leave O martyred students</i>
17	Chorus	mandaalichi potarra vidhyaarathi veerullara
18	Chorus	mataladi pothara vidhyaarathi amarullara

In this song-performance Padmavathi and the chorus sing-perform the actions of student protesters, and the related outcomes for them and others associated with them. As with the other examples, the focus in these songs is on mundane events and goings-on of village life. In contrast to the previous examples, however, this song-performance is an orchestrated stage event

and is therefore particularly well-rehearsed and well-structured. It starts with valorising student-protestors, which involves the chorus. There are then two sets of descriptions on protest participation, at lines 5–9 and lines 12–16, which feature without the chorus. These are interspersed with valorising descriptions of student-protestors that involve the chorus, specifically in lines 10–11 and 16–18.

At lines 1–4, the song-performance starts with characterizing student-protestors in the fight for separate statehood, as ‘brave’, ‘warriors’ and ‘martyred’, valorising their actions through descriptors such as them having taken up a ‘big battle’ and having ‘sacrificed’ their lives. Subsequently, at lines 5–9, Padmavathi treats protestors as being especially precious by relating them to imagery and facets of village life. These include references to how the stars at dawn look down at clean porches, how the mist melts into drops as the day dawns, and how after a harvest the cooking pots are full. These construct the protestors as valued. The departure of students to join active protests is referenced in relation to village life at lines 8 and 9. Having been brought up and fed in the village (on ‘yesterday’s food’) and having engaged in education, Padmavathi constructs protest participation as a sacrifice where precious lives are put on the line and hardships endured.

Subsequently, at lines 12–18, Padmavathi turns to address the impact of protest participation upon family members of protestors. This is done through ascribing particular activities to various family members: mothers cast curses, old and invalid fathers await the return of their children, sisters hope for gifts such as flowers that brothers might bring. In this way, Padmavathi treats protest participation as being hard on family members too as they are all invested in the protester. In the context of performing this to an audience who is likely to have members who know some of these protestors, this performance is an acknowledgement of grief and hardship associated with protest. At lines 15 and 16, Padmavathi voices what the family members might have wished for or what the student protestors themselves might have wanted to say, consoling or talking to their families before they leave. In this way the performance does the action of commemorating those who lost their lives through constructing protest participation in heroic ways. Notably, yet again this involved portraying mundane aspects of village and familial life and does so within the structure of the folk song, even in this more sophisticated rendering.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I examined folk musical practices as protest songs, performed in the movement for the formation of Telangana State in the Indian Republic between 2009 and 2014, prior to the establishment of the separate state. The

findings show that in these song-performances, the mundane and everyday aspects of people's lives form the central concern. The 'folk-ness' of such protest songs in these performance contexts, is attended to and constructed through an engagement with those who are stakeholders in Telangana, (people of AP who currently live in Telangana), and with protest participants. Song-performances treat everyday practices as relevant for the protest movement by implicating them in political goings-on, especially as this relates to the formation (or not) of Telangana State. Song performer Gaddar illustrated how those in traditional caste occupations were in distress in not being able to access everyday objects related to their occupations, offering a critique of how uneven 'modernization' has been. Venkanna differentiated between mundane activities, such as selling food, and political activities of those from AP in legitimating demands for Telangana State, saying certain things could persist in the new state, but other things were non-negotiable. In both examples, features of everyday life were harnessed and made relevant politically in their reframing through performance. In performing in this manner, both singers offered a ready means for those immediately present (or to other audiences online) to recognise the reasons for, or legitimacy of, this form of protest. In the final example, Padmavathi showed the price of protest, especially for young students and their families, through imagery from the vil-lages, illustrating the cost of protest in terms of real lives and real families—a protest song possibly protesting this cost.

In this chapter folk music practices have been understood as oral tradition practices that involve sounds and references to daily life. Folk music practices that work as protest actions are well documented (Ingram 2008) and the performance of protest songs may constitute a protest movement in its articulation of human rights (Paretskaya 2015), civil rights (Roy 2010), and cultural resistance (Hagen 2011). In this chapter, I have shown that protest songs *do* protest through incorporating particular features of everyday lives as related to relevant political contingencies. The context of these song-performances is crucial. On the one hand, these song-performances are situated accomplishments that have taken place in particular settings and involve particular actors and agents. On the other hand, these performances are also situated within broader social, economic and political contexts. The features of these broader contexts, such as breaking promises made to Telangana people, or liberalising of the Indian economy, are constructed and treated as having particular bearing on the people's everyday lives and activities. Political concerns are thereby related back to everyday life in an understandable way.

Such song-performances are protests (cf. DeNora 2002), in this case relating to demand for statehood for Telangana which will in turn result in a reversal of fortune for its people. The songs suggest that the formation of Telangana State is warranted because of ongoing issues for its region and

people including the distress experienced by those in traditional occupations. As well as potentially legitimating participation in protest movements, such song-performances also help to manage potentially problematic outcomes of state formation. In sum, protest song-performances not only mobilize issues of identity, belonging and power relations, but also constitute and construct these as relevant and therefore as protest-worthy. In the examples presented here, the historical availability of musical practices that are known to be protest-related seems to afford these opportunities. In other cases, people have recourse to alternative ways of *doing* protest through a variety of musical practices, as is readily seen in other chapters in this collection.

NOTES

1. Rather than treat the songs and their performances as separate, I see them here as part of a complex that is particular important in relation to protest activities, hence the use of the hyphen.

2. Caste is understood as an endogenous group with hereditary membership (Ovi-chegan, 2014). The system broadly classifies Hindus into four occupational castes or *varnas*—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras—with varying levels of access to resources and opportunities. These *varnas* are treated as hierarchical with Brahmins at the ‘top’ and Shudras at the ‘bottom’. However, the system also classes others as those who do not have a caste, widely referred to as ‘Dalits’, which means broken or oppressed.

3. Dhanaraju (2012; 2014) argues that the term ‘popular’ music or art fits with the art phenomenon in his examination. He claims that various forms of art including poetry, music and dance were not only indigenous and steeped in people’s ways, but were also pervasive and therefore were ‘popular’. However, I use the more resonant term ‘folk’ music here.

4. Title given to native sovereigns of Hyderabad State.

5. A “State of Andhra Pradesh” was officially founded on October 1, 1953 on the basis that its people speak the common language Telugu (Suri 2002). This was forged out of areas under the Madras Presidency with Kurnool as its capital. From 1953 to 1956 various negotiations, political activities, and protests saw the fusion of Telangana regions of the Hyderabad Princely State into this State to form Andhra Pradesh (AP) on November 1, 1956. (Forrester 1970).

6. Here, the representatives of both regions and the Indian Republic signed a “Gentleman’s Agreement” (Seshadri 1970) to that effect.

7. In some ways, this method of sourcing data is similar to what has been called ‘netnography’ (Kozinets 2015). This refers to online ethnography to access unique cultures and social practices that are active online. While netnography involves sustained engagement with online communities and practices, the current data collection procedures involved a focused approach to collecting song-performances. A more sustained netnography would have involved engaging with the sharing, commenting

and production aspects of the current data. However, since the focus of interest is on protest song-performances, the data collection procedures were focused on how these can be accessed.

8. Gaddar—The pen name of Gummadi Vittal Rao (1949-)—is an Indian poet and political activist in Telangana. He has been active in movements addressing grievances of the oppressed castes, workers, and farmers. Goreti Venkanna (1963-) is an Indian poet and folk singer and has published several works of poetry. Vimalakka—the pen name of Arunodaya Vimala (1964-)—is a folk activist and leads a folk group called Arunodaya Samskritika Samakhya. She was an active member in the movement for the formation of a separate state.

9. Several efforts were made to determine the copyright of these song-performances and the YouTube hosts for licensing information. These however did not yield in any response. Under the Creative Commons licence agreement here I only use extremely limited parts of the videos and subject them to commentary and critique rather than promoting these for mere consumption (YouTube 2017).

10. Some researchers (Boden and Zimmerman 1991) address the ethnomethodological concerns for examining social actions as methodical practices, that are methodically sensible for those participating in them. Researchers argue that people of a shared culture or community methodically orient to actions as particular types of actions. This means that people use particular methods in figuring out what is happening at any given moment (Garfinkel 1967). An analytical approach that aims to explicate these ethno-methods examines peoples' actions from their own perspective rather than imbuing peoples' actions with researcher or established social scientific meanings.

11. At the time of writing, this performance was available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iJiGM8GChE>. 0:07–0:53.

12. These reforms introduced in 1991 aimed at 'opening' Indian markets to private investors and reduce Government's control over India's production and manufacturing (India in Business 2016). An outcome of this has been a shift in employment sectors. Traditional occupations and work roles were gradually being replaced by alternative occupations, such as those in information technology.

13. Available, at the time of writing, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pj8D73zKTDg>. 5:38–6.44.

14. Reliance Industries Limited is a conglomerate holding company and is the second most profitable company in India. It engages in production, manufacturing and distribution of a range of items and services such as clothes, groceries, petrochemicals and telecommunications.

15. Tulla Devender Goud (1953-) is a Telangana based politician from the Telugu Desam Party (Elections in 2016).

16. Komaram Bheem (1901–1940), was a tribal leader born into the Gonda Tribal community in Adilabad district, Telangana. He organized and led resistance against the then feudal Nizam rule over Telangana.

17. Available, at the time of writing, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waqNh9n1pIM>. 1:42–3:19.

18. The partition of British-occupied India into the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1947 resulted in the deaths of at least 1 million people and displacement of 50 million people (Dalrymple 2015). Notably, it continues to be a problem involving frequent wars, exchange of hostilities and claims and counter-claims of state sponsored terrorism.

19. The Secretariat was the administrative office of the employees of the Government of AP. It housed the legislative assembly, which debated and passed laws for AP.

20. Singer Padmavathi, also known as 'Karimnagar Padmavathi' is a well-known folk singer who has participated in several protest events. Little personal information is known about her, although several of her performances can be accessed on the Internet.

21. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIVdGJCHPsQ&list=PLTXo7-0UeY5YdQyFC8xmV44Nj9Kj2kNIF&index=1>. 2:24–4:07.

Part V

**POLITICS, PARTICIPATION AND
ACTIVISM IN THE FIELD**

Chapter 16

“Freedom is a Constant Struggle”

Performance and Regeneration Amidst Social Movement Decline

Omotayo Jolaosho

“iAPF ayilalanga/ Ayilalanga, iguqe ngamadolo.” So began one of the freedom songs I learned while doing fieldwork in South Africa on the role of performance in collective mobilization. In translation, the song noted that the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), the social movement of my concern, is not sleeping (or dead), it is merely resting, literally genuflecting as if in somber reflection.¹ Earlier manifestations of this song could typically be heard at funerals, to assure mourners that those whom they mourn are not lost forever. By singing *iAPF ayilalanga*, APF members offered a parallel assurance as they were confronted with perceptions of the decline and the dissolution of their social movement, namely that APF is not gone but would rise again.

In this chapter, I am concerned with music’s role during periods of political demobilisation, particularly the potential of collective performance to inspire new waves of mobilisation. I consider two moments of political reformulation from the vantage point of the APF, one of many social coalitions that contested South Africa’s adoption of neoliberal economic policies in the wake of the country’s democratic transition.² The first moment of political reformulation occurred in the immediate wake of apartheid and was the point of APF’s origin. Following South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, community organisations that had worked in opposition to the apartheid state had to reconstitute their purpose upon the ascendance to power of the country’s leading anti-apartheid movement, the African National Congress (ANC). Although the transition did not by any means eliminate the need for grassroots mobilisation, many South Africans felt ambivalent about taking an oppositional stance towards a government they had elected following years of liberation struggle. Despite the hardships of their lives, which many impoverished

communities experienced as deteriorating post-apartheid, collective protest against the government was not a foregone conclusion in the first few years of South Africa's democracy.³ I show how musical performance was key to APF's emergence amidst this period of political uncertainty—establishing continuity with apartheid-era mobilisations while cementing possibilities for continued struggle. The second moment of political reformulation is the decline of APF itself. APF was essentially defunct by early 2011, and has since given way to other political entities including the Democratic Left Front, and the Economic Freedom Fighters. I consider how performance re-collects the movement amidst this decline. Through its songs and creative expressions, APF remains a political force in the collective memory and identities of its affiliates, offering hope for the regeneration of movement ideals even if these manifest in different guises.

The chapter draws on 16 months of ethnographic fieldwork with the Anti-Privatisation Forum conducted between September 2009 and December 2010. I used a combination of ethnographic, audiovisual and historical methods in investigating the role of performance in APF's community mobilisations. I conducted participant observation, attending protest demonstrations as well as organizational meetings. As I photographed and videotaped such events with the permission of the APF, my camera came to facilitate my participation: it legitimated my proximity to protesters, while emphasising my distance as a researcher. Furthermore, I conducted different types of interviews, including brief opportunistic intercept surveys at protest events, semi-structured interviews with APF activists, and feedback interviews in which I solicited responses to the footage I captured.

I draw on this set of ethnographic data to demonstrate the sustained significance of protest songs even amidst fluctuations in organisational coherence. I argue that protest songs matter for social movements not only in moments of protest and sustained oppositional activity, as scholars have shown (see Bensimon 2012; Corte 2013). These songs also remain essential resources in moments of decline or dissolution as activists navigate shifting opportunities for political action and address the challenges of demobilisation. In their book, *Music and Social Movements*, Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1998) assert that music keeps political forces active even after associated social movements have faded away. Thus music offers the possibility of ongoing political activity when a social movement does not look like one. In other words, we should not be so quick to pronounce a social movement dead; even when the visibility of the movement has declined, its causes can remain audible and sonically reconstitutable through its songs.

"WHERE HAVE ALL THE PROTEST SONGS GONE?": (IN)AUDIBILITY IN SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

What do audibility and inaudibility mean for social movements? Scholarship on the topic highlights the significance of music for activism as a medium of persuasion conveying political messages lyrically (Lieberman 1995) or as collective action in itself (Roy 2010). Individual artists may produce songs in affiliation with particular movements, at times as career opportunities (Rosenthal and Flacks 2012). It is attention to collective music-making, however, that has revealed the immediacy of music's effects on movement participants and bystanders; in protests and in public-facing events music organizes, galvanises, energises and sustains collectivity through its emotional mediation (Roy 2010; Corte 2013; Jolaosho 2015). These particular *affordances* make songs impactful even when circulated beyond their original contexts, and indeed co-optable for counter-progressive aims, as in the cultivation of "white power music" (Corte and Edwards 2008).

To appreciate the semantic nuances evident in this analytical terrain, a brief clarification of terminology is necessary. While protest songs, freedom songs and collective music-making might seem interchangeable, each term offers distinct associations, within the literature on music and social movements, that are sometimes geographically bounded and advance different sets of scholarly interventions. Many authors have defined the "protest song" through reference to lyrical content (e.g. Denisoff 1972) regardless of genre. John Street, for example, draws on David Laing's typology of music's political role (Laing 2003, 345) to distinguish protest songs from songs of resistance more generally. For Street, "a protest song identifies a specific issue or enemy. A song of resistance may have no such focus or narrative. Its politics may lie in the mere act of singing" (Street 2012, 44). While Street acknowledges that singing may be deployed for oppositional purposes in different contexts, he locates the defining characteristic of a protest song in its lyrics' specification of a target.

Not everyone concurs that lyrical content is the definitional feature of protest songs. Allan Moore offers a contrasting perspective, stating: "to consider the meaning of a protest song to lie simply with its lyrics is to completely misunderstand the cultural form of it" (Moore 2013, 397). Moore is among a number of scholars, myself included, who argue for more holistic analyses of the interrelationship of music and protest through attention to the dynamic interplay of elements constituting a musical event (Bensimon 2012, 242; Corte 2013; Rosenthal and Flacks 2012). Such a holistic engagement would grapple with song lyrics as but one part of a broader political performance

context. The term protest song in this chapter therefore refers to discrete units of musical composition (including the integration of melodic structure and lyrical content) that are performed by activists across protests and other events associated with social movements. I also use the term freedom songs in consideration of South Africa's long history of mobilising music to advance the country's liberation struggle. Finally, I use the terms protest singing or collective music-making to emphasize the performance event itself as a dynamically embodied activity that involves song and much more, including sounds and sonic textures, movement and dance.

In the United States especially, the intrinsic ties between collective music-making and political activism have been characterized as in decline particularly in the decades following the Civil Rights Movement, arguably the height of political group singing in the country's history. William Roy evokes this ebb noting that "more characteristic in contemporary collective action is the chant, which is a variant on group singing, but I would venture is experientially thinner" (Roy 2013). This sonic decline provoked wistful queries in 2011 when, with the emergence of nationally sustained public protests including the Occupy movement, one journalist could not but ask: "where have all the protest songs gone" (McKinley 2011). Michael O'Brien argues however that such lamentation may be overstated given his examination of protests in Wisconsin against proposed legislation restricting union members' rights in the state. Participatory music-making remained in evidence during these protests particularly with the prominence of a "Solidarity Sing Along", a practice in which participants gathered each weekday to sing songs of protest against Wisconsin's governor and his legislation curtailing collective bargaining. The interaction between live and recorded media within the protesters' musical practices lent itself to an analysis of the soundscapes of protest as sonic performances, including song, that blurred accepted boundaries of presentational and participatory music-making (O'Brien 2013; cf. Turino 2008). In his conclusion, O'Brien notes that given the political distinctiveness of the Wisconsin protests, the centrality of music to the movement may be difficult to replicate in other contemporary contexts.⁴ In this sense he suggests that collective protest singing in the United States exists as a recoverable potential rather than a prominent actuality.

In contrast to the United States, South Africa maintains protest singing cultures that mobilize earlier traditions (Eyerman and Jamison 1998) while instituting new practices. By focusing, not on the performances of individual artists or political elites, but on the perspectives of shifting collectivities who coalesced through protest, I show the continued salience of South Africa's freedom songs for political mobilization even in the aftermath of the country's democratic transition. While politicians' revival of militant apartheid-era songs over the past decade polarised the nation regarding their continued relevance, song has remained intrinsic to political expression among the nation's protesters and oppositional social

movements.⁵ The persistence of liberation songs among these groups was facilitated by community mobilisations, specifically the emergence of "new" social movements with causes rooted in distinct post-apartheid state politics. By examining these moments of reformulation, I hope to elaborate the processes through which songs hold political power even in the midst of the visible decline of the social movements in which they originated.

MUSICAL PERFORMANCE AND APF'S EMERGENCE

Although 1994 could be interpreted as the culmination of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggles, there was continuity between those efforts and social movements that emerged in the wake of apartheid. APF was one of many social coalitions that emerged following South Africa's first democratic elections. The collective formed to mobilize against a series of neoliberal restructurings proposed by the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and by the University of Witwatersrand. APF served as an umbrella body that coordinated the collective activism of a fluctuating number of students and community organisations in about 34 communities in the Johannesburg metropolitan area. Founded in July 2000, APF was essentially defunct by 2011, but flourished in its protests in its earlier years. In 2002, for instance, APF was one of the key organisations (under an alliance called the Social Movements Indaba) that mobilised for a march targeting the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) convened by the United Nations in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002. During the WSSD march, which took place on August 31, more than 20,000 protesters took to the streets in a procession that travelled from the impoverished township of Alexandra to the far more opulent Sandton, where the summit was held. The government had warned against any disruptions to the summit, a challenge to which oppositional forces like APF rose by mobilising as many people as possible outside of the official modes of participation in the event. In terms of numbers, this was thus far its largest oppositional gathering, and its success demonstrated the extent of APF's potential base.

Performance was critical to APF's emergence, helping to solidify the organization's collective identity. Activists drew upon South African conventions in which song was intrinsic to political contestation. In South Africa, community performances, including freedom songs and accompanying dances, played a significant role in mass mobilisations to combat apartheid (Gray 1996; Gunner 2007; Jolaosho 2012; Mthembu 1999). Freedom songs and activist performances did not die with the apartheid regime, and APF activists adapted these songs to channel continued discontent among the country's marginalized populations into renewed political mobilisation.

During one of its earliest events, activists stormed the Urban Futures conference at Wits University, which they condemned as a privatization showcase, with song. “As we approach the Great Hall, the venue for the closing ceremony of Urban Futures (and our target), we get excited at the sound of singing (our comrades are here)”, two activists recollected (Naidoo and Variева 2005). Protest songs and dances were integrated expressions that remained prominent in APF activities throughout the years, playing significant roles in meetings and internal practices as well as in protests and more public confrontations.

THE LIBERATION SONG IN SOUTH AFRICA

Freedom songs are not unique to South Africa and have an established presence in countries and activist communities across the world. South Africa’s freedom songs contribute to a global perspective on music’s role in social change. Indeed, these songs circulated globally through the movement of South Africans in exile who would share their musical practices with local communities they encountered. For example, in the United States, Sweet Honey in the Rock and In Process..., both African American women’s a cappella singing groups, adopted South African songs into their repertoire as part of their protest against apartheid (Jolaosho 2012).

South Africa’s repertoire of freedom songs, also known as liberation songs, emerge out of a history of racial oppression and government domination. They emerge as tactics of a liberation struggle against the ravages of war, against colonialism and most notably, against apartheid. Some scholars trace their origins to traditional forms, such as the Zulu *amahubo* or war song, and to oral art in general that is embedded in “tradition” (Mthembu 1999, 1). Some scholars recognize the liberation song as a global genre that is not unique to South Africa. “It is as old as man himself rhythm-wise, but has been changing form from generation to generation and from country to country” (Mthembu 1999, 3). In her study of the liberation song, Anne Gray writes:

Liberation music is not unique to a particular country or century. For as long as inequality between people exists, those who feel oppressed will find strength and inspiration in music. For centuries people have stored their anger in song and music has accompanied their battles for freedom. The struggle against oppression of any kind clearly provides the perfect climate for the production of liberation and protest music. (Gray 1996, 9)

Proving these statements, Gray’s study maps different genres of liberation music from periods of the French revolution and the British Industrial

revolution, from nations like Ireland, the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China and from the folk music of African Americans.

The liberation song in South Africa has many precedents and influences ranging from those of the immediate national locale to international, particularly American, imports such as ragtime, jazz, spirituals and songs from the civil rights movement (Jolaosho 2012; Gray 1996; Gunner 2007). As "songs of the people" or what Gray refers to as people's art, these songs were not only adopted and sung by the masses, these masses also composed and adapted them. While the work of individuals such as Vuyisile Mini⁶ and Reuben Tholakele Caluza⁷ is recognised, the identities of many composers and the origins of most songs are unknown. South Africans involved in the liberation struggle against apartheid shared common ground in the songs they sang; these songs circulated across social movements and locales. As Duma Ndlovu once observed, a song like "senzenina", is a song that everybody sang: "a mass body of people related to that song and touched each other's hearts using that song". Furthermore, pop culture journalist Peter Makarube notes: "African people always made music. Nobody ever said, 'I wrote this song in three minutes', or 'I wrote it in three months. This is my song'. Because you start a song and someone backs you, and people just build up a song" (in Hirsch 2002). Many liberation songs with call-and-response structures that allow for incessant repetition, constant ad-libbing and improvisation are songs that the people built, and continue to build, in every act of performing them. Their composition, as their performance, is participatory and collective in nature, and not bound to a particular location.

Liz Gunner (2009, 39) recounts one example of "building" a song as told to her by a Johannesburg taxi driver named Fifi: The youth of Orlando⁸ would sing: "Tambo uzonginika ibazuka/ Iz' akhal' I-AK madoda!" ("Tambo will be handing me a bazooka/ It'll come screeching with the AK, people!") A young fighter, named Sol, returning from the camps in Tanzania brought in the following lines as a new contribution: "Khona manje sengilal'emoyeni/ Izimpimpi zilal' emakhaya" ("Here and now, I sleep in the wild/ The informers sleep cosy at home"). Of the melodic amalgamation, Gunner further describes elsewhere: "the whole song became a combination of the two with a lead voice singing the 'Tambo' lines and the contribution from Sol fitting in the middle, thus demonstrating how ideas merge and are amplified in song" (2007, 10). Songs circulate across space; they add on a line here, change a phrase there, are re-melodized all the way over there, created through a very fluid process, one that is difficult if not impossible to conclusively trace or attribute.

Aiding their spatial diffusion and cross-temporal circulation is a plasticity enabled by an underlying structure of participatory music-making. Antiphony, or call-and-response, repetition and embodied rhythm—three

well-recognized elements of participatory music-making (see Roy 2010; Turino 2008)—render South African freedom songs pliable with each moment of performance.

ADAPTING FREEDOM SONGS POST-APARTHEID

Post-apartheid, songs were such intrinsically political and embodied expressions among APF activists, and South African protesters more broadly, that Khanyisa, a male APF member, attested:

if I go to a march and the songs are not good I will tell you there is something not good with the movement because it means they are not together, it means they don't march a lot. Yes, they might all know the song but it doesn't move them, it's not spirited... So, it tells you, you know. Creativity needs a febrile mind. So, this is a mind in ferment, a mind which is moving, kind of in motion, which has got hope. It might not have hope in the starry-eyed way but it might be hope based on the discomfort of feeling the badness, the sadness. (Interview with author, November 14, 2010)

Febrile creativity was crucial to a conscious attempt by activists to adapt apartheid-era freedom songs to post-apartheid struggles. Recognising the legacy of freedom songs as culturally sanctioned practices that interrogate the existing state of affairs, articulate common grievances and mobilise toward shared visions, many APF activists sought to highlight post-apartheid inadequacies through song.

This post-apartheid repertoire drew on the sanctioned authority of anti-apartheid singing practices yet offered distinct shifts in sentiment that cannot be taken for granted. As APF emerged out of an oppositional stance to the policies of a democratically elected ANC government, it faced a prolonged challenge to popularize its oppositional sentiments. Because songs lingered often unchanged from the anti-apartheid era in the immediate post-transition period (1994 to early 2000s), activists within new post-apartheid social movements such as the APF needed to distinguish the emerging class struggle from the foregoing racial one. They used song to clarify the changing stance of the ANC in its shift from a liberation movement to state governance. Vuyiswa, a female APF member who had been actively involved described the emergent moment. “Moving people from that position of seeing the ANC, as the savior was a long process”, she said.

So while you're conscientizing them theoretically the songs also played its role. For instance you'll be in a protest or in a workshop ... and you have many people and some are still members of the ANC and let's say you start a song

and people will be like, “We can’t sing this song, we are full members of the ANC!” But then gradually people understood and were like, “Ok, we are members of the ANC but we don’t have electricity, we don’t have water while these guys live in Sandton [an affluent suburb of Johannesburg] and other areas and what is there to gain if we don’t sing this song?” *So it was a process that ran parallel with theory and song.* And eventually you have now a solid group that now knows that the ANC is actually failing the poor and that can be seen in all aspects of life. (Interview with author, November 15, 2010)

Vuyiswa is describing the role song played in the transformation of political ambivalence into oppositional collectivity. As noted in the introduction, the immediate years following the 1994 democratic election that brought the African National Congress (ANC) into national governance was a particularly ambiguous period for the communities and popular movements for whom the demise of apartheid was the fulfillment of political aims. Although there was a hiatus in grassroots struggle—as “people held their breath in awe of the dawning of a new era” (Ngwane 2010, 3)—this awed suspension did not last for long (Dawson 2010). Raising political consciousness among APF’s target constituents, song popularised criticism of the ANC’s policies and confirmed the viability of continued struggle.

The transition to post-apartheid freedom singing came about through spontaneous and organised formations. In their organised practice sessions, APF-aligned performance groups—including Sounds of Edutainment, Bophelong Youth Choir and Sedibeng Concerned Artists—adapted songs and created new expressive forms (including new songs, poems and plays) to update repertoires. More spontaneous adaptations during protest events were particularly aided by the plasticity of song form. As Vuyiswa recalled:

I would come to a protest and then just in my mind work the lyrics [to preexisting tunes] and then try them out and then people join in, you know... sometimes you are protesting and then something happens and then you’re just carried away and quickly you look for a tune to fit the words and then it fits and then people get to join you. And then the next protest they say, “Let’s sing that one.” Sometimes you forget the lyrics they’ll be the ones reminding you. You’ll be the one who will be forgetting and then they remind you, that’s how the songs grow. (Interview with author, November 15, 2010)

Although freedom songs are made relevant through lyrical transformations, this is not necessary. A translation of sentiment—in which preexisting lyrics encode current grievances—can also help activists and their audiences relate in the current moment to an apartheid-era song. By the time the APF released its album of freedom songs, *Songs of the Working Class Volume 1*, in 2007, South Africa’s collective oppositional singing culture had not only survived

the apartheid transition but was a fertile resource for the emergence of new social movements, including the APF, whose protesters creatively deployed these practices.

One example of how an anti-apartheid song was made relevant to post-apartheid crisis involves a particularly violent confrontation I witnessed between activists and police officers during a protest in 2010. Activists from various organisations had gathered to participate in hearings regarding a 35% tariff increase that had been proposed by Eskom, the electricity parastatal company. For activists, this meant that electricity costs that were already unaffordable would increase even further, relegating them to dangerous alternatives, including paraffin. In crowded quarters without ventilation, using paraffin for cooking and warmth risks smoke inhalation and fire. At the electricity hearings, activists had decided to silently participate by holding up posters including one that read “35%=Death by Paraffin.” Their silent participation was considered disruptive and they were asked to leave the convention hall by organizers of the event. They took their protests directly outside the convention’s gates, and even that was deemed unacceptable. Events which would have otherwise followed routine expectations along the lines of songs, speeches and eventual dispersal were quickly thrown into chaos by the South African Police Service swooping in with their shields and batons, hitting and arresting activists whom from observation they had identified as leaders. A woman, who had bent down in the chaos and dispersal, rose, raised her hand up in the air and sang “senzenina?” Her voice cut through the disarray of murmuring and shouting, others joined her as she raised her hands to ask the police in song, “what have we done?”

Of “senzenina,” a song popularized in the height of brutality by apartheid police forces, playwright Duma Ndlovu observed: “Somewhere along the line a thousand years from now, we will be forced to sit down and review our history. ‘Senzenina’, like ‘We Shall Overcome’, will take her rightful place in society, because at one time, a mass body of people related to that song and touched each other’s hearts using that song” (Hirsch 2002). Singing Senzenina as protesters confronted the violence of a post-apartheid police service is one of the most evocative acts that could have taken place in that moment. The song sounded not as a relic of the past—protesters did not have to adapt the lyrics, it framed their present sentiments exactly. The song cut through the chaos, allowing the protesters to focus and reconstruct their front line. Exactly how did this happen? Attention to musical structure illuminates this process:

- *Call-and-response*—When the woman who initially raised the song began singing “senzenina”, she offered leadership at a time of chaos,

offering protesters a means of reorienting themselves, not around the immediacy of police brutality but towards their role in the proposed musical exchange.

- *Repetition*—repeating structures meant that a song could be sustained by a crowd if there was energy for it. "Senzenina" is the perfect demonstration of sung repetition because it is literally one line repeated over and over. The song therefore could sustain protesters' activities around it as sentiments expressed were prolonged while they recovered their formation.
- *Embodied rhythm*—For many activists with whom I worked, rhythm is the way through which music moves them, the way in which music is danced. One person interpreted it thus: "when you listen to music there's got to be rhythm, when you are dancing it's got to go with the rhythm, when the rhythm goes this direction you can't just go that direction" (interview with author, January 22, 2010). In a separate interview, someone else stated: "you sing with your mouth and your chest and your lungs but that is only one part of you so when you start moving then the whole of you is involved... Now the song has got you, the song moves you like literally. So even an old man, a granny with a sick you'll see them swaying" (interview with author, November 14, 2010). Rhythm is therefore music's connection to the body showing how movement cannot be separated from song. The integration of the two serves as a means through which protesters unify. This framework made them adaptable to changing circumstances, what I mean by their plasticity.

Within protests, songs facilitated collective bonds. In particular, the integration of movement with music served as a means through which protesters unify. According to Gatsha, a male protester:

dancing when we sing creates a rhythm within the space, and people get along with the rhythm, it brings another incitement within the people, the space just becomes more positive with connective energy, having the same aim or objective. So you cannot separate dance from music. (Interview with author, January 22, 2010)

Embodying a shared rhythm through movement—by clapping, stomping and swaying together; producing the same vocal punctuations or gestures—orients those gathered, generating connective energy through music (Black 2014; Corte 2013). These unifying effects of collective singing in meetings and protests offered respite amidst the demoralising strife and backbiting that pervaded APF's latter years.

“IT WILL GO DOWN AS FAR AS YOUR OWN STRENGTH”: SINGING APF’S DECLINING YEARS

As songs offer vocal and aural recollections of life, they are critical barometers of the ebb and flow of collective struggle. APF’s decline could be heard in its performances; its songs recalled earlier years of collective vigor. These recollections were not without pain. During an interview I conducted in November 2010 with Khanyisa, we started discussing the song, “That’s why I’m a socialist”. The song had the following lyrics: “my mother was a kitchen girl/my father was a garden boy/ that’s why I’m a socialist/I’m a socialist/I’m a socialist”. Khanyisa asserted that the most important feature of this song that made it popular was that it was identity-affirming. “Now that song, I think the reason it’s popular”, he started, “it’s got a nice theme with it, a nice call and response but it’s an identity-forming song or an identity-affirming song. It says, ‘We are the Socialists’. Yes, that’s what we are but we are not the poor, you know, ‘We are...’” Apart from its musical structure and its lyrical themes, the song affirmed an identity beyond classifications of poverty even as it referenced historical circumstances to which many could relate. Many activists themselves, including Khanyisa, had parents who had been “garden boys” and “kitchen girls”. As he was offering his interpretation, the song evoked strong physical responses. His eyes watered, his voice thickened with such emotion until he could no longer continue. I offered to stop the interview but Khanyisa preferred to continue rather than break the moment to regain composure. Continuing the interview, I asked why he was feeling emotional. “It’s because we’re missing that”, he responded. “It’s gone you know, or it’s going. But it will come back”, he offered as if to reassure himself.

It was Khanyisa who had earlier insisted that song served as a measure of activist engagement. In light of this sentiment, his tearful response can be understood. Recall his statement that “if I go to a march and the songs are not good I will tell you there is something not good with the movement because it means they are not together”. These evaluations of the connection between a song and its singers—that they be moved enough to produce spirited sounds—indicates the broader context of his concern over apathy. The potency of identification that Khanyisa perceived in renditions of “That’s Why I’m a Socialist”—particularly significant because song served as a barometer of the struggle—was currently missing. As a long-term activist involved in community movements since apartheid-era mobilizations and as someone who thereby developed his sense of self with the struggle, such an absence of song resonance was deeply upsetting as it signaled the decline of collective mobilisation. “The struggle is not a straight forward thing you know”, he continued:

so it's got its ups and downs so sometimes when it goes down, it will go down as far as your own strength. So when you're weak it goes really down ...and also now it's even more obvious that the social movements are declining because everyone else is fighting, you know like protests, strikes but we, we're just quiet so that means we're out of it.

His reflections made sense in light of internal battles within the APF. A decline in APF's external visibility affected its members profoundly. The strength of the struggle was identified with the strength of its constituents, a further elaboration of the identification between self and struggle that occurs in activism. As Khanyisa revealed, such processes of identification are critically elaborated through song such that an absence of feeling in song renditions can cause profound sadness and disquiet.

MUSIC IN THE WAKE OF MOBILISATION

In deconstructing APF's demise and hope for its regeneration, one activist offered a compelling reflection: she clarified that attempts to address the divisiveness among its members needed to engage more than just the organizational structure. Rather she acknowledged in APF's latter engagements the absence of an intangible collective bond that must be rediscovered: "there's something—if I was religious I would say a soul—or something that we need to find again and it was there" (McKinley 2012). In her estimation, APF needed to rediscover its spirit and reconstitute a sense of community and ethical collectivity. This rediscovery would involve drastic changes: "it does need a big shuffling, shaking up and maybe if that shaking up is not possible, it will have to die, it will have to go through a process where things don't work out and you start fresh, sometimes that is also necessary" (in McKinley 2012). Such assessment extends an appreciation of the significance of APF's decline beyond the disappointment of loss, to an opportunity for new beginnings. Her insights also signaled that the significance of the APF resides not in the solidity of organizational structures but in less tangible affiliations. Another activist's comment that APF "is in my blood" (in McKinley 2012) and Khanyisa's impression that the struggle "will go down as far as your own strength" similarly suggest the extension of APF into the intangibilities of activists' self-identification. While APF as a coordinating forum has declined, some of its community-based affiliates and individual members have remained politically active and continue to mobilize through song. Furthermore, even beyond the activities of these affiliates, songs recollect the APF, particularly as the struggles it galvanized during its years of activity have evolved into other mobilisations. As Ron Eyeran and Andrew Jamison noted, the ideals of social movements live on in their art. Such art, in many cases, serves "to

inspire new movements by helping to keep the older movements alive in collective memory” (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 12). As the song with which I began warned—“APF is not sleeping, it is merely genuflecting [in prayer and solemn reflection]” (“APF ayilalanga/ ayilala iguqe ngamadolo”).

In 2016, South Africa was engulfed by protests. Demonstrations among university students, including at Wits, against the outsourcing of labour and the hiking of tuition fees declare that #FeesMustFall. Communities rallying in solidarity with them insist that #ThePriceOfBreadMustFall. This convergence of workers, students and community struggles recall the constellation of APF’s emergence more than a decade earlier, and attest that the genuflected figure that was the APF has perhaps risen again in a variety of different guises. While each social movement must be understood in terms of the particularities of its practices and the context of its emergence, continuities of struggle between the APF and more current mobilisations can be discerned in song. For instance, “That’s Why I’m a Socialist”, a song that generates deep resonance for APF members has been claimed and redeployed among #FeesMustFall activists who perform it with their own depth of feeling. Their redeployment features lyrical, sonic and structural transformations. When sung at APF events, “That’s Why I’m a Socialist” could be approximated to the following antiphonic pattern:

Call: My mo—
Response: My mother was a kitchen girl
Call: My fa—
Response: My father was a garden boy
Call: That’s why—
Response: That’s why I’m a socialist,
 I’m a socialist
 I’m a socialist

Within a number of #FeesMustFall renditions, the song has a few lyrical adjustments:

Leader: Let me tell you about the story of my life
 My mother was a kitchen girl
 My father was a garden boy
 That’s why I’m a freedom fighter.
 You wanna know, the story of my life
 My mother was a kitchen girl...

Furthermore, the antiphonic pattern is transformed from one in which the leader passes a melodic line to a chorus response to one in which the leader

and chorus response have intersecting lines. While the leading line holds the lyrics, the responding chorus sing in wordless vocalisation that is layered in counterpoint to the leader. The result is a remix that recalls the earlier song (and the social movement it inspired) but adapts it according to new sensibilities and mobilization contexts.

That song not only remains prominent in the decline and reformulation of South African grassroots struggle, but also retains its participatory structure, is remarkable in light of scholarship on how music manifests amidst social movement dissolution. The few case studies available detail a trend in which music recedes with movement inactivity. In other words, these studies suggest that songs are stripped of their vitality, momentum and functionality within collective action when the movements they were embedded in are active no more. As noted, Eyerman and Jamison point to music's mediation of memory—that when a social movement no longer looks like one, its songs can keep it alive in collective memory (1998, 12). In his case study of musical movements in the 1960s, including the U.S. civil rights movement, William Roy also discusses how the protest songs of that era have receded in public purpose, becoming more mnemonic device than integral parts of collective action (2010, 190–206). The story I have told here challenges these conclusions. While their mnemonic contributions are indeed a part of their efficacy, South Africa's freedom songs have continued to fuel protest action despite transitions in the country's political life. From APF's origins and beyond its years of activity, its songs have drawn upon and contributed to a longstanding continuum of struggle. South Africa's, then, is an ongoing musical movement that extends beyond the lifespan of a single social movement organization.

NOTES

1. All translations by the author with the exception of those already published.
2. On the emergence of new social movements and the transformation of South Africa's political landscape following the country's first democratic elections in 1994, see Ballard et al. (2006; see also Bond 2006; Desai 2002; Gibson 2006). On APF's emergence specifically, see Naidoo and Varieva (2005; see also Dawson 2010).
3. Scholars disagree regarding the extent to which there was a vacuum of opposition to the ANC immediately following South Africa's first democratic elections (mid-to-late 1990s). Ballard et al. (2006) argue that as former anti-apartheid organisations became allied under the governance of the ANC, there was a vacuum of opposition to the state that was not filled until new social movements emerged in the late 1990s onwards. In contrast, Marcelle Dawson (2010, 268–69) argues that Ballard et al. overstated the lack of popular opposition in the immediate post-apartheid transition. Criticism of the ANC's policies began in the mid-1990s shortly after it took power, Dawson contends. While it holds true that criticism of ANC policies was

present within its factions and within broader South African civil society, it is clear that the immediate years following 1994 was a period of demobilisation and political transition (Bond 2006, 115–16). State opposition had to reestablish itself and redefine its contours in light of the country's democratic turn.

4. O'Brien notes two atypical features that facilitated the presence of music within the Wisconsin protests: the spatial proximity among participants that enabled the co-presence needed for collective singing and the alignment of performance strategy with movement aims of laying claim to the history and values of the labor rights movement in a contested present (O'Brien 2013, 16–17).

5. Politicians' revivals of polarising songs have spurred debate over the continued role of freedom songs in a democratic dispensation. In 2005 for example, Jacob Zuma, then the country's ousted vice-president, caught media and popular attention with the song "mshini wam" (Gunner 2009). "Bring me my machine gun", its lyrics in isiZulu, one of South Africa's eleven official languages, directed. Zuma supporters across South Africa embraced the song incurring the vociferous opposition of political rivals including Mosiuoa Lekota. Lekota was the national chairperson of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in 2007 when he wrote that freedom songs were time-bound compositions. Their primary purpose was to raise popular awareness of changing policy directions in the country's mass liberation movement. Songs invoking images from the armed phase of the struggle grated against the present epoch of governing a peaceful democracy (Lekota 2007; Mail and Guardian 2007). Such songs could incite racial violence, a particularly sensitive consideration given South Africa's political history. Indeed observers noted in some cases "mshini wam" serving as an accessory to xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008 (Gunner 2009, 47–48). The attempts of these politicians and their civic interlocutors to negotiate the delicate role of freedom songs in post-transition nationalism highlight the continued though ambiguous prominence of musical practices that bolstered South Africa's anti-apartheid struggles.

6. Vuyisile Mini (1920–1964) was a South African trade unionist, often tagged as the father of freedom songs. He was arrested and hanged by the apartheid regime. Purportedly, he went to the gallows singing the song he is now well known for, "nants' indod' emnyama, Verwoerd," translated as "here comes the black man, Verwoerd".

7. Reuben Tholakele Caluza (1895–1966) was a South African composer who trained and taught at the Ohlange Institute, a private college outside Durban.

8. Orlando is a community in Soweto, a township of Johannesburg.

Chapter 17

Cultural Production as a Political Act

Two Feminist Songs from Istanbul

Evrım Hikmet Öğüt

What makes an art production political? This complex question, on the relationship between art and politics, continues to occupy a significant place not only in the literature of the sociology of art but also in the minds of art producers/artists, activists, academics and audiences. In this chapter, departing from this question, and widening its scope from art production to any type of cultural production, I examine two feminist songs performed by an all-female collective from Istanbul, namely Bandsista. In doing so, I illustrate that the political or protest quality of these songs cannot be seen as independent from all kinds of relations that impinge on the process of their production and dissemination. In other words, in the case of these two songs, I argue that it is these particular relations that make a song political as much as the content and message do.

In the context of Turkey, the term protest (*özgün*) music has a specific connotation to mostly folk-based, leftist songs that are arranged in a Westernized manner (using polyphonic/harmonised singing, to give one example), accompanied by *bağlama* (a long-necked lute) and various other traditional and/or Western instruments. Far beyond this conceptualisation, I refer to a comprehensive definition of the term. Dario Martinelli, in his article “Popular Music, Social Protest and Their Semiotic Implications”, highlights basic facts about protest music: The term does not refer to a specific genre and it does not necessarily have a standard political colour (it can be leftist or rightist, etc.). Rather than proposing a single definition, he examines the songs of protest, classifying them according to various parameters—context, content, and so on (Martinelli 2013). In this chapter, I basically accept the fact that the only distinctive characteristic of the protest song is the “idea of protesting” that can be traced in any of the features, such as the musical or lyrical context, the use of the song, the meaning attributed to it and the social relations operating in its production.

Christopher Trigg (2010, 994) deals with another aspect of protest songs. He states that “Protest songs are sung from a position inside social change”, and adding that “the song itself is a key part of the progress that it seeks to effect”. In this respect, the songs of Bandsista not only criticize the given situation of women and offer a political stand against that. It can be argued that through the act of organizing the whole creative process as a political act, Bandsista has become a political actor.

Bandsista, an *ad hoc* women’s collective from Istanbul, produced a two-song EP *Sokak, Meydan, Gece* (Street, Square, Night) in 2012. The EP was released on 8 March 2012 for International Women’s Day as “a small contribution to the 30th anniversary of the women’s struggle in Turkey” (Bandsista 2012). The songs soon became a mode of musical expression for the women’s struggle in Turkey and took their place within its repertoire of creative resistance. Both the music and lyrics of the songs were based on the shared history of the members of the Bandsista collective. The songs were quickly adopted by activists in women’s movements with regards to the musical and extra-musical images the songs recall from a collective history of which they were a part.

I examine each phase of the production of these two songs, “İsyân” (Revolt) and “Olur/Olmaz” (Let/Not), by delineating how the whole process is considered a collective political act by its producers. Its members identify Bandsista as a collective in which participants imagine and actualize the whole production process together.¹ Beyond this, they aim to widen the idea of collectiveness by incorporating the audience. Besides illustrating these aspects of collectiveness in Bandsista case, I also use the concept “collective” while indicating the sources of the material used in the songs—both musical and verbal. The lyrics and melodies of the songs derive from various sources (sayings, proverbs, slogans, well-known songs and many other widely used—mostly anonymous—material) from the collective memory of the members as well as the audience. In brief, Bandsista takes its source material from a collective history/memory, transforms it into songs, and gives them back to the audience by making them a part of its collectiveness. The process generates a circle which takes its data from anonymous sources and eventually re-anonymises them. While I consider the two songs of Bandsista to be protest songs, I also state that they widen the meaning of the term: from its political context and its lyrical and musical content, to the capacity to protest against conventional music making forms.

In order to problematise the production process, I return to Walter Benjamin’s (1982) seminal speech on art production;² and to illustrate some aspects of my conceptualization on collectiveness, I refer to Howard Becker (1982) and Christopher Small (1998) from the sociology of art and musicology literature. I also argue that Bandsista’s conscious insistence on collective creativity cannot be seen as separate from the feminist praxis (Elomäki 2012).

This chapter, rather than being the result of a well-planned-out research project, was undertaken in order to record a unique experience that has created an unexpected and continuing influence on numerous women, including me. In other words, when these songs were created in 2012, I had no idea I would be writing on this specific experience, and moreover, it was not possible at that point to foresee whether the songs would be adopted by women or remain popular for a long time.

As a musician, and as an ethnomusicologist, I followed closely and observed Bandista between 2011 and 2015. The EP *Sokak, Meydan, Gece* (Street, Square, Night) was realized by the offshoot women's collective, Bandsista, which was founded on the invitation of three female members of Bandista. The Bandsista collective was created with the intention of producing one unique product to celebrate 30 years of feminist struggle in Turkey. Since there were no plans for the women's collective beyond this, it did not give any concerts or continue its musical life after producing this EP.

This chapter is thus based on my own participant observations of the process of creating *Street, Square, Night* between January and March 2012, along with informal interviews with the other members of the collective during both the process and the writing stage. I have been striving to ground my analysis and interpretations upon my ethnographic material.³

THE PRODUCTION OF ART AS A POLITICAL ACT

In 2013, a group of artists and activists, under the name of Public Resistance Platform, staged a protest against the 13th Istanbul Biennial, a prestigious artistic event dating back 30 years. Following the Gezi protests across Turkey that same year (June 2013)⁴ to raise issues such as citizens' right to the city and to public space, the motto of the Biennial was "The notion of the public domain as a political forum", and urban transformation was one of its focal themes.⁵ Public Resistance Platform's action was not the first protest against the Biennial. The root cause of all the protests was the sponsorship behind the event: the Biennial was supported by some of the major companies behind precisely the type of urban commercially oriented transformation of Istanbul being fought against in the Gezi protests. Moreover, the founder of the main sponsor, Koç Holdings, was one of the supporters of the 1980 military coup.⁶ Therefore, the Biennial's "pseudo" political statement was not convincing—indeed was highly hypocritical—to those protestors who were aware of the relationships behind it.

Broadening the discussion out from this specific occurrence, we can say that the act of challenging the Biennial's political consistency represents one example among many: It is a recurring theme when politically engaged artistic

and/or cultural production is examined in depth. Taking my lead from this, I offer the assumption that, as with any other political-artistic production, a protest song cannot be taken as a basic outcome; on the contrary, its production processes—its creation, dissemination, consumption, and so on—as well as the relationships at play behind these processes, all contribute to its political context.

In “The Author as Producer”, Walter Benjamin (1982) frames the necessary relationship between literary artistic production and the relations involved in production, in the context of class conflict. Even though Benjamin makes class struggle the primary issue that an author has to deal with, and states that “the place of the intellectual in the class struggle can only be determined, or better still chosen, on the basis of his position within the production process” (Benjamin 1982, 22), his key discussion on this is applicable to a broader political scope when discussing art production.

Benjamin places the intellectual or author as a subject against the capitalist relationships of productions. Correspondingly, instead of asking the question “what is the position of a [literary] work *vis-à-vis* the productive relations of its time, does it underwrite these relations, is it reactionary, or does it aspire to overthrow them, is it revolutionary?” Benjamin proposes another: “what is its position within them?” (Benjamin 1982, 17). This question directs his attention to the technique of literary work rather than its content.

Carrying the essence of his discussion into a broader scope, the question can be answered with the assertion that what makes an art production political, more than its content, its nature or its capability of representation, lies in the social relations behind its production. Similarly, Kuryel and Firat, in their examination of politically engaged artistic experiences related to various struggles from the recent past, put the concept of “aesthetic experience” to the centre of their discussion, describing it as a sort of cultural/artistic production that prioritizes collective creative processes and therefore redefines the social relations behind the production (Kuryel and Firat 2015, 13).

Applying this approach to cultural production, below I analyse the entire production process of the two songs from *Street, Square, Night* as a collective political act. In this respect, I assert that the idea of collectiveness involves both the circumstances and the material, can play a role in any of the creative processes of the artwork, and eventually makes the receiver (audience) a part of the collective. Sociologist Howard Becker’s (1982) “art worlds” concept presents a holistic approach that sees all the participants at any stage of the art production, alongside their individualities, as part of a collective experience. The concept, briefly, considers art to be a collective action that cannot be realized without the collaborative attempt of various actors, including the audience. Similarly, ethnomusicologist Christopher Small (1998) offers the concept of “musicking” to refer to collectiveness in musical production. Both these concepts—art worlds and musicking—direct attention to the intellectual

environment and the predominant sense of aesthetic as being among the factors that form the artwork. Correspondingly, in the case of *Street, Square, Night*, the idea of collectiveness blurs the differentiation between the producer (artist) and the audience by questioning the concept of creator. Revealing the political essence of both these approaches, I consider collectiveness to be a political practice, widely adopted in today's global anti-capitalist and feminist politics that favours horizontal relationships rather than hierarchical ones.

BANDISTA, A MUSIC COLLECTIVE

Even though protest or political music has a long history—and a strong place in the political arena in the 1970s—in Turkey (Kahyaoğlu 2010), in recent years, especially in Istanbul, and as in the global anti-capitalist movements around the world, we have witnessed an increasingly active and creative use of music in political events such as street demonstrations. In the last decade, *halay*⁷ (line dances based on folk songs) has given way to various other mobile ensembles suited to street protests, such as percussion-only marching bands. From mid-2000s on, Bandista became a regular musical component of street demonstrations and solidarity events, playing with or without amplification, according to the circumstances.

Bandista was formed in 2006 and released its debut album, *De te fabula narratur*,⁸ on May 1, 2009 on its website; members handed out the CDs freely during the May Day demonstrations in Istanbul.⁹ Following its debut, the band quickly became an active figure in the political scene; it has played not only in Istanbul, but also in numerous solidarity events around Turkey and Europe. The band plays both well-known local and international political songs, as well as its own compositions, the former taking a significant place in its repertoire. Bandista performs well-known marches and songs from international opposition movements that are imprinted in the collective memory—White Army, Black Baron (Red Army is the Strongest)¹⁰ and *Bandiera Rossa* (Red Flag)¹¹ to name a few—in an idiosyncratic manner, mostly by re-constructing these songs musically and writing new lyrics that derive from the band's political internationalist perspective.

The band also “composes” its own songs. As I will discuss in detail below, the compositional process of many Bandista songs can be seen as an operation that takes various musical elements, images, symbols and ideas from the collective memory of the multiple traditions of struggle of which the band considers itself to be a part. One band member depicts this operation:

The basic matter here is that, we do not believe that any product or sound that we produce is actually coming out of us. After all, it is a cultural thing,

something learned before. Even if I play guitar, there is definitely someone who taught me before how to play, and any sound that I make with it definitely was heard by me before. Even if there is a potential for individual creativity within this sense, we claim that by putting back into the realm of anonymity whatever we produce we are re-anonymizing it. (cited by Mehbarov 2012, 84)

Emphasizing the re-anonymizing of its own musical products, the collective shares all its albums under the copyleft¹² scheme through its website, encouraging the audience to share and distribute its mp3s freely. As anonymity is a significant concern for Bandista, the band has strict rules on media appearances, such as never using photos of individual band members on posters or giving their names during interviews, as well as not appearing on TV shows, and so on. This idea of anonymity cannot be seen as separate from the idea of collectiveness. The band describes itself as a music collective and pays regard to avoiding any kind of hierarchical relations within the collective.

Among the eight albums and EPs publically shared on Bandista's website, the EPs in particular tend to be directly devoted to specific issues; for example, *Paşanın Başucu Şarkıları*, released in September 2009, recalls the 1980 (12 September) military coup in Turkey; and the album *Sınırsız, Sürgünsüz, Ulussuz* (No Border, No Exile, No Nation) from 2012 is in memory of Festus Okey, a Nigerian refugee who was shot by an officer in a police station in Istanbul in 2007.

Similarly, the EP *Street, Square, Night*, released on 8 March 2012, is specifically devoted to the struggle of women in Turkey. The songs on the EP were produced by women members of the collective, along with their female comrades, most of whom are not musicians. Bandsista, in the album booklet, describes its relationship to Bandista, as: "Even though we got involved in the project thanks to the members of Bandista, in the process we have been transformed into a distinct collective working group. It was then that we decided to take on the name Bandsista, evoking difference but not distance" (Bandsista 2012). Like Bandista, Bandsista puts the idea of collectiveness at the core of its very existence, undoubtedly seeing the roots of this idea in the praxis of feminist politics as well.

STREET, SQUARE, NIGHT: COLLECTIVENESS IN PRODUCTION

Bandsista, the women's collective which created the two songs, consists of mostly white-collar, urbanite women living in Istanbul. Bandsista describes the album as: "The collective efforts of women whose lives and dreams intersect in a myriad of ways—women who share the same workspace or belong

to the same trade union; women who march side by side during protests, toast their glasses at night, or dance together during concerts' (Bandsista 2012).

The collective effort the members made in various phases of the production and the horizontal relations they created are described in the album booklet: "For days on end, we worked together, singing, recording, and writing until each word and note satisfied everyone. Composing the lyrics, we often completed each other's sentences; when at odds, we formed entirely new ones" (Bandsista 2012).

In this regard, in the next section, in order to claim the production of the album as a political act, I follow the ideas of collectiveness and anonymity in every single stage of the production of the EP: from collecting and selecting the material, to composing, writing the lyrics, recording and releasing the album, and to singing the songs on streets.

COMPOSING: TRANSFERRING, TRANSLATING, TAKING FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY

The above approach to musical creation, put forward by a member of Bandsista, is also more or less shared by the Bandsista collective. This approach of taking material from a collective or anonymous history is most often referred to in the literature on folk music or folk-music-based political genres.¹³ In this sense, in terms of musical creativity, Bandsista considers itself to be a part of a collective experience and a collective history/memory.

The first song, "İsyân" (Revolt),¹⁴ originated from the concentration camps of World War II.¹⁵ The melody spread throughout the feminist movements of the 1970s,¹⁶ and this protest march song continues to be sung by women across the globe. Bandsista, implying that the struggle is limited neither to their own experience nor to their location, has added another link to this chain and sung the song once again, this time in a familiar tongue by translating it into Turkish. The collective members depart from their own experiences by completely changing the lyrics of the second-wave feminist movement, as well as adding the voice of current issues and struggles which surround them, such as the experience of migrant domestic workers and the rebellions in Tahrir Square and the Kurdish region.

This kind of musical transfer is one of the useful applications in the popular music scene of today's highly globalized world. Such transfers often not include only a literal translation—the literal context can be stable or not—but also a translation of the musical style, instruments, musical background and so on to fit a new cultural context. Each translation has its singularity. Speaking of transcultural flows, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state that the relation

among the translations and the first product does not have a hierarchic, but rather a rhizomatic character. Thus, once a song is transferred to another cultural context, it gains uniqueness only to the extent that it depends upon the other versions and the various connotations they evoke. In the use of political context, while each transfer of the song has its own particularity, at the same time, the song becomes a link that interconnects those struggles across different geographies and histories. In this way, the song gains anonymity and a collective quality in the Benjaminian sense (1936) by extinguishing the “authenticity” of the earlier products.

Unlike “Revolt”, the second song, “Olur/Olmaz” (Let’s/Not),¹⁷ is not based on a previously existing musical work. The melody was composed by the members of Bandsista as if it was a re-production of any possible melody from a specific genre that was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. The genre was named 45’lik, after the media for which they were recorded: single vinyl discs usually playing at 45 rpm. Even though it is not possible to generalise, some songs in the genre have a particular connotation in the mind in Turkey as the songs of “modern,” “independent” women (Yıldız and Çelik 2006, 41). These songs, which spread widely in the country, refer to the relatively libertarian climate of the 1960s. 45’lik songs were mostly based on the melodies of popular songs of the time from Greece and France, such as the songs of Charles Aznavour; hence, they were *aranjman*s (arrangements, musical translations). The lyrics of these songs, which were written by both men and women, often depicted an independent, strong woman. In particular, the song “Sana Ne Kime Ne” (None of Your Business)¹⁸ became one of the musical symbols of the feminist movement in Turkey for years, with its strong emphasis on the independent image of women. These warm and playful melodies are imprinted in the memories of women in Turkey, giving Bandsista images of an alternative model of femininity, and, in particular, the song “Sana Ne Kime Ne”, constitutes the musical starting points of the song “Let’s/Not”.

WRITING THE LYRICS: COMPLETING EACH OTHER’S SENTENCES

The lyrics of both songs in the EP are based on various daily life experiences of the members of Bandsista, who are from a similar urban background and both, in a way, deal with women’s struggle in Turkey. The first song, “Revolt”, is basically the manifestation of women who claim the streets, the nights, and thereby the public space as a reflection of cultural consciousness. In Turkish, the word “street” has come to refer to a place full of danger for women, especially in terms of purity. As can be easily seen from even a cursory glance at local newspapers, a woman “being on the street” at

night still has strong connotations of prostitution in the minds of a significant proportion of the population. Consequently, reclaiming the streets is a significant issue for the feminist movement in Turkey. The claim expressed by the slogan “We don’t leave the nights, the streets, the squares”¹⁹ resists and challenges the dominant understanding of danger, and also of purity (Ekal 2014, 175). The claim gave its name to the album as well.

While the emphasis on claiming streets and nights in the lyrics of “Revolt” touches on various crucial and current discussions in the feminist movement in Turkey, many other issues, such as the controlling mechanisms of the government over women’s bodies, labour conditions, migration, are also among further concerns of Bandsista.

In Turkey, as a result of the neoliberal and conservative politics of the government,²⁰ the introduction of socio-political mechanisms for controlling women’s bodies has gained speed in recent years. For example, new laws that restrict abortion and the changing of the name of the former “Ministry of State Responsible for Women and Family Affairs” to the “Ministry of Family and Social Policies” in 2011 encountered strong resistance from women’s organizations, which objected on the basis that it failed to delineate any space for women outside of the family unit. In this respect, the lyrics of the second verse (starting *Kadın dile diüünce*—see below) speak of women’s rights to be seen as a woman, not just a family member. Another example is in the very last lines: *Barış da bizim devrim de/Amed²¹ de bizim Tahrir de* (We are peace and revolution/ Amed is ours as well as Tahrir), referring to the ongoing conflicts and struggles in both the Kurdish region and Egypt.

The second song, “Let’s/Not” has a playful character and the lyrics are taken from a wide variety of sources, including slogans, idioms, sayings, book titles and so on. A specific inspiration came from a rhythmic slogan of the women’s movement in Turkey in recent years: “Be it the father, be it the husband, be it the state, be it the baton, spite rebellion, spite freedom.”

Collage techniques which bring seemingly unrelated ideas, objects, texts, etc. together is a useful tool that feminist politics often uses in creative resistance practices (Bartlett 2013, 190). As Bartlett (2013, 180) observes, “feminist protest draws attention to the construction of culture as patriarchal and so consciously sought [seek] to reinvent it as feminist”. In doing this, both in material and textual contexts, collage creates a space to seek new epistemologies in the meaning-making process. In the lyrics of Lets/Not, feminist slogans and titles of books from feminist literature²² were combined, while the plentiful and widely used sexist idioms in Turkish²³ were reversed, disclosed and de-constructed from the feminist perspective. The lyrics of the song aim not only to expose the patriarchal and sexist content of daily language in Turkish, but also, by mocking or forcing people to confront it out of context, dare to stand against it.

Table 17.1 Translation of “Revolt”. Credit for original lyrics: Kadıköy Müzik Yapım.

<i>İsyan</i>	<i>Revolt</i>
Mutfak, atölye ve kampüslerden Ofis, mahalle, hücreden Çıkıyoruz evlerden Genelinden, özelinden Meydan da bizim gece de Yalnız ya da hep birlikte İsyan! İsyan	Out of kitchens, workplaces, campuses Offices, neighbourhoods and cells We’re leaving homes The public and private ones The night is ours and so are the squares Alone or together we stand Revolt! Revolt!
Kadın dile düşünce Aile, devlet, mahkeme Kadın dile gelince Hükmü yok üstümüzde Aile de yalan devlet de Arzu da bizim beden de İsyan! İsyan!	When a woman’s decency is questioned The family, the state and the courts When a woman speaks for herself They don’t have authority over us Family is a lie and so is the state It’s our desire and our body! Revolt! Revolt!
Saçım kısa eteğim de Sokaktayım, köşede Kaltak, sürtük, fahişe Namus, iffet neyse ne Ağır da olsa bedeli İslah etmem bedenimi İsyan! İsyan!	My hair is short and so is my skirt I’m in the street and on the corner Bitch, Whore, Prostitute Honor, purity whatever No matter the price I’ll never tame my body. Revolt! Revolt!
Ucuz, esnek ve örgütsüz Göçmen kadınız kimliksiz Sınırları yıkıyoruz Evsiz, barksız uyruksuz Emek de bizim kentler de Yalnız değil hep birlikte İsyan! İsyan!	Cheap, flexible and unorganized Immigrants without ID We are tearing down borders Homeless, without identity Our labour is ours, and so are the cities Not alone, together we stand Revolt! Revolt!
Barış da bizim devrim de Amed de bizim Tahrir de İsyan! İsyan	We are peace and revolution Amed is ours as well as Tahrir Revolt! Revolt!
Lyrics: Bandsista	Translation: Aylin Kuryel

Besides the slogans and the idioms, current political debates within the women’s movement in Turkey take their place in the song: the killing of women (which has increased in the last decade)—*Cinayetinize sessiz kalmaz* (She won’t stay silent to your murders); the neoliberal and conservative politics of a government that prioritizes the family—*Çitmişim çekirdek aileyi* (I nick the family unit); and especially the restrictions on abortion

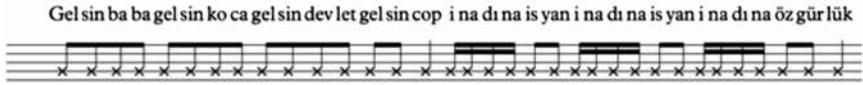


Figure 17.1 The rhythmic transcription of a well-known slogan in Turkey.

rights—*Olursa çocuk yaparım olsun/İstemezsem soyları kurusun* (I'll give birth, if I want/And if I don't, let the human race become extinct!).

Since feminism, both in theory and in the active struggle, is not homogeneous, the women who created the song had different tendencies, priorities, and characteristics. Moreover, some members of the collective would not describe themselves as feminists. In this sense, as stated above, the process of creating the songs was, more than anything else, a process in which women

Table 17.2 Translation of “*Olur/Olmaz*”.

<i>Olur/Olmaz</i>	<i>Lets/Not</i>
Gelsin baba gelsin koca gelsin Polisiniz devletiniz gelsin Bakanınız haklarımı versin Aman istemem üzeri kalsın	Be it the father, be it the husband Be it their police, be it their state Your minister giving me rights No thanks, keep the change
Ev işlerini Marslılar yapsın Cadıysam süpürge bana kalsın Olursa çocuk yaparım olsun İstemezsem soyları kurusun	Martians can do the housework Since I'm a witch, I'll keep the broom I'll give birth, if I want And if I don't, let the human race become extinct!
Çitmişim ben çekirdek aileyi Kırmışım kendi testimi Bundan böyle ne bacı ne bayan Hayatta olmam ben adam	I nick the family unit I live by my own sword From now on neither madam nor lady Don't look at me to find decency
Cinayetinize sessiz kalmaz Yastık değildir, köşede durmaz Kol kırılsa yen içinde kalmaz Tarih yazar figüran olmaz	She won't stay silent to your murders You can't just sweep her under the rug You can't just wish it away She'll write history not be its spectator
Çevir dünyayı tersine dönsün Seni dövemez dizini dövsün Kızkardeşlerin sesini duysun Kadınlar sokaklara dökülsün Bundan böyle duramam ben evde Sokağa özgürleşmeye Bundan böyle ne bacı ne bayan Hayatta olmam ben adam	Turn the world in upside-down He'll beat himself not you Let your sisters hear your voice Women, let's hit the streets No longer can I stay at home To the streets, to become free Neither madam nor lady Don't look at me to find decency
Lyrics: Bandsista	Translation: Aylin Kuryel

interacted with each other and interchanged their experiences. One member described the revelatory nature of this process: “It was surprising, that need to discuss at length, even with the people you live side-by-side and who are supposed to share the same feminist perspective. This feeling, and the instructiveness of these discussions, were the most significant Bandsista experiences for me” (2017, İstanbul).²⁴

The lyric “Martians can do the housework” constitutes a good example to depict this process. The original idea for the sentence was “Men can do the housework”, timely to a current campaign²⁵ by a prominent organization, the Socialist Feminist Collective²⁶. The campaign claims that “men are indebted to us”, emphasizing the economic relations behind domestic work and the strong relations between patriarchy and capitalism. But some members of Bandsista, stating that housework is supposed to be undertaken collectively by all members of the household, rejected the idea. The subsequent discussion allowed participants to discuss an array of issues around this particular one, delegating the solution to the Martians! Surprisingly, this contradictory lyric became one of the most unequivocally accepted by women after the song’s release.

PLAYING, SINGING, RECORDING

Even though a certain level of expertise is required for a good quality recording of a music performance, the collective aimed to avoid separating the recording process from the other collective processes, and did not give priority to musical perfection. Since only a few members of Bandsista were musicians, some male members of Bandsista were needed to play instruments such as guitar, accordion, bass guitar, saxophone, etc. Both the instrumental and vocal parts were recorded in a member’s bedroom. Due to the small size of the room and the lack of extra microphones, the vocal parts were recorded to various channels by two/three-person groups. Although singing the refrains all together in a small room was not the easiest part of the process, it was the most entertaining one. In accordance with the idea of expanding the collective, a 14-year-old female follower of Bandsista was invited to the vocal recording session.²⁷

SHARING THE SONGS, EXPANDING THE COLLECTIVE

Neither in the gestation nor in its creative processes did Bandsista consider itself as a closed, completed collective. On the contrary, members—the women who attended any of the processes—were numerous, and they could participate in any stages they liked. Even though they were from a common circle, with similar lifestyles, problems and political sensibilities, they

nevertheless avoided drawing lines to limit access to the collective. The last step of the production, the presentation, proposed a new dimension of collectiveness by expanding the collective.

After its release as copyleft on Bandista's website, in the early morning of 8 March 2012, the album spread very fast. On the first day, the website had more than twelve thousand visitors, the album was downloaded three thousand times, and the songs "Revolt" and "Let's/Not" were listened to online 8,700 and 1,300 times respectively. More significantly, at the traditional feminist night march the same night, organized by the Istanbul Feminist Collective (a collective of different organisations based in the eponymous city), the songs were sung by women at the demonstration, with the help of the lyric sheets that had been copied and shared by the organizing committee.²⁸ Moreover, numerous placards based on the lyrics of the songs were seen in participants' hands.

Besides feminists, the women in many left-wing organizations and parties have enjoyed the songs at various events, and are still doing so today. The range of the songs went beyond the women's movement. For instance, the song "Let's/Not" was played from loudspeakers in Taksim Square on May Day 2012.²⁹

There are various possible reasons for the widespread acceptance of the songs by the women's movement. One reason may be their witty, playful expression, which attracts the new generation of opposition movements. More importantly, these songs, referring to a collective memory—both literally and musically—evoke the feeling: "These songs belong to all of us!" Consequently, despite the fact that the 30 years of feminism in Turkey have been expressed in various songs,³⁰ the song "Let's/Not" has easily become the voice of the movement in the 2010s.

Following the release, Bandsista received numerous invitations to demonstrations, solidarity events, and concerts, but they only sang the songs in demonstrations with all-female participants. Bandsista rejected concerts, stating that it was not a musical band.³¹ On the other hand, the female members of Bandista did sing the songs at Bandista concerts, but in such cases they invited all the women in the audience to the stage. Hence, the listeners also performed the songs, becoming performers themselves; the songs have day by day gained a level of anonymity, and the collective has day by day expanded.

CONCLUSION

These joyful and mischievous songs were the expression of a rebellion against the patriarchy that reproduces itself in everyday life; against 'household work' that is exacted on us as if it were a profession; against the 'nuclear family'

to the extent that it is the site of oppression, sexism, moralism, violence, and exploitation. The songs were a call towards organizing and a call to the street and the square, which are the founding sites of struggle and the writing of history (Bandsista 2012).

This call quickly found a response, because rebellion has its roots in the collective memory not only of the group of women who constituted Bandsista, but also those who share similar experiences of womanhood. The songs are still an important part of the musical expression of women at demonstrations and celebrations in Istanbul and many other cities. Even five years on, some sentences of the lyrics are rediscovered by women who use various parts of the lyrics as political statements on their placards. The experience of Bandsista also paves a way to new and various experiences. After Bandsista there are new quasi-amateur music collectives of women's and new songs that are similarly derived from the words, images, and melodies from the collective memory.

The concepts of art worlds and musicking, both of which emphasise the collectiveness in artistic and cultural production and consider all the possible actors—including the audience—as part of the creative process, bring into question the personal creativity that has imprinted the history of art and, specifically, music. The reason for the appropriation of Bandsista songs can be found in such a collectiveness, which leaves its mark on every step of its production and blurs the borders between its producers and receivers by re-anonymizing the songs. The idea of collectiveness also provides horizontal social relations among the members, thus democratizing the decision-making processes involved in creation. Lastly, the chosen means of disseminating the EP leaves the production totally outside the capitalist relations involved in the commercial music market.

Following Martinelli's (2013) conceptualisation, which seeks the quality of protest in any of the aspects of a song, it can be said that the strong critical content of Bandsista's two songs that protest against patriarchy, state, various politics of government, militarism, racism, etc. allows them to be characterised as protest songs. But in this particular EP, Bandsista took the idea of protest a step forward by emphasizing the process as much as the result, favouring a form of collectiveness that works through horizontal relations. In consideration of a widely accepted feminist discourse, "the personal is political", which emphasizes the connection between personal experiences and larger political power relations, a criticism of the role of power relations in any kind of experience is one of the features intrinsic to feminist politics. Bandsista, in this respect, puts a basic praxis of the feminist movement into operation.

NOTES

1. The members have diversified opinions on the quality of this collectiveness. It can be said that the production process was a collective act that one can be incorporated at any steps at will. Still, inevitably, some members were more active on the creative process. On the other hand, the collectiveness did not last beyond the production process and stayed limited with a specific production, the EP.

2. Address at the Institute for the Study of Fascism, Paris April 27, 1934.

3. Unsurprisingly, the members' narratives on both Bandista as a group and their Bandsista experiences reflect various, sometimes conflicting perspectives. Similarly, my own narrative sways between admiring the collective's efforts to be a non-profit, autonomous, anonymous collective, and a harsh critique of our failures in those points.

4. In late May 2013, a massive wave of protests erupted in the face of the attempted demolition of Gezi Park in Istanbul. While triggered by the desire to conserve this widely used and highly symbolic public park, the protests were at root a response to the broader processes of urban transformation and ecological destruction that had been ongoing for some time, and quickly spread throughout the country. The protestors in Istanbul occupied Gezi Park for two weeks, during which it was made a space of collective living based on an alternative socio-economic order (for a detailed overview, see Akbulut 2014; Erensu and Karaman, 2017).

5. The conceptual framework of the Istanbul Biennial was announced: "Mom, am I barbarian?" Accessed May 22, 2017. <http://biennial.iksv.org/en/archive/newsarchive/pl/1/622>.

6. The third military coup in Turkey was launched "to bring peace to a polarized society" between rightist and leftist politics, according to the rightwing generals led by General Kenan Evren. A military junta took state power, established martial law, and abolished political parties, trade unions, and democratic rights. For the numbers of people killed and sentenced to prison, see "1980 Coup Facts." *Hurriyet Daily News*. Accessed June 11, 2017. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/1980-coup-facts.aspx?pageID=238&nid=17628>.

7. *Halay* is a general category for the line dances from central and eastern Anatolia, usually accompanied by *davul* (a large, double-headed drum played with mallets) and *zurna* (a vertical, double-reed wind instrument played from the Balkans to Central Asia).

8. *De te fabula narratur*—"it is your story that has been told"—is a quote from the Roman lyric poet Horace (65BC-8BC). It is used by Marx in the preface of *Das Kapital* (1867).

9. The first massive May Day celebrations took place at Taksim Square in Istanbul in 1976. In 1977, 37 participants lost their lives when gunfire was opened on people attending the celebration; the perpetrators remain unknown. After this tragic incident Taksim Square was closed to the May Day celebrations. But as the Square has a symbolic meaning after the massacre in 1977 and is a significant public sphere in the collective memory, unions and leftist organizations have been insisting on celebrating the day in the square for years. 2009 was one of the years that the protesters who wanted to enter Taksim Square were inhibited by police intervention.

10. “The Red Army is the Strongest” (Красная Армия всех сильнее, *Krasnaja Armija vsekh silnej*), known as “White Army, Black Baron,” is a march written in 1920 as an anthem for the Red Army by Pavel Grigorevich Gorinshtejn and Samuil Pokrass.

11. “Bandiera Rossa” (It.) is a famous song of the Italian labour movement. The melody is taken from a folk song.

12. Copyleft is a general term that refers to “a strategy of utilizing copyright law to pursue the policy goal of fostering and encouraging the equal and inalienable right to copy, share, modify and improve creative works of authorship”. Even though various copy left licenses exist, Bandista does not use any of them; instead, it prefers sharing its albums online as non-profit productions for any non-commercial use. Accessed June 11, 2017. <https://www.copyleft.org>.

13. For example, Ljerka V. Rasmussen’s *Newly Composed Folk Music of Yugoslavia* discusses a specific popular genre based on folk music that emerged in Yugoslavia in the 1960s. Another example among many is the research of Maria La Vigna on the music of the Winter Ceremony of American Indians in San Juan Pueblo, New Mexico. It indicates that the “new” songs presented each year in the ceremony are rooted in those that have come before, and are being “created” as a result of a collective act of numerous individual composers (La Vigna 1980, 80–81).

14. Accessed June 11, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcI8fGzQNv8>.

15. *Die Moorsoldaten (Peat Bog Soldiers)* was composed in Nazi concentration camps in the Second World War. Today it is a well-known protest song sung in various languages. Accessed June 5, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEDBkK_BthA.

16. Known as L’hymne femmes (Hymn of Women). Accessed June 5, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIE9HtFv0fc>.

17. Accessed June 11, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syMuo3pIi6U>.

18. 1975, İstanbul Plak. Lyrics: Ülkü Aker; Music: Arranged by Norayr Demirci from a Philippos Nikolau’s song.

19. In Turkish, *Geceleri de, Sokakları da Meydanları da Terk Etmiyoruz*.

20. Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party) came into power in 2002. For the neoliberal and conservative politics of the Party and its politics on women, see Öztan 2015.

21. The main city in the Kurdish region in Turkey; known as Diyarbakır in Turkish.

22. *Kadınlar Dile Düşünce; Kadınlar Dile Gelince*.

23. “Su testisi su yolunda kırılır”, “kol kırılır yen içinde kalır”, “köşe yastığı olmak”, etc.

24. Translated by the author.

25. This demand is rooted back to the International Wages for Housework Campaign in early 1970s in Italy, which problematised the invisible labour behind housework and childcare.

26. The collective extinguished itself at the end of 2015.

27. She came to the recording along with her mother, who cooked her favourite pastry as a gift to Bandsista.

28. The statement of the feminist night march was: “women do not leave the streets, the squares and the nights”. Thus, the name and verbal content of the EP *Street, Square, Night* was directly pointing out the core of the discourse of the feminists of Istanbul.

29. After 32 years of the event being banned there, Taksim Square was opened for May Day celebrations in 2010, although this freedom was granted only for three years. In 2013 the governorship banned the Taksim Square celebrations, putting forward the construction on the Square as a reason.

30. Another song, “Kadınlar Vardır” (There are Women) left its mark on feminist practice in Turkey from the beginning in 1980s. The song was written and composed by Filiz Kerestecioğlu, a jurist and feminist activist who was elected as a member of parliament for the *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (Peoples’ Democratic Party) in 2015 and still serves at the time of writing.

31. Bandsista was not a musical band but a collective that gathered for a specific purpose, namely writing songs for the 30th anniversary of the feminist struggle in Turkey on 8 March 2012.

Chapter 18

Hip-Hop as Civil Society

Activism and Escapism in Uganda's Hip-Hop Scene

Simran Singh-Grewal

This chapter presents an analysis of the hip hop scene in contemporary Kampala, Uganda. I argue that popular music can function as a form of civil society with particular emphasis on the authoritarian state. I make this argument because hip hop in Uganda has first, emerged as a medium of activism, where issues are articulated on the basis of shared interests and collaborative action; and second, as a site for expressions of hedonism and escapism. This chapter will demonstrate how both enactments can be viewed as acts of resistance, and therefore, of protest against a specific backdrop of social, political and economic marginalisation. Furthermore, both enactments engage with concerns that encompass social and political issues. Through this, hip hop provides a discursive space for cultural expression, and facilitates the interaction and negotiation of these themes with a broader context through questions of identity, community and collective action, all concerns of civil society (Ramnarine 2011).

The chapter is informed by data gathered from field research undertaken between November 2014 and January 2016. I include ethnographic details of prominent musical events, such as the Annual Ugandan Hip Hop Summit, Hip Hop Mondays at Deuces, Galaxy Breakdance and Ghetto to Ghetto, the details of which I provide in a subsequent section. In addition, I share supporting data from interviews with well-known figures in Uganda's hip hop scene, supplemented with phenomenological narratives to critically analyse this music scene, in performance and in social life.

Taking into consideration studies on the nature of associational life in Africa, where state-society-market relationships are overlapping, I first discuss hip hop as a medium of activism, and second, as a site of escapism, in order to reveal shared spaces that integrate both these qualities as

acts of protest. My interrogation on the nature and forms of civil society includes discussions on civil society as analytical concept and critical tool, the dimensions of civil society in Africa and the oppositional in the contexts of marginalisation and authoritarianism. In this study, I argue that the state and its inadequacies can be implicated in the formation of both activism and escapism, making all such narratives, songs of protest. Building on this assertion is the nature of power and resistance in popular culture, where protest may be framed in terms of a diversity of social groups with a multiplicity of interests, each exercising a representation of difference within systems of domination (Fiske 2002). This chapter will demonstrate that Ugandan hip hop, in musical and social life, is confrontational, albeit in ways that do not seek to overtly defy but instead circumvent and transcend the inequities of everyday life in Uganda.

UGANDAN HIP HOP AND THE INFORMAL CIVIL

Uganda is a site characterized by extreme poverty, deeply contested resources, a history of civil conflict and dominant power structures in the form of a largely authoritarian regime that not only fails to mitigate these problems, but instead, actively fosters them through corruption, a lack of employment opportunities and basic infrastructure (Lomo and Hovil 2004; Mamdani 1993; Finnström 2008). It is a space defined by inequality, where engagement with political issues most easily takes place through means separate from institutions of the states, such as volunteer associations, citizen initiatives and popular protest, and equally, in political apathy and the subversion of official narratives. The state and its inadequacies can be implicated in the formation of social and economic marginalisation, indicating that a focus on such spaces could provide an insight into crucial concerns, themes and issues that shape subsequent and concurrent political engagement, in formal and informal ways.

Much scholarly work explores the complex and overlapping dimensions of social, economic and political spaces and relationships in sub-Saharan Africa. Interrogations of associational life show that while institutional relationships and formal structures appear insubstantial, these spheres of separation instead overlap and intersect, overlaying the official and the unofficial, the private and the public, the rural and urban (Rothchild and Chazan 1988; Obadare 2011; Bratton 1992; Ekeh 1975). This makes clear demarcations impossible, indicating that discussions on civil society focus not on bifurcations between state and society, for example, but rather on state-society relationships, and in spaces where the political is located beyond the states' purview.

Comprehending the nature of civil society in Africa thus begins with the recognition that firstly, “much that is both interesting and transformative in the continent occurs outside or at the periphery of formal organisational life” (Maina 1998, 137; cf. Van Rooy 2013). This challenges the assertion that civil society exists only in so far as there is “self-consciousness of its opposition to the state” (Bayart 1986, 111–17). For this reason, debates on civil society in sub-Saharan Africa have shown it to be an elusive concept, both in definition and in practice, “recalcitrant in the face of classification” (Keane 2003, 7). The term has been critiqued as an “effort to recalibrate worn out methodological tools and to find positive politics, amid conceptual confusion” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). Mamdani (1996) suggests a move away from civil society as prescriptive measure, suggesting that the concept is best served as an analytical and historical tool, given that the emergence of civil society in Africa is not a recent phenomenon, but can be found in anti-colonial liberation movements (Mamdani 1996; Obadare 2006).

Providing a complete review of scholarship on civil society in sub-Saharan Africa is beyond the remit of this chapter. However, I would like to draw attention to the conception of civil society as an independent stratum of power, said to forge collective identities, build consensus and construct platforms around moral, social and political values for citizen education and mobilisation (Azarya 1994). These capabilities can be linked to Habermas’ (1991) conception of civil society as an aspect of the public sphere that mobilises social and political action, through communication and interaction, between citizens pursuing individual and collective interests. It has been described as a social formation beyond the purview of the state (Bratton 1989, 1994), as a “new cultural fabric”, with the capability of “restructuring identities, challenging existing monopolies of wealth and power, and even reinventing the terms of modernity itself” (Bayart 1996, 120; cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). Tacit in these conceptions is civil society’s ability to provide a platform for resistance; in Uganda this occurs against a backdrop of authoritarianism which is both overweening in control over, and shambolic in services towards citizens

The idea that civil society, can be conceived of as a new “cultural fabric” with the capability of “restructuring identities, challenging existing monopolies of wealth and power” (Bayart 1996, 120; cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2000), is useful when considering dimensions that hip hop culture takes in Uganda. I observed hip hop ‘heads’ in Uganda locate themselves in various ways through formations of hip hop identity and practices negotiated through the genre’s cultural influence and global popularity. In East Africa and elsewhere on the continent, hip hop has been the site of consolidation for cultural identity, with particular emphasis on young people, in a manner that is local, but equally in connection with global black cultures (Osumare 2007;

Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2008). It has featured in dialogues on globalisation, media and popular culture; its concerns and resistances, providing an insight into the ways and means that individuals and communities articulate and negotiate their social and economic realities. Hip hop's cultural appeal and commercial success indicate both a localization of the genre and mainstream recognition. This extends far beyond its geographical roots in New York City in the 1970s, with a popularity and influence that acknowledges the spaces of marginalisation it emerged from (Rose 1994; Mitchell 2001; Chang et al. 2006).

The hip hop scene in Uganda, its dimensions and enactments, revealed one consistent preoccupation; that of the marginalisation of individuals and communities, in the form of social and economic hardship. This marginalisation is confronted through activism in the form of a 'hip hop practice' in service of community and society such as is described in the hip hop ideal of 'knowledge of self' (Chang et al. 2006) on the one hand, or on the other, through escapism in celebrations of conspicuous consumption and hedonism. These are both the "diverse categories of people who craft their everyday tactics of coping with, adapting to, and, in their various ways, resisting the established order" (Ferguson 2003, 281). Here, hip hop articulates the experiences of ordinary people forced to exist in tenuous social, political and economic conditions. In its commercial appeal and creative veracity, hip hop in Uganda exerts an assertive presence as "social fact" (Barber 1987), as it occupies one of Ekeh's (1975) several 'public spaces', where market, state and society interpenetrate each other in complex ways and at different levels.

The conception of civil society thus, as cultural fabric, a platform for social values and as a component of the public sphere in resistance to / protest against marginalization provides us with ways to perceive of hip hop in Uganda as such. From this acknowledgment, one finds oppositional stances to entrenched social and political systems in Uganda, showing how, rather than an institutionalised civil society, formations of civil society can and will emerge from what at first seems the domain of the social, of leisure and pleasure, in what can be termed as the interstices of innumerable informal spaces (Rothchild and Chazan 1988).

HIP HOP IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY: SPACES OF ACTIVISM

I begin this discussion with the 12th Annual Uganda B-Global Hiphop Summit in December 2014.¹ The summit is an annual occurrence, and is organized by Silas 'Babaluku'. A well known figure in the Ugandan hip hop scene, he is founder of the Bavubuka Foundation, the longest running youth and hip

hop organisation in Uganda, and pioneer of the Ugandan Lugaflow hip hop movement. Lugaflow began in the early 1990s and comes from the Swahili Word “Lugha”, which means languages. Lugaflow shows a marked engagement with social and political issues, combining Ugandan languages as well as musical elements such as instruments and compositional forms within a global hip hop sound (Ntarangwi 2009).

This gathering aimed to “empower and educate the youth to lay foundations upon which their communities can grow, build and be transformed, through engagement and practice of the Hip Hop culture” (12th Annual Uganda B-Global Hiphop Summit Facebook page). A diverse range of attendees included MC’s, musicians and activists, representing record labels, musical ensembles and breakdance crews. Happenings were meticulously filmed by a young man named Gilbert Frank Daniel, who describes himself as the “UG hip hop archivist”, and who was my first point of contact at Bavubuka when I began my field research.

In his speech at the Summit, Babaluku described the Lugaflow ‘hip hop practice’, which I understood as being based on the hip hop ideal, knowledge of self. ‘Knowledge of Self’ is attributed to Afrika Bambaataa and his Universal Zulu Nation Organisation, established in 1975 in the Bronx (Chang 2006). ‘Knowledge of Self’ alludes to an understanding of one’s individual worth and place in a critical consciousness about the roots of racial oppression and exclusion. The practice is founded on an identity based on an association with hip hop, of substance and merit developed through reflection and knowledge on social, economic and political contexts. Led by Babaluku, discussions focused on perspectives through which individuals conceived of their identity as hip hop ‘practitioners’. The atmosphere was informal and interactions animated, with discussions punctuated by observations and cheers. The discussion itself followed some structure. Each individual introduced themselves and stated why they were at the summit; each articulated their views on how they saw hip hop practice in contemporary Uganda and on their roles as practitioners. Questions on the nature of this hip hop identity were interrogated through participants own experiences. Personal accounts as performers and activists, or in their words, as ‘practitioners’, led to the uses and meaning of hip hop identity and practice, showing how individuals participated in and supported their communities, aiming to better the circumstances of oneself and of society as a whole through hip hop.

Spyda MC, a rapper in his early twenties, said a hip hop practitioner is “a person, who is not shy about hip hop no matter how people try to demoralise, a brother.” Spyda runs the Ghetto to Ghetto Cypher project, along with MC Taye. Ghetto to Ghetto comprises of ‘guerilla’ musical events, with the duo rapping over recorded beats in some of the poorest areas of Kampala city. Audiences at these impromptu gigs are invited to participate in performance.

According to Spyda and Taye, they decided to “freestyle anywhere”, to encourage dialogue on “the struggles and issues in daily life”. Aimed at “poor communities”, the intention is to “improve conditions” through discussion and expression. Like Spyda, Taye grew up in the ‘ghetto’. Taye is influenced by acts such as Mos Def, Common, De la Soul and KRS-One, and he conceived of a musical initiative called SLUM, or Social Lessons Useful for the Mind from which Ghetto to Ghetto emerged. Talking about his hip hop practice, he said, his “art is (his) language” and in this, “We have the tools which hip hop gave us”. Esther, a young woman who runs Galaxy Breakdance Project,² says hip hop “means being you, truly know who are, ready to share in your own expression”. She says a practitioner could be a “dancer, artist, photographer... anyone who practices any element of hip hop and believes.” She joined Galaxy in 2008, with the aim of providing free lessons on MC’ing, breakdance and graffiti to “disadvantaged kids from the slums”, and in doing so to “do something for the community.”

The mediation between individual participation and community engagement through hip hop is where civil society can be employed as a critical concept, an analytical tool, and as a form of protest. Lewis (2001) suggests that individuals, groups and associations are part of the political order when they participate in these processes. They are, moreover, a part of civil society when they seek to define, seek support for or promote changes in the means by which social values are authoritatively allocated. This process of allocation finds voice in the articulations of hip hop practices in Uganda, drawing into focus conceptions of identity and community in the context of resistance to socio-economic hardship.

These reflections are important as they integrate a dialogue on the relationship between the individual and society in the specific context of marginalisation and the means by which one negotiates this. The idea of a community is one that is first linked through shared socio-economic circumstances, in the form of deprivation in the specific site of Kampala’s slums. Second, conceptions of ‘community’ here include those involved in hip hop who are performers, consumers and activists. Participation and support, in and of communities, takes form and enactment in initiatives driven by a socially aware, responsible hip hop ‘practice’. Members of the hip hop community I include here grew up and continue to live and work in these spaces. They credit the betterment of their own personal circumstances with encounters in hip hop, as expressed by Babaluku, that (through hip hop), “you know what you are standing for”. Such experiences in turn direct involvement with community outreach programmes as discussed previously. In this intersection of individual and community, according to Babaluku, the hip hop practice is one through which a person can find ways to say, “I own my turf ...cats in the ghetto are like, I didn’t go to school, but this is my story”. In many

ways, the aims and objectives described here are not dissimilar to ‘activist interventions’ in the ghettos of South Africa and Brazil. Grassroots interventions are located within the domain of development practice, to “provide havens of safety and learning for poor children and youth; sites where an alternative socialisation and sense of place are fostered because of hip-hop’s fifth element—knowledge of self” (Pardue 2004, 429). Rather than a specific engagement with issues of race and violence, in Uganda too, the emphasis is on community building in resistance and protest to poverty and deprivation.

Habermas’s (1991) conception of civil society as an aspect of the public sphere that mobilises social and political action, through communication and interaction, between citizens pursuing individual and collective interests is useful in the consideration of these activities as protest. The Hip Hop Summit occurred in the public domain, in space and in performance, as an event focused towards the resistance of problems and issues encountered in Uganda. The event and the promotional happenings were mobilised by the existence of social groups such as record labels, musical collectives and ensembles, activists involved in community outreach initiatives, and audiences amongst them and vice versa. These were social events that can only exist in the presence of musical practitioners and audiences, the separations of which shift during the course of these happenings. Dialogues encompassed in and developed through performances, brought participants together, in interaction and communication, linked through the articulation of shared concerns specifically, those on the means and ways in which those present could challenge the problems they faced on a daily basis.

From this, encounters with hip hop become a space where social values can be identified, as it includes discourses and enactments in the service of individual empowerment, community betterment and social progress in resistance to the harsh social and economic circumstances of everyday life in Uganda. The hip hop practice is rooted in an awareness of the difficulties which result from a lack of resources, poverty, unemployment and government corruption. These values and elements encompass conventional understandings of civil society as that which is comprised of voluntaristic acts of engagements, informed by inclusion and agency. Similarly, the two themes of hip hop and marginalisation are interrogated through articulations on the hip hop practice. The voluntary involvement in activities informed by these themes such as those described previously, satisfy conceptions of civil society as a process, punctuated by popular participation, engagement and commonly articulated interests (Lewis 2001). At the same time this practice, through performance, as entertainment and as activism, shows members, both collectively and individually, how to work towards the betterment of community and therefore, society. In these cases, the hip hop practitioners present were able to represent the interests of those socially and economically

marginalised as they too shared similar origins and concern, formed mainly by life in the ‘ghettos’ of Kampala. The hip hop practice is thus, rooted in protest, a form of resistance against the lack of resources, poverty, unemployment and government corruption in Uganda.

Third, amongst those present at the Hip Hop Summit visual representations of hip hop in terms of Bayart’s civil society as cultural fabric, is given place and expression in modes of attire and embellishment at the Hip Hop Summit. T-shirts were emblazoned with slogans such as ‘Power to the People’, and ‘Spoken Truth’, with graphics of sound systems and urban cityscapes. Zulu Nation medallions and African print tunics, complemented trainers or “kicks”, as they were called. These articles of clothing and embellishment, signal first an involvement with hip hop culture and second, pride in an African identity. Of particular ubiquity are the Rastafarian colours of red, yellow and green which featured prominently on wristbands and on detailing on loose fitting denim, and several participants wore their hair in dreadlocks.

The adoption of elements associated with Rastafarianism in the local hip hop scene is an oppositional stance as the association with Rastafari encompasses the use of marijuana which is considered deviant in Uganda’s mainstream culture, which remains conservative and largely Christian. Furthermore, in discussions with individuals in the hip hop scene who expressed an involvement with Rastafari belief and practice, this involvement also represented a protest against political power structures. The appeal of Rastafari is based on an opposition to racial prejudice and colonial subjugation historically associated with the movement. Such aspects of the oppositional found in social and musical life against the backdrop of marginalisation are important and I will return to these in a subsequent section.

For the moment, continuing with a focus on social mobilisation, I draw attention to the fact that hip hop provides a practical means towards using one’s skills to move beyond economic limitations, and is in turn informed by community improvement and social responsibility. To quote Babaluku’s speech at the Summit, “The word keeps you in motion continuing to be the best that you are ... B-boys, MCs, ... you see him rapping and he (also) runs that market stand”. The hip hop community also becomes a space of economic empowerment, where hip hop can “dispense skills, bring communities together”.

The relationship between community betterment and economic independence is important as it draws into focus the preoccupation I encountered in the field, with marginalisation tackled through the ‘hustle’, whether this was through social activism, as described previously, or through commercial success. Civil society is often called into being to rectify the socio-economic relegation that occurs in sites described above, a situation exacerbated by the state’s inability to provide mitigation. The intersection of the domains of the social and the economic, and the means by which hip hop occupies these,

provides a conception of civil society as relational and located with an overlap of borders between state and market (Ramnarine 2011), an understanding given cogency by the overlapping nature of associational life too. In many ways, these protests against marginalisation in the hip hop scene I discuss finds consonance with Fiske's (2002) conception of resistance which in turn corresponds with two dominant kinds of social power. The first is semiotic power, or the power to construct meanings, pleasures and social identities, and the second is social power or the power to construct a socioeconomic system. While the two may function in an autonomous manner, the hip hop scene in Uganda indicates a close relationship between them. More to the point, this interaction provides space for the inclusion of the subversive and the oppositional, including those aspects which at first, might seem escapist. Rather than viewing these tendencies as those which are apathetic towards political and economic power structures, this points instead towards the implications of this form of protest on and in civil society, which I interrogate in the following section.

ESCAPISM AND EXCESS: THE SITE OF THE OPPOSITIONAL

In Uganda, engagements with hip hop as protest can be viewed through the frame of the oppositional in initiatives that call for community improvement and social responsibility, and in the critique of power structures implicated in the problems of unemployment, corruption and poverty. The hip hop scene incorporates the subversive in the identification of Rastafari and the use of marijuana as shown earlier, as well as in 'ghetto fabulous' narratives of conspicuous consumption. The latter, one finds amongst hip hop artists who have achieved a level of commercial popularity and celebrity in terms of mainstream success.

Amongst these hip hop artists is Atlas da African. 'The track Ahh-ahh-ahh', is available to stream or download on Spotify and iTunes (single, 2014, DEG), and is a successful collaboration with dancehall superstar Chameleone. The song/track uses the words 'bling-bling' as a hook, and lyrics that talk of "sunglasses and Advil" ostensibly to combat hangovers, references to parties in Kololo, an upmarket neighbourhood of restaurants, clubs, foreign embassies and the headquarters of large international aid organisations such as the UN, and mentions spending *pesa* in the casino. Atlas, in another track, alludes to experiences of criminality in North America, stating an involvement in activity for which he served jail time, alluding to sums of money owed or paid in the criminal underworld, travails which he was able to overcome through his eventual success as a hip hop artist.

Atlas's long-time collaborator and friend, Gasuza, a rapper, photographer and filmmaker, has had a career that includes a stretch at the iconic Def Jam records in New York in the late 1990s. In our interviews, he says on many occasions, "I am hip hop", providing anecdotes of encounters with celebrities, some at the height of their success and others at the cusp of it, such as when "Kanye West waited for days at the reception" mixtape in hand, parties with Sean "Puffy" Combs when he was dating Jennifer Lopez, being in a rap 'ciphers' with RZA of Wu-Tang Clan, and a meeting with Tupac Shakur at a recording studio.

I include this here as for these artists too hip hop became a space for personal affirmation and validation, related to the genres commercial prominence and cultural influence in North America. These narratives are fashioned of encounters with hip hop in North America as a result of migrations in childhood engendered by war and displacement during Idi Amin's years in power. So while in the preceding section, subjective associations with hip hop arose from an identification with the music scene as cultural space for community improvement and social responsibility; here, we see perspectives of race, gender and socio-economic standing brought into focus, situated against a wider context of displacement and insecurity. Hip hop became a means by which one could identify and articulate one's place in relation to these problems, as members of a community and society. This is a negotiation between meaning, pleasure and social identity in interaction with hip hop as a socio-economic system.

Locally, in Uganda, these negotiations take forms of escapism and excess. Here too, preoccupations occur in the public sphere, and indicate an allocation of social values, albeit deviant to mainstream Ugandan society. Atlas is signed to the Deuces Entertainment Group. The label owns a popular venue of the same name, where he, along with other members of the labels' roster, hosts 'Hip hop Mondays'. Unlike the Summit, with its focus on socially conscious activism and teetotalism, these events are unabashed celebrations of conspicuous consumption, packed with revelers flamboyantly clad, in what one rapper termed, "fake-ass bling", an example of which is a medallion with a reproduction of the signature Versace Medusa logo. There are VIP tables for the stars with bottles of Black Label and Courvouisier placed on slabs of ice. Hip hop is embodied in a commercially projected hedonism that flirts with the idea of a 'gangsta' criminality, fashioning a local hip hop celebrity culture of excess.

The place of these evocations of wealth and celebrity in Uganda point us towards aspects of protest. GNL Zamba, arguably Uganda's most commercially successful hip hop artist, also credited with having the first sold out hip hop concert in Uganda, says, "(It is about) upliftment, encouragement to get money, but you understand where that longing comes from, a place of

desperation” (GNL Zamba 2014). This is an important point. Such statements draw into focus issues of marginalisation from which emerge narratives of activism. On one hand, and material excess on the other and the relationship they share. Hip hop’s distinctive identity and culture, in the encompassing of behaviors such as the use of marijuana, as stated previously and in material excess, serve as a clear protest against the deep conservatism of Ugandan society. This conservatism is in turn reflected in the rigidity of political structures, and therefore is associated with the socio-economic relegation one finds in day-to-day life. From this perspective, protest may be framed in terms of diversity, where social groups exercise a representation of difference within systems of domination (Fiske 1987).

The escapism evoked through conspicuous consumption and hedonism in Ugandan hip hop stands incongruously at its sites of enactment such as the Deuces nightclub, at the edges of which hawkers attempt to make a living (which is barely subsistence). These actions and behaviours remain in contrast to circumstances such as poverty which they seek to avoid. In this, they represent a clear form of social protest. This is because tendencies towards escapism through wealth and excess raise the crucial question of what is escaped from and why this is necessary (Fiske 1987). As I was told on many occasions, Uganda’s nightlife afforded escape through music and revelry from the trials and tribulation encounters in everyday life. Secondly, hip hop here is an exercise of power in the construction of meaning, pleasure and identity through acts of representation in protest of circumstances engendered by structures of authoritarianism. Escapism and apathy located in celebrations of excess are a direct response to dominant systems, setting the stage for critique, resistance and therefore protest through social life and the meaning derived from this by those subordinated.

Against this backdrop, Fatton (1995) describes civil society as a potentially subversive space where new structures and norms can take hold. Focusing on celebrations of hedonism such as that evidenced in nightclubs, and in the narratives of escapism one finds here, I argue that such discourses interrogate societal norms and circumvent systems of domination through subversion as a form of protest (Mbembe 1992). Fatton, uses James C. Scott’s term “infrapolitics” or the “wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name”, to describe how subordinates create discourses of unconscious resistance that occur in social or ‘unofficial’ spaces, through norms and ways to indicate alienation from those in power. In this, these “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990, 19), are potentially explosive as they constitute an invisible zone of resistance to domination. Here, Fatton ascribes this alternative infrapolitical episteme, particularly in authoritarian systems, to an emergence of civil society. This emergence, albeit disguised and circumspect, is nonetheless a tenacious protest, precisely because the terms of

resistance here are embodied in escapism and an apparent apathy towards visible social and political issues, making them hard to gauge or be pinned down by structures of authority.

The formation of civil society as repressed and disguised is reinforced by the apparent lack of an overt political stance and commentary in hip hop in Uganda for the most part. The absence of a specific confrontational stance and explicit commentary on politics in the Ugandan hip hop scene, holds tacit in its lacuna, the acknowledgment that the state had failed in its provision of resources and opportunities for stability and growth. I frame it as such, as an awareness of these failures and disillusionment is expressed across all camps, 'conscious' or commercial. Atlas implicates the current regimes failures in the statement "our government is failing us". GNL says, "Social services? Are you kidding me? You cannot ignore the political scene because it is going to shape economics, social things. Corruption is killing our dreams" (2014). For the same reasons, Babaluku urges young people to not "depend on the government no more", for employment and social services, and "a lot of young people in Uganda die in silence" (2014).

There is no desire to confront the state head-on, either through overt political commentary or direct civil protest. These behaviours are indicative of civil society in the authoritarian state. Sogge (1997) puts forth an argument to doubt the efficacy of an institutionalised civil society in spaces where first, poor public services and low wages if any, diminish the legitimacy of the state, and second, the ambiguous distinction between the public and the private, meaning that informal social and political action is preferred over the formal. Crucially, forms of political activity here change form to avoid co-operation or capture, compromising and subverting the notion of an institutionalised civil society, relying instead on implicit forms of protest. In Uganda, this continues to be relevant. State power and institutions control practically all political life, and so, participation is replaced by depoliticisation; strategies in the part of civil society take the form of withdrawal rather than confrontation (Makumbe 1998; Nyong'o 1992).

CONCLUSION

Bratton (1989) and Makumbe (1998) argue that civil society in Africa should be conceived of as counter-hegemonic and a social base where state institutions may be called into account, providing material and ideological sustenance to social movements for reform and change. In the Ugandan hip hop scene, themes and imagery can be considered counter-hegemonic as they provide a discursive space for the inclusion of marginalised social, political and economic narratives. However, problems arise around actual social

movements for reform and change. At this point, the genre, its performances, its celebrities, what it represents and in its popularity, can be called a social movement. However, reform can only have come into being when some sort of widespread social change has been affected, which as of now is not the case, neither in the instance of significantly challenging social and economic inequality nor in the form of institutions capable of sustaining this.

Nevertheless, in the tendencies towards activism and escapism described in this chapter, one finds in the hip hop scene in Uganda a means to gauge how such preoccupations function as protest towards entrenched social and political systems. They reveal in stark detail the marginalisation engendered by authoritarianism and the forms and nature that resistance towards it takes in everyday life. This protest takes the forms of individual participation and community engagement working in concert with the allocation of social values in the public sphere through hip hop. Hip hop is also an alternative infrapolitical space where potentially subversive new structures and norms can take hold. As an informal mobilization against entrenched social and political systems, the terms and dimensions of hip hop in Uganda point toward the formations of an informal civil society, rather than an institutionalised civil society. The hip hop scene, thus, instead of confrontation, seeks protest through circumvention, stealth and evasion. These capabilities are potent in the formation of resistances as their locations and forms shift, challenging co-optation or confrontation by the very systems of domination within which they operate and protest against.

NOTES

1. The Hip Hop Summit occurred over a period of five days, commencing on December 21. This chapter first, includes data gathered during day 4, held at Jinja, on December 22. This event included formal discussions amongst attendees, statements from whom are quoted here. Second, observations and interviews are included from the final day at Sabrina's pub in Kampala, the focus of which was performances on the December 25.

2. Galaxy Breakdance, founded by Alex Heskey, is a non-profit organization aimed towards young people in the poorest areas or 'ghettos' of Kampala. Forms of hip hop dance such as breakdancing are taught to young people free of cost as a means to provide confidence and skills. The initiative also holds an annual competition, which I observed as very popular that year.

Part VI

**SEMIOTICS, MEDIATION
AND MANIPULATION**

Chapter 19

BOOM! Goes the Global Protest Movement

Heavy Metal, Protest and the Televisual in System of a Down's "Boom!" Music Video

Clare Neil King

The music video "Boom!" is a collaboration between System of a Down (hereafter SOAD) and director Michael Moore, and was filmed during a global protest of the Iraq War on February 15, 2003. The Armenian-American heavy metal band has often used music to express concerns about the state of society, focusing particularly on American political and cultural issues. SOAD has used music to comment on the ongoing denial of official recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the American government, as well as problems with the U.S. prison system, drug abuse, and mainstream media. This chapter will explore "Boom!" from multiple perspectives: analysis of the music, in the context of heavy metal conventions; analysis of the video, with consideration of the director; and a discussion of the bands' presentation of identity. My goal is to further understand connections between identity, music, and the televisual, and the role of these components of the video in documenting and encouraging protest, by considering the intent, goals, and subsequent success or failure of this video, "Boom!" as protest.

A protest song voices opposition to a perceived injustice with one goal being to create awareness and another being to encourage others to join in protest action. Ronald Cohen describes protest songs as "designed to challenge the status quo... and in other ways use music for political purposes" (Cohen 2007, 1177). Jonathan Friedman adds that "Performance is clearly a potent medium for spreading and making accessible what otherwise might be problematic and unpopular" (Friedman 2013, xv). Both authors articulate protest music to be a method of popularizing unconventional ideas or politics. One reason why protest songs can be successful in their challenges to the status quo is their ability to make the listener relate to the perspective held by the performer. Serge Denisoff wrote that "one of the major functions of the song

of persuasion is to create solidarity or a “we” feeling in a group or movement to which the song is verbally directed” (Denisoff 1972, 4). “Boom!” may not have prevented the Iraq War, or even incited the protest that it documents, but it continues to represent SOAD’s opposition to war and remind listeners of the scale of the 2003 protest. This chapter provides a case study of “Boom!” as a protest song within the historical context of early post-9/11 America, and the popular heavy metal subgenre Nümetal.¹

SYSTEM OF A DOWN

SOAD consists of songwriter and guitarist Daron Malakian, lyricist and lead singer Serj Tankian, drummer John Dolmayan, and bassist Shavo Odadjian. The band released five albums together between 1998 and 2005 gaining popularity in the heavy metal tour circuit before gaining mainstream recognition in 2001 and eventually becoming the first band since The Beatles to debut two records at number one in the same year in 2005 (Harris 2005).² SOAD and its members successfully navigated their rise to fame, maintaining an explicit ideological orientation while remaining accessible to a broad audience. “Boom!” is an example of SOAD’s ability to bring awareness to global issues through music and performance.

Scholarship on heavy metal as a vehicle for protest is sparse and SOAD is unusual among popular heavy metal artists in using the genre to discuss politically charged themes. Rage Against the Machine has been discussed for its explicit protest songs (Robinson 2013; Green 2015). Sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris (2006) has approached the genres of Extreme Metal from the perspective of social transgression, and while not all transgression is protest, protest is certainly a form of social transgression. Niall Scott (2016) and Martin Morris (2015) also discuss heavy metal in terms of “resistance”, and again, not all resistance is protest, but protest can be a form of resistance, particularly to political ideologies and oppression. Mark LeVine (2008) also tackles the subject of heavy metal as resistance within Islam, a discussion that is mirrored in conference events such as “Metal in Strange Places” which took place in Ohio, U.S.A., in 2016. Another approach to a heavy metal artist as enacting a kind of protest is discussed by Naiman elsewhere in this volume. Pillsbury identifies what has been called “working man’s metal” that leans towards social commentary but again it is not identified explicitly with protest for reasons I will explore below. This chapter will provide a much-needed addition to the ongoing discussion of heavy metal as protest (resistance and transgression). Two major concepts—violence and persona—drive my discussion of the “Boom!” video, and I will explore them briefly before moving into my analysis.

VIOLENCE

Susan Fast and Kip Pegley (2012) draw upon the work of Slavoj Žižek (2008) and Pierre Bourdieu (1990), to adopt a definition of violence that goes beyond subjective, palpable examples (such as war, terrorism or genocide). Objective violence is the systemization of oppression which upholds normalcy, and can be further divided into two categories. The first, systemic violence, is exemplified by the violence of capitalism in today's society that perpetuates the wealth divide. Žižek elaborates on this concept at length, arguing that the current version of global capitalism, which "offers no clear solution" despite its call to "act now" against the inherent inequalities in such a system, actually requires us to take a step back and "resist the temptation to engage immediately" in order to find true solutions to the systemic problems creating the underlying inequalities (2008, 7). The second sub-type of objective violence is symbolic violence, which pertains to the violence done to something when being categorized. Every time a categorization or interpretation of a thing is privileged and repeated, it gains power or authority as the whole truth (Fast and Pegley 2012, 4). This violent categorization leads to discrimination based on gender, class, and ethnicity, and problematizes our historical understanding of society.

These ideas are immediately relatable to music, as each performance can serve as a record of musicians' interpretations of the state of the world. The audience, in turn, interprets the music—sometimes differently than the musicians' original intention—doing violence to it. Trends of popularity and longevity then exert their own form of symbolic violence on the work of the musicians by privileging some of their works over others, and some interpretations of individual songs over others. Despite any attempts to navigate the commercial music industry while still emphasizing one's opinion or message, much popular protest music is still lost to the symbolic violence of interpretation among many listeners. Further investigations into audience reception can be found in Stuart Hall's foundational theory of encoding and decoding (1974) and Barbara Lebrun's 2009 discussion of fieldwork in relation to French protest music. The power audiences hold over the long-term reception of music makes it necessary for artists to clearly state their own intentions.

In the "Boom!" video, SOAD draws the viewer's attention to social injustice through the use of statistics, and dramatic imagery. The music then relates to our discussion of violence in three connected ways. First, the band has its own impressions and understandings about subjective and objective violence in the world that they want to convey to the audience. Second, the music conveys a certain set of those impressions about violence to audience members who interpret the information individually. And third, the audience then forms an understanding about the impressions framed in the video, and

about the band and its music, which they then perpetuate as a fan base, doing further violence to the ideas. In some cases, a broad variety of interpretations is the intended goal, however, with SOAD's "Boom!" it is important to provide the audience with clear cues to ensure the intended message is received by listeners.

PERSONA

It follows then, to consider Philip Auslander's (2006) conception of a performer's persona as a way for the musicians to privilege a certain interpretation of their work. By expanding upon the ideas of Erving Goffman (1974), Auslander uses the term persona to describe not only a form of self-expression, but of self-representation. A person's behaviour may be different depending upon whether she is alone or in the company of colleagues, or friends. Auslander distinguishes this persona from a series of other possible layers in a person's identity: the fluctuating private self, persona as musician, character being performed in an individual song, or character performed for a series of songs. Developing upon Goffman's ideas from his 1974 book *Frame Analysis*, Auslander discusses the musician's freedom to apply several layers of frames to their music in order to steer the audience's interpretation (Auslander 2006, 101–4). He argues that music is a primary social frame, and that upon that frame can be layered others, such as recording, editing, and in our example, music video. I argue that, in "Boom!" SOAD effectively enact the persona of a *regular person opposed to war*, through their detailed presentation of emotive sounds, images, lyrics and text. Importantly, the band members are depicted as protesters rather than as celebrity musicians. Throughout the video, they are never seen playing their instruments, unlike almost all of the band's other videos over the years. This portrayal of a relatable persona invites the audience to listen closely and consider themselves as potential protest participants too.

Within this framing the audience is given a very specific set of information from which to formulate an understanding of meaning. In his 1959 book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman points out audiences' tendency to "misunderstand the meaning that a cue was designed to convey" which results in the necessity of performers to make "sure that as many as possible of the minor events in the performance... will occur in such a way as to convey... an impression of the situation that is compatible and consistent" with the performers desired expression of meaning (Goffman 1959, 51). As John Fiske would describe it, there is a vast number of meanings that can be interpreted from any form of communication (Fiske 1982, 3). The performer, in this case SOAD, must then use all the forms of mediation at their disposal in order to convey a balance of specific protest action and commercial generic catchiness

to reach their intended audience at the largest scale. This careful consideration of miniscule meaning cues is apparent throughout the “Boom!” video.

An oft-cited example of this fickle audience effect is the changing persona of Bob Dylan and resultant audience interaction, over the course of his career. When first starting out, Dylan performed an “Okie” persona, evoking Woody Guthrie’s working-man folk aesthetic. His audience became thoroughly attached to this image, so much so that when he started to shift to a new style of playing – most notably by “plugging in” at the 1965 Newport Music Festival – many audience members were disillusioned with his persona. In a 1966 article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Jules Siegel wrote that Dylan had been booed off the stage at Newport, and later booed again when they plugged in for the second half of a concert in Forest Hills (1968, 39). Al Kooper, who played organ with Dylan at the time states that the Newport reaction may not have been due to the electric instrumentation, but because the band was unprepared and only played for fifteen minutes. He goes on to argue that the media representation of the Newport event had promoted a narrative of betrayal and that Dylan’s Forest Hills audience “had been taught to boo” (Kooper 1999, 61). These debates are revisited by recent scholar Elijah Wald (2015) in his book *Dylan Goes Electric*. (see also the chapter by O’Connor in this volume). As Auslander notes, “[i]f one thinks of audiences not just as consumers, but also as the cocreators of the musicians’ personae... it is easy to understand why audiences often respond very conservatively... to musicians’ desire to retool their personae” (2006, 115). Likewise, SOAD band members have always performed their personae very carefully on stage, in interviews, and in music videos.

DETACHMENT

Careful persona manipulation often results in a precarious balance between portraying oneself as an activist, and leaving room open for fans who are just “in it for the music” and uninterested in political views. Glenn Pillsbury discusses this method of “detachment” in musicians’ self-presentation in reference to Metallica in his 2006 book *Damage Incorporated*. After quoting the bands’ members as saying “we’re just stating an opinion” and “you can be documentary”, Pillsbury argues that “dropping the shield of detachment means relinquishing enough personal control *in order to be read*” (2006, 81–82). As I asserted in the introduction to this chapter, one aim of a protest song is often to bring awareness to a perceived injustice. Popular musicians sometimes tread a difficult line between commercial success and the freedom to be politically outspoken. Artists frequently downplay even obviously politicised lyrics in an attempt to maximize distribution. Audiences are eager to apply their own interpretation to music and can easily be fans of protest

songs without acknowledging or caring about their intended meaning. However, the ability to appeal to this broader audience increases the odds that more listeners will be exposed to the protest, which is why commercial gain from popular music protests continues to both be problematic and able to contribute to positive action and change.

Major music industry attempts at philanthropic concerts have been successful both in raising awareness of critical global inequities and raising huge sums of money. But they also continue to be criticized for creating a spectacle of human suffering for commercial gain. From the first Live Aid concert against Ethiopian famine in 1985, to the Tribute to Heroes concert ten days after 9/11, 2001, benefit concerts can be perceived as perpetuating systems of oppression while raising awareness and money for a cause (Fast and Pegley 2007; Garofalo 2005). SOAD's "Boom!" and later Wake Up the Souls Tour (2015), participate in this history of popular protest music as both awareness-raising and commercial.³

This desire to not be pigeon-holed as a "protest band" and to be read for their full spectrum of opinions and interests is apparent in numerous SOAD interviews. In 2002, Malakian claimed: "[w]e're not stuck on serious issues... [w]e also write about the dirty stuff we get up to" (Rocca 2002, 8). While his statement is absolutely true, this use of detachment from the impact of the band's more "serious" songs exemplifies artists' need to be read in a nuanced way that does not limit audience interpretation to one set of values. Tankian also expressed this desire to be acknowledged for the many facets of their music in a 2001 interview stating,

I don't understand why we have to be just one thing. If I write on one side of this lampshade, "The metropolis is too dense. It causes fear," that's a social statement. And on this side I write, "Blow me." And then here it says, "I'm hungry." And here it says, "Gee, what a splendid day." Now, those are four different things. We're all just turning the lampshade. Should I see the whole thing as political because the first statement was political? (Eliscu 2001, 22)

"Boom!" is blatantly political, but the nuanced manipulation of the band members' self-representation throughout the video allows for an interpretation of the band as normal, average people with lives beyond the scope of political activism.

ANALYSIS OF THE SONG

Further consideration of the details of the video's content follows, but first I will turn to my own interpretation of the music, its structure, and its place among heavy metal conventions around the turn of the millennium.⁴

The music carries a great deal of the video's momentum, creating a setting in which the fast-paced scenes and quick visual transitions feel in sync with the rhythm of the song. Set in a standard pop form, the song also adds a post-chorus "Boom!" section (see table 19.1). This simple adaptation of AABA form makes the song easy to pick up and sing along with, allowing protesters and listeners alike to quickly join the chorus. Throughout the video, and particularly during the extended instrumental bridge section, spoken protester comments are included. In the studio recording the instrumental break is only four measures long. In the video we get more than double that length of time to hear what various protesters have to say.

The introduction is highlighted by the bass line's rhythmic alternation between C and C-sharp, characteristic of SOAD's use of "Dropped C" tuning. Dropped D tuning became popularized in early heavy metal music as a way to emphasize the heavy sound of the lowest open string on the guitar and many metal bands contemporary to SOAD used various dropped tunings.⁵ The backing vocals have a tonal centre on D, and use the pitches of the G harmonic minor scale, sometimes referred to by heavy metal guitar magazines as the Phrygian dominant. The term Phrygian seems to be used to emphasize the flattened second degree because while the third degree of Phrygian is a minor third, in metal, Phrygian is used to describe songs with either major or minor thirds, but always the flattened second degree. Pillsbury discusses the history of the use of the Phrygian sound from the early sixteenth century to today's common heavy metal usage, and notes its frequent (but not exclusive) use to evoke a non-Western Other or "exotic" sound. The song "Powerslave" by Iron Maiden, for example, uses the Phrygian dominant including the flattened second and minor third to "signal the mystical power of ancient Egypt" (Pillsbury 2006, 121).

Table 19.1 Structure and Duration of "Boom!" Constructed by author.

<i>Time (Video)</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Length in mms.</i>
0:12-0:28	Introduction	4
0:29-0:52	Verse 1	8
0:53-1:05	Chorus	4
1:06-1:30	Verse 2	8
1:31-1:43	Chorus 2	4
1:44-1:46	Boom! X 7	1
1:47-2:18	Bridge	4 – Instrumental (10 in video)
2:19-2:31		4 – with Vocals
2:32-2:43	Chorus 3	4
2:44-2:46	Boom! X 8	1
2:47-2:49	Outro	1

The figure shows two staves of music in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics "Why must we kill our own kind". The intervals between notes are labeled as m2, A2, and TT. The bottom staff is the accompaniment with intervals labeled as P5, M3, M3, U, U, m3, m3, U, and P5.

Figure 19.1 Vocal Harmonies in the Bridge of “Boom,” Transcribed by Author.

While Pillsbury also makes important note of the use of this Phrygian sound without the context of exoticism, I argue that in “Boom!” the Phrygian sound serves as a cue to the listener towards the location of the Iraq War and the rich Arabic culture threatened by violence. An illustrative example takes place during the bridge, in the last four measures with the lyrics “Why must we/kill our own kind?” with vocal harmonies that stress major and minor thirds and perfect fifths (or consonant intervals often related with Western musics), with melodic moves dominated by minor seconds and a tritone evocative of non-Western musics (see figure 19.1).

Other musical qualities that serve to make this song unlike others in the genre include the declarative vocals, which are not quite spoken, nor sung, but clearly enunciated, highlighting the importance of the lyrical message. While popular Nümetal had generally more understandable lyrics than the unintelligible distorted screaming of more extreme styles, SOAD’s vocals still stand out. Sweeping backing vocals serve as the main melodic component during the verses, and reinforce the melody of the instrumental section during the bridge. The guitar deviates from its role as rhythm carrier only occasionally, with its own short counter-rhythmic melodic line. Notably, the guitar never breaks into a virtuosic solo, going against the convention in the majority of heavy metal music, but aligning itself with the trend in Nümetal that sees guitarists giving fewer and simpler solo sections in an effort to be more “tasteful” than famous heavy metal guitar virtuosos from the 1980s era of the genre (Malakian 2000). The use of differing rhythmic layers, supported by intricate high-hat patterns, provide polyrhythms to the constant driving 4/4 beat of the song. By combining the use of predictable patterns and sounds with unique modal and rhythmic elements, “Boom!” provides the audience with gratification, while maintaining their attention, and I argue, encouraging close listening and critical interpretation.

ANALYSIS OF THE VIDEO

The video adds a mediated layer of information to the music; now we have not only music and lyrics to get impressions from but also images and

text. During the bridge segment, after input from many protesters (beginning with the measures illustrated in figure 19.1), a cartoon sequence takes over, depicting George W. Bush, Tony Blair, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden riding bombs toward villages. The bombs buck them off and turn on them as they fall from the sky and explode into peace symbols to the beat of the chorus. (See table 19.2 for a detailed breakdown of video content.⁶) Bearing in mind that the video was meant to be released before the Iraq War began, in an effort to possibly prevent it, I argue that this sequence depicts protesters' actions stopping the governments from acting without their consent. As with the constant imagery of regular protesters, the representation of defeating the warmongers in this cartoon stresses the responsibility of each individual around the world to speak up for what they believe in.

The video begins and ends with text quotations unaccompanied by music. The first is an introduction from the band, "On February 15, 2003, ten million people, in over six hundred countries around the world, participated in the largest peace demonstration in the history of the world. Because we choose peace over war, we were there too..." This sets in motion the viewer's understanding of the band as protesters, rather than as celebrity performers. The famous John Lennon and Yoko Ono quote at the end of the video, "War is over (if you want it)" (1972) connects SOAD's form of protest to those of other famous musicians, and places a historical context around their current societal critique.

The video provides a lot of information visually to accompany the music and protester dialogue. Broad shots of the various cities where the protest took place are featured throughout. Large cities and turnouts are featured such as Rome, with a million protesters demonstrating, and London with a million and a half. Cities not immediately considered global superpowers are featured as well, with thirty thousand protesters in both Rio and São Paulo, and ten thousand in Cape Town. Dispersed throughout the video these images and numbers showing the vast turnout around the world educates the audience while giving a sense of the global importance of the issue being discussed.

The combination of images and text moves at the same fast tempo as the music, providing a detailed picture of the band's opinion on the Iraq War, as well as an educational-documentary feel, lending factual weight to this opinion. We see a wide variety of protesters, signs, props, and costumes, while simultaneously being provided with on-screen banners listing facts about the war and relevant American political issues. Examples include, "Iraqi oil reserves worth four trillion dollars," and, "one in six U.S. children live in poverty." Snapshots of, presumably Iraqi, children and missing persons appear only for the span of one beat each, possibly representing their fleeting lives, while still making them visible.

Table 19.2 Breakdown of video content of “Boom!”

<i>Time</i>	<i>Song Section</i>	<i>Imagery</i>	<i>Text</i>
0:00-0:12		SOAD’s personal introduction Text only, white on black.	On February 15, 2003 ten million people in 600 cities around the world participated in the largest peace demonstration in the history of the world. Because we choose peace over war, we were there too... LA: 30,000; Paris: 400,000; Cape Town: 10,000; San Francisco: 200,000; Rio: 30,000; Lansing: 3,000; Tokyo: 6,000
0:12-0:28	Introduction	Alternating wide shots of protests with attendance numbers and protesters comments.	Madrid: 800,000; Melbourne: 200,000; Seattle: 75,000; Johannesburg: 10,000. No. of congressmen with a child in military: 1. London: 1.5 million; Flagstaff: 1500; Rome: 1 million
0:29-0:52	Verse 1	Lyric: “I’ve been walking through your streets” coincides with visual of band walking with protesters. More statistics and shots of costumes, signs, and band members shooting footage with handy-cams.	500,000 projected civilian casualties
0:53-1:05	Chorus 1	Alternating shots of band members and protesters with quick glimpses of the smiling faces of what appear to be Iraqi children.	
1:06-1:30	Verse 2	Overhead and street-level shots of crowds, their signs, banners and costumes. Band member Shavo discussing his video with a police officer, band members in the crowd. Fast flashes of many children’s faces with the lyrics “4,000 hungry children...”	Iraqi oil reserves worth \$4 trillion. Halliburton wins contract to rebuild Iraqi Oil fields. 4,000 hungry children leave us per hour from starvation

1:31-1:43	Chorus 2	Rocket shooting into the sky, Protesters singing 'Boom!' with the Chorus. Alternating shots of children, and protesters singing, meditating, and dancing with Bush masks on.	War could cost US \$200 Billion. 1 in 6 US children live in poverty.
1:44-1:46	Boom x 7	Groups shouting 'Boom!' Black and white footage of a mushroom cloud transitions to the bridge.	
1:47-2:18	Bridge	During extended instrumental section, lengthier quotes come from protesters.	US weighs nuclear strike on Iraq. Tel Aviv: 2,000; Durban: 5,000; Sao Paolo: 30,000; New York: 500,000
2:19-2:31		Vocal section is the political cartoon.	
2:32-2:43	Chorus 3	Crowds, band members as protesters, children, child protesters.	UN: 10 million Iraqis could face starvation
2:44-2:46	Boom x 8	Photos of missing persons from previous Iraqi wars, flashing quickly.	
2:47-2:49	Outro	Shots of band members, end with zoom into Tankian's camera lens.	
2:50-2:55		Iraqi child on a bicycle (same child appears in <i>Fahrenheit 9/11</i>).	
2:56-3:01		White on black, text only.	War is over (if you want it) –John Lennon and Yoko Ono

DIRECTOR MICHAEL MOORE

Another important factor when considering the style and imagery choices of this video is the role of its director, Michael Moore, known widely as an outspoken, American documentary director, and not commonly as a music video director. His documentaries are famous for critiquing American culture and politics in films like *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004). His presentation of strong views about American politics has been interpreted as an example of what Joseph Nye Jr. calls America's soft power (Nye 2004). Bjørn Olav Knutsen and Elisabeth Pettersen use Nye's term to argue that Moore represents the freedom to create media that disagrees with the government, and in doing so is a soft power force for perpetuating the American Dream (2009, 107–26). This perspective on Moore's celebrity power ties in closely to our discussion of persona, as his presentation of himself as purposefully obnoxious, has drawn a lot of animosity within the Western—US dominated—world. It is important to consider how Moore's tirades might be understood from the perspective of a non-Westerner, even an Iraqi citizen; that America—as an ideology—might still hold some appeal despite the threat of their military might, because such a popular dissenter as Moore could exist at all.

Nicholas Ruddick discusses Moore's over-arching thesis at length and recounts that “the right rallies its troops under a banner bearing the slogan Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man,” but also reminds us that “although he tells painful stories about the US, he is popular, even at home, because the majority of his audiences are persuaded that his stories are true” (2009, 153). This dichotomy of seeing the American people as inherently decent but lazy, allows Moore to connect to his audience as human beings, force them to see hypocrisy in their midst, and in doing so, remind them that it is their duty as members of society to participate in democracy if it is to succeed in reflecting its true moral values (Ruddick 2009, 151). While Moore's persona is often featured in his documentary films, he is absent from the music video, again focusing on the band's persona as protesters, rather than drawing attention to Moore's celebrity power.

Moore's first documentary *Roger and Me* was released in 1988 and brought attention to the failure of corporate capitalism in the automobile industry in Moore's hometown Flint, Michigan. But it was not until 2002, when he released *Bowling for Columbine* that he received large-scale press attention. Moore won an Academy Award for the film in 2003 and famously used this acceptance speech to call out then-president George W. Bush for the false pretenses of the Iraq War (Misiak 2005, 161–2). All of this was happening in the same year that the “Boom!” music video was being prepared and released. Moore had previously worked on a music video with Rage Against the Machine (RATM) for the band's song “Sleep Now in the Fire” in 1999,

before Moore's fame and before 9/11. Both "Boom!" and "Sleep Now in the Fire" were made before the release of *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), Moore's most heavily criticized film. The projection of protester identity in SOAD's music video contrasts with that of the earlier RATM video in its focus and omission of Moore. However, both videos use the bands' position as media creators to add exposure to controversial political subject matter.⁷ While both Moore and popular musicians who express political opinions are often criticised for their financial gains from these efforts (Davis 2013), the dedication to protest subjects throughout the work of Moore and SOAD lead me to believe in their concerted opposition to war and injustice despite capital gains.⁸

INDUSTRY

The need to evoke a true representation of yourself while remaining appealing to a broad audience can be challenging. In the introduction to his book *Unfree Masters*, Matt Stahl argues that successful artists enjoy autonomy and emphasizes the duality of successful artists' contractual obligations. Mainstream musicians often represent a freedom and autonomy to make music the way they want to, while still being required to fulfill contractual obligations (2012, 1–2). This autonomy is evidenced in an interview with Tankian from 2001 in which he is asked what he would think if only fifty people bought SOAD's next album. He responds "Great. That would get me out of my record deal and I could do other things... [financial] success is positively earmarked... [b]ut ultimately, you gotta do what's inside of you..." (Eliscu 2001, 22). After three more albums together, the band went on indefinite hiatus and Tankian did produce several other projects on his own. Despite the effort necessary to do so, the band continued to portray themselves as nuanced ordinary people in the midst of mainstream success.

Auslander (2006) argues that it is possible for artists to manipulate their personae over time. He relates the interaction between performer and audience as a negotiation of personae within the constraints of genre framing. Auslander uses the example of Bob Dylan's "Okie" persona, mentioned earlier, which Dylan carefully assembled early in his career. Dylan later struggled with the expectations and demands of his fans as he attempted to change aspects of his persona over time (2006, 114). Conrad Amenta also uses the example of Bob Dylan while discussing the state of protest music in post-9/11 America. He argues that certain albums gained iconic status as protest music in the 1960s and 1970s, but that due to how those albums functioned within a consumerist society, they can no longer teach us how to protest in today's political climate. When you bought a Bob Dylan album it was as if you could "possess some portion of Dylan's principles" (Amenta 2011, 57). A survey of

the *Billboard* “Best-Selling Albums of the 2000s” reveals that none of those albums fit into a protest, or overtly rebellious category, but this does not mean that protest music is unpopular, or that there is no mass culture movement for change. A large part of protest in today’s culture consists of a “mass exodus from systems of music consumerism where trends are artificially inseminated,” to new socially networked emergent systems (Amenta 2011, 58–59).

Today, audiences stream and share music relentlessly, and this must be recognised when accounting for music popularity. In this reality, Amenta argues, we must shift how we calculate “success” in the music industry and rethink how we gather information regarding reception. Audiences no longer require something physical to hold on to, and are not bound to the track listings set by albums. This socially networked system allows for the creation and distribution of vastly larger amounts of music, creating many more sub-categories than researchers have ever had to deal with before. Examples of these systems include YouTube, Reddit, SoundCloud, and the now defunct GrooveShark, and largely ignored MySpace. Music technology for home use is also making sound production by amateurs easier than ever. By taking the corporate scripting out of everyday entertainment, anyone with an Internet connection can choose from a vast array of media, which caters to their particular ideology (Amenta 2011, 59).

SOAD’s 2003 album, on which “Boom!” can be found, did not appear on any *Billboard* lists despite the band having achieved huge success with their 2001 album *Toxicity*, which went triple platinum in the U.S. The song “Chop Suey” from *Toxicity* even charted on *Billboard*’s mainstream “Top One Hundred” (*Billboard.com*). The circumstance surrounding the release of their 2003 album demonstrates the inaccuracy of sales lists at a time when peer-to-peer file sharing was just becoming popular. After the success of *Toxicity*, a number of demo tracks were leaked on the internet under the title *Toxicity II*. This prompted the band to go to the studio to master the tracks sooner than planned, and *Steal This Album!* was released with very little marketing (T. Martens 2002). “Boom!” appears on this album alongside many other fast-paced critiques of the American social and political climate around the turn of the millennium. This combination of success and apparent discontent with capitalism maintained audience intrigue and prevented accusations of “selling out” so commonly thrown at successful rock stars.

CONCLUSION

“Boom!” helps perpetuate the memory of the global protest of the Iraq War in 2003 through its documentary effort. Despite not actually preventing the Iraq War from taking place, this protest, helped in part by this video, lives on

in global memory as the largest international protest ever staged before the January 21, 2017 Women's March on Washington in response to the election of Donald Trump as U.S. president. The combination of lyrics, music, visuals and text provides the audience with a specific set of impressions to draw their interpretation from, influencing mainstream audiences' understanding of protest and politics in America. The music is a catchy, driving force for drawing the audience into the message by focusing on declarative vocals rather than virtuosity. The presence of the band as protesters and not celebrity musicians presents an image of American civil freedom and the obligation to exercise that freedom. Their status as successful protest rockers made a collaboration with Michael Moore available to them, and allowed them to insert their message into the public sphere while maintaining their identities as hard-rockers, Armenians, protesters, and regular human beings.

SOAD's hiatus has lasted twelve years to date, and with the election of Trump, and political divisiveness increasing across Western nations, many fans anticipate a new album soon. An interview in *Kerrang!* with drummer John Dolmayan suggested that the band is working in the studio together on fifteen new songs (Sharma 2016) but there is still ambiguity around possible release dates. Dolmayan said in the *Kerrang!* interview "We don't know what's happening in terms of release, it's still not 100% as far as plans go... I'm not going to put my name on an album I'm not 100% proud of." (Sharma 2016, 8). Putting my fandom and skepticism aside momentarily, the band's importance as a voice for dissent and protest against inhumane treatment of marginalized communities still cannot be understated, and a new album could potentially be full of commentary on the very disturbing global increase in far-right populism.

This chapter takes as a case study the 2003 "Boom!" music video and reads it as a blatant protest of the 2003 start of the Iraq War. While popular music audiences often ignore protest in songs by their favourite artists—interpreting it merely as pop—the influence of bands like SOAD and RATM on fan communities and their political opinions cannot be ignored. Further investigation into reception of politicized music in popular audiences will continue to shine a light on how we listen to music and decode its messages. My own fandom of SOAD definitely influenced my views on global politics, and the preceding analysis of the song and music video contribute to an understanding of heavy metal conventions as able to express transgression, resistance, and protest.

NOTES

1. Nümetal is a primarily American subgenre of heavy metal that developed in the early 1990s and reached peak popularity in the early 2000s. Bands such as Korn, Slipknot, Deftones, Kittie, Limp Bizkit, Otep and Linkin Park exemplify the genre.

A broad range of styles is represented in the subgenre with commonalities such as the influence of hip-hop and grunge music, a turn of the millennium and 9/11 American cultural experience, and the series of concert festivals held by Black Sabbath (foundational heavy metal band) front man Ozzy Osbourne called Ozzfest (1998–). SOAD played Ozzfest three times, and has musical commonalities and differences with its contemporaries.

2. The first recording artist to debut two albums at number one in one year since The Beatles was American rapper DMX, whereas SOAD was the first *band* to reach this landmark.

3. The Wake Up the Souls Tour consisted of seven concerts culminating in a free concert in Yerevan, Armenia's Republic Square to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The concert was also livestreamed to the internet through *Rolling Stone*, April 23, 2015. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/videos/system-of-a-down-armenia-live-stream-20150423>.

4. My analysis draws on my long-term familiarity with the band and this song. In order to create my tables and figures, I used repeated, close listening. First, I made an outline of musical form with time stamps from the video, and then filled in my understanding of each section using digital manipulation to slow down and transcribe parts of the music.

5. As Cope (2009, 47) describes, dropped D tuning leaves all the strings in standard tuning except the lowest string which is tuned down a whole step providing a richer, darker tone, and allowing “power chords” to be played by barring all the strings on the same fret. Dropped C tuning is when all of the strings are tuned down a whole step to D standard and the lowest string is tuned down an additional step to C, allowing for the same power chord hand positions, and an even darker, fuzzier tone due to the looseness of the strings caused by down-tuning. While bands like Black Sabbath initiated the use of dropped tunings in the early years of heavy metal, the practice has become common with many bands using dropped D and some bands taking it even further than SOAD, like Slipknot who have tuned down to as low as dropped A on the album *Iowa*. SOAD recorded their first three albums in dropped C tuning and their final two albums in dropped C-sharp.

6. System of a Down and Michael Moore, director. “Boom!” [Music Video] Digital Media. Sony Music, 2003. Accessed on the band's official Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bE2r7r7VVic>. Uploaded October 9, 2009.

7. In “Sleep Now in the Fire” (1999) we are again presented with introductory and conclusion text frames; the band members are participating in a protest action; and the video is replete with “facts” in text form about poverty in America. However, this video is divided into two narrative contexts, each with their own presentation of persona from the band members. The primary narrative is an act of musical protest, clearly put on by Moore and RATM, outside the American Stock Exchange in order to bring attention to income inequality. The secondary narrative is a parody of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*—a famous American game show where people answer multiple choice questions for prize money up to a million dollars. This juxtaposition permits the band to represent themselves both as angry protesters, disturbing the peace outside the Stock Exchange, and as cheery, suit-bedecked fat cats—still playing

their instruments—in the *Millionaire* scenes. System of a Down present no such duality, and only includes humour in the political cartoon of the bridge section.

8. For further critical perspectives on Michael Moore's documentary work, see: Thomas W. Benson, and Brian J. Snee, eds. 2015. *Michael Moore and the Rhetoric of Documentary*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2016. "Gulliver's Travels: Michael Moore the Explorer in *Who to Invade Next*." *Multicultural Perspectives*, 18 (4): 202–5; Scott Krzych 2015. "The Price of Knowledge: Hysterical Discourse in Anti-Michael Moore Documentaries." *The Comparatist*, 29. Clare Neil King *BOOM! Goes the Global Protest Movement*

Chapter 20

Pussy Riot

Performing “Punkness,” or Taking the “Riot” out of “Riot Grrrl”

Julianne Graper

In reference to the scandal involving feminist punk collective Pussy Riot in 2012, one contributor to the British conservative magazine *The Spectator* stated: “Seventeen Russian investigative journalists have been murdered or disappeared without a trace since Putin and the FSB gang took power. Isn’t their silence more eloquent than some punks thrashing guitars outside the Kremlin?” (Sewell 2012). If the widespread responses of support from Western media are any indicator, *The Spectator* contributor greatly underestimated the power of punk as protest.

In fact, while Pussy Riot’s incarceration for their performance in a Moscow church has been described as “a clear-cut freedom of speech issue” (CBS News 2013), the responses of support from Western media were enormous and many human rights abuses of equal or greater severity have received comparatively little press. Polly McMichael, following Stuart Hall’s lead, has eloquently stated that Pussy Riot self-consciously adopted the tropes of punk music “boiling it down to words, actions, and tonalities that signified a kind of essence of punk” (McMichael 2013, 11). This made Pussy Riot’s actions intelligible to English-speaking viewers familiar with these tropes, even if they didn’t speak Russian or understand the complexity of the issues Pussy Riot was protesting. McMichael goes on to suggest that the group embodied precisely the West’s idea of what punk in Russia *should* look like. Similarly, *New York Times* contributor Vadam Nikitin and scholar Nicholas Tochka have both suggested that Americans’ fascination with Pussy Riot paralleled their response to Soviet dissidents during the Cold War, whom they supported in order to further their own anti-communist aims despite being unaware of the specific issues these dissidents protested (Nikitin 2012; Tochka 2013, 304). According to McMichael, Nikitin, and Tochka, Pussy Riot played into the West’s expectations, and the West utilized them to their advantage.

In this chapter, I term the adoption of semiotic codes associated with contestation, protest, feminism, punk rock, and Riot Grrrl “Performing Punkness.” Building on McMichael’s framework, I analyze videos, blog posts, public interviews and news media, addressing Pussy Riot’s performance of punkness not just in their initial protests, but in their subsequent actions in the media. I postulate that Pussy Riot did not just adopt a punk persona in their political art, but that their entire involvement with the international media was a continuation of that performance—in essence, one of their political art “actions” on an even grander scale. My argument not only draws from Dick Hebdige’s claim that punk and other subcultural styles are obliquely political, focusing on the subversion of hegemony through aesthetics rather than direct political action (Hebdige 1979, 17), but also from Kiri Miller’s analysis of schizophrenic performances of virtual virtuosity (Miller 2009). Like Miller, I note a disconnect between the identity performance of being a musician and the performance of actual music in a performance context. However, unlike performative theories of identity that rely on the unconscious repetition of behaviors, I suggest that Pussy Riot’s performance of punkness was both conscious and deliberate, drawn from their experiences in the avant-garde art scene.

While some authors (for example Wiedlack 2016), have suggested that too much emphasis has been placed on Pussy Riot’s connection to U.S. popular music, I will argue that understanding the group’s connection to protest music, like the feminist punk genre Riot Grrrl, is key to deconstructing the disproportionate response by U.S. listeners. I suggest that Pussy Riot’s performance of punkness made them culturally intelligible to U.S. viewers, playing not only into anti-Putin sentiments in the United States that were particularly visible in 2013 during Russia’s involvement with the Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea, and the politically charged Sochi Olympics, but also into established narratives about how protests are enacted. Similarly, following Serge Denisoff, I note that Pussy Riot’s relationship to their U.S. viewers is influenced by the same commercial structures that govern other popular music styles, despite claims to anti-capitalist authenticity (Denisoff 1969, 218).

The course of the chapter will examine the tenuous relationship between protest and performance in the twenty-first century. Charles Tilly and Alison Brysk have classified protest into “genres”, or the use of particular rhetorical and situational structures to achieve political goals (Brysk 2013, 109; Tilly 2008, 7). These protest genres are not necessarily musical, but demonstrate the cultural narratives that inform and are perpetuated by political and protest actions. Much like Tilly and Brysk, I suggest that understanding the Pussy Riot phenomenon relies on looking past mere musical performance and into greater depth at what it means to perform protest itself.

PUSSY RIOT AND THE AVANT-GARDE

Pussy Riot is a feminist punk collective, of flexible membership, formed following Vladimir Putin's re-election in 2011 (Gessen 2014, 15). Though a key element of Pussy Riot's ethos is that anyone can be a member, for the purposes of this discussion, I will focus on the three founding members who were eventually incarcerated and who formed the epicenter of the group's media attention. These women are Nadezha Tolokonnikova (Nadya), Maria Alyokhina (Masha), and Yekaterina Samutsevich (Kat). In the following two sections, I briefly address the group's formation and its connection to both the avant-garde art scene and to the Riot Grrrl movement in the United States.

Pussy Riot's origins in the art world are central to my claim that Pussy Riot are "Performing Punkness," rather than simply "being punk." In interviews, Tolokonnikova has cited the influence of Moscow Actionism on her work, an artistic movement "aimed at reclaiming the former symbols of socialist culture that after 1991 became the privatized symbols of the new Russian capital"; for example, by using the artists' bodies to spell offensive words outside of Red Square, or blocking streets with massive amounts of artwork (Churkov 2011, 128). Actionism is evident not just in Pussy Riot's eventual art "actions"—the term itself emphasizes the connection—but also in Pussy Riot's predecessor, the art collective "Voina" (War), founded by Tolokonnikova and her then boyfriend Petya Verzilov in 2007 (Gessen 2014, 34). Voina was known for making transgressive, politically charged art actions in public places around Moscow, perhaps the most visible being one in which five couples had a public orgy in a museum. Other actions included the staged hanging of costumed "Decembrists", stealing supermarket items while dressed in priest's clothing, and kissing police officers of the same sex (Gessen 2014, 40-41; Elder 2011).

Pussy Riot's later work mirrored Voina's aesthetic, including punk musical performances on top of a subway, inside a department store window, at a fashion show lit on fire, and most notably, at Red Square in Moscow, similarly relying on shock, reclamation of public spaces, and spontaneous interaction with the public (LiveJournal 2011-15). These impromptu (and usually illegal) performances have been compared to the famous 1977 Sex Pistols "boat concert," which spoofed the Queen's Silver Jubilee by playing "God Save the Queen" on a boat while passing the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Pier (Chernov 2012). In fact, Pussy Riot's connection to the art world marks a continuity in the history of punk performance, which, according to Simon Frith, was never about the expression of a working-class sensibility as it may have seemed on the surface, but was rather an avant-garde "exploration of the aesthetics of proletarian play" (Frith 1978, 536).

Frith's work complicates the claim that being avant-garde leads to a performance of punkness, not to being punk itself. However, even in its earlier manifestations, punk's relationship to the art world was predicated on the performance of a punk persona as much as it was about the music itself: for example, Malcom McLaren, manager of the Sex Pistols, suggested that his band was a work of Situationist art stating that "Rather than just while away my time painting, I decided to use people, just the way a sculptor uses clay" (Reynolds 2010, 376–77). The Situationists, a group of avant-garde artists dedicated to anti-authoritarianism and anti-capitalism, originated the "constructed situation," or art made out of "a moment of life, concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of unitary environment and the free play of events" (Ford 2005, 58). According to McLaren, the Sex Pistols were performing "being a band" as much as they were performing actual music. Similarly, Pussy Riot's performance of punkness was less about the music itself than about the performance of being a punk band and the performance of protest through art.

PUSSY RIOT AND RIOT GRRRL

If Pussy Riot's indebtedness to the avant-garde provides a method by which they performed punkness, feminist punk style Riot Grrrl provided the content. Rather than simply being members of an international feminist punk movement protesting against the patriarchy, however, I argue that Pussy Riot repackaged Riot Grrrl with a Russian face for consumption by U.S. listeners. They did so by drawing on particular recognizable signifiers that would subsequently be read and interpreted by U.S. viewers as familiar indicators of punk, protest music, and feminism.

Riot Grrrl is a style of feminist punk founded in Olympia, Washington and Washington, D.C. in the late 1990s. Riot Grrrl created an alternate outlet for teenage girls by allowing them to participate in punk performances, which were otherwise closed to them, particularly focusing on creating a support network for grappling with serious issues like sexual abuse, for which they had no outlet in traditional media (Marcus 2010, 15). Riot Grrrl is characterised by feminist politics articulated through what I term a "juxtapositional aesthetic," or the contrast between hyperfemininity and hyperaggression as a way of drawing attention to stereotypes about women. For example, Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill frontwoman Kathleen Hanna was known for writing words like "slut" on her bare skin, or for juxtaposing headbanging and voguing while dancing to the same song. This juxtapositional aesthetic was a stylized form of protest geared towards deconstructing misogynistic narratives about female bodies and the appropriateness of female aggression.

Though it is cited as a key element of many punk subgenres, the do-it-yourself, or DIY philosophy is particularly key in Riot Grrrl, and also central to its ethos as a feminist form of protest. As Sara Marcus describes it:

‘Punk’ here meant not mohawks and spikes but do-it-yourself, or DIY: creating something from nothing, fashion from garbage, music and art from whatever was nearest at hand... DIY was a philosophy and a way of life, a touchstone that set its industrious adherents apart from the legions of Americans who passed their lives—as the punks saw it—trudging from TV set to first-run multiplex, from chain records store to commercial radio dial, treating art and culture as commodities to be consumed instead of vital forces to be struggled with and shaped, experimented with and created, breathed and lived. (Marcus, 37)

For Riot Grrrls, DIY was a symbol of female empowerment, as well as an opposition to commodity culture. Rather than allowing themselves to be excluded from a male-dominated scene or by restrictive notions of femininity in mainstream culture, bands like Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, and Heavens to Betsy sought to create safe spaces for women within the hardcore punk scene by creating their own bands and ‘zines (Marcus 2010, 49).¹ Pussy Riot would try to align themselves with this anti-capitalist, DIY aesthetic through their use of their homemade balaclavas and the dissemination of their performances via the Internet.

The relationship between Pussy Riot and Riot Grrrl was deliberately constructed by Tolokonnikova and Samutsevich, as evidenced by their performance at a conference held by Putin opposition groups in September 2011, slightly before the official formation of the Pussy Riot collective. At the event, Tolokonnikova gave a brief presentation on feminist art and theory, including Bikini Kill. The presentation closed with a performance of the piece “Kill the Sexist,” in which the two women (posing as the imaginary band “Pisya Riot,” or “Wee-Wee Riot”) declaimed lyrics they had written over a backing track created from samples of the British punk group the Cockney Rejects (Gessen 2014, 65–66). They claimed that this imaginary group was a new development in the history of feminist art that they described, essentially placing their own art in Russia as a part of a dialogue with the existing trajectory of Riot Grrrl and feminist art in the United States. Later on, in an interview for the *St. Petersburg Times*, Pussy Riot would describe its similarities to Bikini Kill as “impudence, politically loaded lyrics, the importance of feminist discourse, non-standard female image” (Chernov 2012).

Pussy Riot’s aesthetic can be seen to be a distilled, codified version of Riot Grrrl. This is first visible in their “uniform”: the brightly colored balaclava, dress, and stockings. Just as Bikini Kill front woman Kathleen Hanna deliberately juxtaposed femininity and aggression by writing words on her

body, by wearing short skirts but also screaming and headbanging, Pussy Riot juxtaposes femininity—through bright colors and dresses—with the aggression of the balaclava, which indicates the illegality of their actions. Similarly, the name itself mirrors the juxtapositional aesthetic: while Bikini Kill juxtaposes heavily sexualized clothing (a swimsuit) with a violent action (to kill)—and Riot Grrrl itself reconfigures femininity through respelling to imitate a growl—the name Pussy Riot positions a term for female genitalia in opposition to the violence of a Riot.

Furthermore, while Pussy Riot's careful curation of their performances for dissemination via the Internet has been used to demonstrate their DIY aesthetic and therefore bring them closer to punk and Riot Grrrl, some authors have suggested that it is actually anathema to punk's emphasis on spontaneity, instead indicative of a global protest movement whose focus is on the appropriation of public spaces, including digital spaces (Golobolov and Steinholt 2012, 122; Strukov 2013, 87). Rather than focusing on the art action in the moment that it occurs, Pussy Riot edit and shape their performances over time, employing a philosophy of "seriality", or multiple live performances later mediated to appear as a single, continuous event through film (Gessen 2014, 101). The footage of the protest for which they were incarcerated, for example, was spliced with footage of a second performance and full recorded song that included quotations from Rachmanninov's *Vespers* interspersed with aggressive vocals and anti-Putin lyrics, giving the impression that a complete musical performance had occurred. Though the blog post where the music video first appeared details particulars about the meaning and interpretation of the lyrics, interviews posted throughout the blog's run from November 2011 to June 2015 describing the group's aesthetic philosophy remain focused on the contested nature of their actions, rather than on the performance of music itself. In other words, Pussy Riot's central aesthetic philosophy is based in creating the *appearance* of a live performance, but one that is actually heavily manipulated with a particular artistic purpose that went beyond the event itself. This "liveness" (Meintjes 2003, 112) emphasizes the constructed nature of Pussy Riot's performances.

PERFORMING "PUNKNESS"

The construction of liveness as well as the distillation of Riot Grrrl into its most basic elements is most apparent in Pussy Riot's 2012 musical protest in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, a church headed by a former KGB official who was a key player in the campaign for President Vladimir Putin's re-election (Bennetts 2012). The three women involved—Tolokonnikova, Alyokhina, and Samutsevich—were arrested on charges of "criminal

hooliganism” and imprisoned for almost two years (Gessen 2014, 243–44.)² This performance was what earned Pussy Riot the international media attention that pervaded the West shortly afterward.

However, the Punk Prayer, as it was known, was a performance not so much of music, but of the act of being a punk band. In the widely circulated footage of their arrest, Pussy Riot entered a contested area of the church—a part of the church forbidden to women—and were there for only a few seconds before uniformed officials begin to drag them off. They were able to blast only a few seconds of music and shout a few times before the entire protest had been effectively quashed. However, despite the seemingly ineffective nature of this as a staged event, all of the elements of protest music were clearly encoded. One of the women pulled out an electric guitar, an easily recognisable symbol of musical rebellion. Though she did not have a chance to play it, the women also brought a back-up tape with them, whose low-definition, pounding percussion, and thick electrified texture sounds like any standard punk track. Furthermore, the women performed jumping, punching, and kicking gestures foregrounding the aggressive nature of their protesting and simulating the kind of dancing that one might experience at a punk rock or Riot Grrrl concert. These elements—gesture, sound, and visual—combined with the women’s location, made the protest intelligible as punk and as protest to Western audiences who might not understand their words, due to language barrier, or the low definition of the actual recording. In this way, though Pussy Riot did not perform a complete punk song, they tapped into the essential elements of punkness, acknowledging the fact of multiple parameters of performance outside of those stipulated in the musical text.

RESPONSE FROM THE WEST

To say that Pussy Riot’s incarceration provoked controversy, or even outrage in Western media would be an understatement, indicating the group’s success in communicating with a U.S. audience through their distilled version of Riot Grrrl. In addition to extensive print and video news coverage, the response to Pussy Riot’s incarceration included the Free Pussy Riot campaign which produced updates about the trial on a webpage as well as a published volume of their writings; the song “Free Pussy Riot” by Canadian artist Peaches; a solidarity performance by Madonna at an Amnesty International Concert in which she wrote “Free Pussy Riot” in the manner of Riot Grrrl Kathleen Hanna; and statements of support by Paul McCartney, Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Portishead, U2 and others (Gessen 2014, 186, 194; Montgomery 2014). The sheer volume of support from North American viewers demonstrates not only the success that had in communicating cross-culturally, but also gives

insight into the ways in which the protest narrative that surrounded Pussy Riot was constructed. Furthermore, it supports Masha Gessen's claim that the trial itself and its surrounding media fervor could be read as one of Pussy Riot's protest actions in itself (Gessen 2014, 281).

Peaches' video perhaps best demonstrates the way in which the West constructed the notion of a solidarity movement around Pussy Riot, interpreting the group's actions in a way that suited a Western protest narrative. Peaches, who like Pussy Riot, is known for sexually explicit lyrics and disregard for gender norms, pre-recorded a track with a distinct punk sensibility, straightforward repetitive lyrics and a Kathleen Hanna-like screaming vocal. The video shows crowds of people dressed in colorful balaclavas with "Free Pussy Riot" written on their bodies, sitting and marching in the street as if demonstrating. These scenes were interspersed with low-definition videos of individuals posting YouTube videos of themselves in support of Pussy Riot. This video evokes the sensibility that Pussy Riot has become an international movement in which anyone and everyone can participate, and that the power of mass unity will sweep out oppressive forces in Russia—while maintaining a safe distance from any real harm (Peaches 2012). This sensibility reached its pinnacle during Pussy Riot's 2015 appearance on the Netflix series *House of Cards*. However, while Peaches' video clearly evokes a demonstration, the performance over the credits of *House of Cards* video shows a crowd surrounding a stage on which Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina are singing and dancing (Guerrasio 2015). Though the aesthetics are the same, Pussy Riot's *House of Cards* performance demonstrates the entertainment value of their actions, highlighting the complex interplay between protest and performance.

The entertainment value of Pussy Riot resulted not as much from their musical performances that despite their claim to being a band, were few and mostly incomplete, but from the entire media circus that surrounded the group's incarceration. During the trial itself, Pussy Riot's lawyers and Tolokonnikova's boyfriend hoped to capitalise on the group's international publicity, going so far as to establish Pussy Riot as an official brand, and talking about producing an album and going on tour, a move that was anathema to the group's original stated goals (Gessen 2014, 229). Some of the band members clearly disapproved of this—and members of the collective from outside of the international media circuit "disowned" them for straying too far from the group's purpose (BBC News 2014), Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina clearly benefitted from the official move towards branding, as evidenced by the television and public appearances in U.S. media upon their release from prison. They would also alter their aesthetic to better fit within the requirements of the commercialized musical protest required by their U.S. fans.

Though the album and tour never happened, a branding initiative did, and, among other marketing schemes, Pussy Riot T-shirts became available

for sale on Amazon.com (Taylor 2013). Branding marked a major shift for the group from DIY towards global commodification. While Pussy Riot was lauded by many, including Riot Grrrl band Bikini Kill member Tobi Vail, for existing “outside of commodity exchange” (Pussy Riot 2013, 129) since they did not actually make music that was available for sale through commercial channels, they were nonetheless deeply concerned with the commodification and sale of the Pussy Riot “product,” which became public entertainment of a different kind when disseminated through news media. The remaining anonymous members of Pussy Riot even commented on this element of their former members’ careers in spring 2015, discussing the notion of “protest for sale” on the then still active Pussy Riot blog (LiveJournal 2015). As Serge Denisoff has noted in his discussion of the 1960s protest music phenomenon in the United States, protest is saleable to U.S. listeners and protest music, when disseminated through traditional channels such as television or the recording industry, ceases to serve the same function as protest produced through non-commercial means (Denisoff 1969, 228). To Denisoff’s argument, I add that the distillation of protest into its most basic, easily intelligible elements such as that achieved by Pussy Riot is a contributing factor to the processes of creating a commercialised protest aesthetic because it is more easily understood by a broad range of potential listeners. One might even argue that Pussy Riot’s aesthetic distillation was even a comment on the simplicity and manipulability of the commercial music industry.

Though Pussy Riot generated primarily positive responses from Western artists, some commented metacritically on Pussy Riot’s connection to the United States—for example, the interactive art piece by Los Angeles artists Gordy Grundy and Michael Delgado that created a mock brand of vodka in honor of the group, including satirical drink recipes, such as “the Putini” (Grundy and Delgado 2016). Grundy and Delgado poke fun at the U.S. response to Pussy Riot by including the tagline “American Made Anarchy in a Bottle,” and saying that their fake product is “marketed to college educated men and women 24–35, who are informed, cause-driven trend setters.” They include quotes from the media and celebrity supporters, and suggest that the proceeds from their alleged brand would go towards the Free Pussy Riot campaign. Grundy and Delgado’s piece critically addresses the U.S. involvement in the Pussy Riot case, highlighting that the protest narratives surrounding the group were largely constructed by outsiders and perhaps inaccurate based on the situation in Russia.

Grundy and Delgado’s piece also highlights Wiedlack’s (2016) interpretation of the Western gaze’s role in formulating the Pussy Riot brand. The Pussy Riot Vodka piece reduces Russia to a series of stereotyped symbols—vodka, Putin, Yuri Gagarin, to name a few—pointing out the limited knowledge most American supporters of Pussy Riot had of the nuances of Russian

politics and society and the privileged position of many of the American youth who were outspoken about the trial. It demonstrates the imposition of American values on to Pussy Riot, as well as the reductive nature of their portrayal in popular media.

PUSSY RIOT IN RUSSIA

The nature of the U.S.-constructed narrative about Pussy Riot's incarceration is particularly notable when drawing a comparison to the media response in Russia, which was significantly smaller. For most U.S. listeners and a variety of scholars, Pussy Riot is best known as a Russian punk band, an anomaly in a country allegedly without an existing punk scene. The documentary film *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*, for example, includes footage of Russian individuals stating that punk does not exist in Russia, and that "no one understands it" (Lerner and Podorovkin 2013). Masha Gessen's account of the trial, the first complete published record of the event, furthers this myth with statements about feminist art such as "If only Russia had something like these groups or, really, anything like Riot Grrrl culture...but it did not. They had to make it up" (Gessen 2014, 60). These statements establish an exceptionalist myth that helped to justify American calls for Pussy Riot's release from prison, and is a key element of the protest narrative constructed around and by the group members.

However, punk is not at all foreign to Russia, nor is feminist punk, suggesting that the exceptionalism of Pussy Riot was also a part of the performance. Russia has had, in fact, a thriving punk tradition since the late 1970s. Feminist punk bands such as Siava, the electropunk band Barto and emo-core band Elizium demonstrated their support for Pussy Riot in 2012 by writing and performing songs such as "Maliava Pussy Riot" (A prison letter to Pussy Riot) and "Kis'ia eres" (Kitten Heresy; Steinholt 2013, 122). However, compared to the response from Western media, responses of support from the Russian punk scene were extremely muted. One reason for this may be that Pussy Riot does not share audiences, networks, band members, concert venues or recording studios with other punk bands (Golobolov and Steinholt 2012, 250). Yngvar B. Steinholt and Ivan Golobolov have used this fact to suggest that despite being Russian and performing music in a punk idiom, Pussy Riot is not a part of the Russian punk scene (Golobolov and Steinholt 2012, 250).

Steinholt asserts that the mischaracterisation of Pussy Riot as Russian punk arises from the assumption on the part of American viewers that punk is a political movement centered on Pussy Riot and united against Vladimir Putin, which it is not (Steinholt 2013, 120). In fact, a public opinion survey of

1,601 individuals conducted by the non-governmental research organization the Levada Center in 2012 and 2013 suggested that most Russians did not follow the Pussy Riot case closely; a significant percentage of them thought that band members had received adequate punishment for their actions (*The Moscow Times* 2013). Of those surveyed, 42 percent believed that Pussy Riot was being prosecuted for insulting the church and its believers, while only 17 percent understood them as calling for the removal of President Vladimir Putin—significantly fewer than those who believed their actions merely represented a form of public disorderliness (The Analytical Centre of Yury Levada 2013, 122).

Volha Kananovich has suggested that these interpretations of the Pussy Riot trial may be partially due to fragmented coverage in Russian news media, which, regardless of political affiliation, failed to provide a thoughtful and well-contextualised reading of the events at Christ Church Cathedral in Moscow (Kananovich 2016, 406). However, the narrative of the punk protester challenging an oppressive state was constructed by Pussy Riot for U.S. audiences. This is evidenced not only by the celebrity responses from artists like Peaches and Madonna, but also by the actions subsequently taken by members of Pussy Riot on their release from prison.

PERFORMANCE IN THE MEDIA

One of Pussy Riot's first appearances following their release a few months shy of a two-year prison term in 2014 was on the satirical news show, *The Colbert Report*. Though Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina come off as serious and respectful, they easily play into the show's sarcastic humour, making pointed jokes about homosexuality, prison life and Putin. Although there is a translator present, both women clearly understand some English, and sometimes respond to the interviewer's questions without waiting, demonstrating that the language barrier is a part of their performance as a Russian stereotype. They are clearly aware of the complex interplay between politics and performance, as evidenced by their reference to their premature release as a "P.R. stunt" (The Colbert Report 2014).

Overall, Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina come off as seasoned performers, even going so far as to thank their supporters and audience present, much as they might if giving a concert. This pandering goes even further when Stephen Colbert, at the end of the episode, dons a balaclava himself, sending a message to Putin to "leave those girls alone" (The Colbert Report 2014). Colbert, an extremely popular character for news consumption among youth in the United States, essentially reduces Pussy Riot, their aesthetic and their message to the single symbol of a colorful balaclava. The popularity undoubtedly

generated by this action markets Pussy Riot as a purchasable commodity: as Nadia and Masha say in the interview, “anyone can be a member,” even Stephen Colbert (*The Colbert Report* 2014). However, unlike the Riot Grrrl DIY concept from which this sentiment is originally derived, presenting this inclusiveness over a broadcast television show turns it into a marketing scheme, in which anyone can buy a balaclava and protest Putin. Colbert even advertises their upcoming appearance at the Amnesty International concert, as if they were a commercial group who sold tickets to their performances. While it is commendable that these women are receiving such significant press, what began as a grassroots, creative musical protest has now become a mass media product—essentially selling “Riot Grrrl” without the “riot.”

A key turning point arises during the Colbert interview, in which Nadya is asked why the group’s name is in English. She replies with characteristic sarcasm, that they “wanted to let English-speaking people enjoy themselves” (*The Colbert Report* 2014). Humour aside, however, the name brings to the forefront Pussy Riot’s allegiance to the English-speaking world who constitute the bulk of their fans.

FROM BLACK LIVES MATTER TO GLOBAL APPROPRIATION

The fact of Pussy Riot’s connection to their U.S. audiences is evidenced by the release of their first-ever English language song in December 2014, entitled “I Can’t Breathe.” The song is dedicated to Eric Garner, an unarmed black man killed by a white policeman in July 2014, one of the individuals around whom the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States has revolved. Rather than the DIY Riot Grrrl-inspired image that Pussy Riot cultivated through their Internet protest videos, Pussy Riot’s homage to Garner is a polished, industrial ballad, demonstrating a major aesthetic shift in response to their popularity in the U.S. In contrast to punk’s lauded musical amateurism, Pussy Riot enlist the help of musicians from Russian bands The Jack Wood and Scofferland and Americans Nick Zinner (the Yeah Yeah Yeahs), Andrew Wyatt (Miike Snow), and Richard Hell of the proto-punk band Television (Sinyakov 2015). The song is professionally produced and heavily edited, including the use of electronic sounds.

The song is accompanied by two different videos to facilitate communication with Pussy Riot’s multilingual digital audience. One version shows images of the site where Garner was killed, including memorials and demonstrations, as well as members of Garner’s family. The other version shows Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina divested of their characteristic colorful balaclavas, now in Russian riot police uniforms being buried alive in a grave.

The video was filmed in a single shot, meaning that the two women really did allow themselves to be buried underground for the purposes of the video.

The juxtaposition of these two videos set to the same music draws a parallel between Pussy Riot's experience in Russia and those of black Americans. The band told CNN that they stood in solidarity with "all those from... all around the globe who suffer from state terror—killed, choked, perished because of war and state-sponsored violence of all kinds—for political prisoners and those on the streets fighting for change" (Mullen 2015). Pussy Riot thus used their Eric Garner tribute videos as a way to align themselves further with Americans by aligning their own protest narrative with one already existing in the United States.

However, the song was also criticized for ignoring the specific issues of racial inequality brought to light by the Garner case, instead focusing on a universal struggle against state-sanctioned violence—in essence, a generalized protest rather than one with specific, achievable goals. Not only were Pussy Riot criticized for using exclusively white male collaborators for their recording, a move that many saw as appropriative, but Hell himself acknowledged some discomfort with the overdubbing of his reading of a transcript of Eric Garner's final confrontation with the policeman over the final moments of the song. The fact that in interviews Pussy Riot seemed poorly informed about the particulars of Garner's case—not to mention the long history of white adoption of black expression in the United States—suggests that while they may have been well-intentioned, Pussy Riot failed to acknowledge that state violence acts differently on different people, in different countries, with different kinds of issues.

Though the aesthetic and political content of "I Can't Breathe" was unlike Pussy Riot's earlier musical protests, the problematic nature of the piece stems from issues present throughout the group's entire development. In particular, Pussy Riot's translation of their own experiences to those of black Americans demonstrates a style of protesting based less in the specific details of a particular issue and more on the act of protest itself, emphasizing the group's performance of punkness as a deliberate aesthetic choice geared towards exploring the artistic possibilities of protest. The non-specificity of Pussy Riot's political goals (which have varied and been criticized throughout the group's existence) when coupled with this aesthetic highlights the performative nature of protest itself.

CONCLUSION

Several years have passed since Pussy Riot went to prison for their actions at the church in Moscow, and much has happened to allow sufficient critical

distance to better understand the dynamics that influenced their widespread international popularity. On one hand, despite their geographical distance, we can understand Pussy Riot as a part of a trajectory of U.S.-based feminist punk, rather than a part of a punk scene currently existing in Russia. This is evidenced not only by the group's own intellectual history, but by their audiences and aesthetics.

Pussy Riot deliberately located themselves on this trajectory through the distillation of Riot Grrrl aesthetics into their most basic elements, which was then made available internationally using the Internet, forming a fan base that existed primarily abroad. This distillation created a narrative for U.S. viewers about the overthrow of the Russian state, and did not really reflect the situation in Russia. Rather, Pussy Riot created the narrative of a kind of musical protest that was intelligible to U.S. viewers that was based less on the performance of actual musical events, and more on the production of symbols.

The protest narrative offered by Pussy Riot is largely predicated on Western ideas about protest art. These kinds of narratives are common across political protests, according to Brysk and Tilly, but particularly visible here due to both the political ambiguity of the group's politics and the separation between the public discourses about Pussy Riot's status as a musical group and the actual kinds of performances that they produced. In essence, Pussy Riot serves as an archetype of protest in the general sense which, as evidenced by their Eric Garner video, they see as applicable across a broad variety of situations.

However, to say that because Pussy Riot's protest art was calculated in this way it was also ineffective is perhaps missing the point. While Pussy Riot may not have overthrown Vladimir Putin as many Americans had hoped, they were nonetheless very successful in raising awareness about issues of free speech, homosexuality, gender politics and a variety of other issues among viewers in the United States. Even if the gap between discourse and action was quite large in the Pussy Riot case, their work nonetheless highlights style as an effective technique for mobilizing political action across large groups of people, even in the presence of geographical and linguistic barriers.

NOTES

1. Most historians agree that punk did not begin as a male-dominated, hostile space for women, but became one with the rise of hardcore in the 1980s.
2. Samutsevich's sentence was suspended on the grounds that she did not actively participate in the protest. Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina served slightly less than their full sentences due to an amnesty law signed by the Russian parliament in 2014, which included the release of mothers from prison.

Chapter 21

Camp Fascism

The Tyranny of the Beat

Tiffany Naiman

Music has long been integral to social protest with songs used to accomplish goals as diverse as critiquing those in power, demonstrating unity and strength by combining many voices into one and illustrating the peaceful nature of civil disobedience (Rose 1994; Margolick 2001; Perry 2006; Peddie 2010; Kutschke and Norton 2015; Randall 2015; Friedman 2017; Martinelli 2017). Protest songs have been considered to be propaganda (Denisoff 1966, 581), rhetorical devices used to illuminate the human condition (Friedman 2017, ii), ways for people to deal with crisis and hardship (Greeway 1953, 63), money making endeavors (Friend and Sainte-Marie 2017), and community building tools (Rose 1994), but the key element to any protest song is audience reception of the desired persuasive aim. In *Persuasion and Social Movements*, the authors lay out what they see as the persuasive aims of a protest song: informing listeners of past, present and future of social problems; establishing or defending the identity, legitimacy and worth of a cause or movement and those associated with it; raising solutions or demands to a social problem; urging specific actions; and creating community for those involved in the movement (Stewart, Smith and Denton 2012). A protest song necessarily needs an audience to understand its meaning and then be moved to engage with the songwriter or performer's desired goals.

In North America, twentieth-century protest music has most often been associated with the civil rights and hippie movements of the 1960s, and can evoke the media cliché of an earnest and clear-eyed musician armed only with a guitar and ideals. Yet, what I discuss in this chapter is a very different incarnation of the protest singer post 1970, dispelling stereotypical and reified representations of protest music and its creators. My intention in this chapter is to consider an alternate form of “camp” that functions as protest—a mode I have termed “camp fascism.” Camp fascism is a transgressive form of protest

found within industrial music that deploys the symbols, style and, at times, language of fascism in performance, music videos and song structures.¹ Each of the bands discussed in this chapter—Marilyn Manson, Laibach and Throbbing Gristle—motivate their audiences to take political action and question the status quo through the appropriation and deliberate *misuse* of fascist iconography, camp fascism.

Industrial music is an oppositional musical practice that acts as a form of resistance to neoliberal domination in the West, generating new social relationships as the basis for a new cultural sensibility. From its inception, industrial music has been associated with a particularly militaristic aesthetic, which can be seen to both establish and enhance authorial intentions and audience interpretations. Indeed, industrial music uses military imagery and the sonic structures and aesthetics of fascism as a way of conveying musical content and dictating the terms of spectator engagement, directing audiences to liberal politics that are contrary to what the totalitarian symbolism might suggest on the surface. Those who mobilise and replicate these iconographies, the artists and the knowing audience, function as a political group; linked and defined by a desired aesthetic, they are *those in the know*. This is the door through which camp aesthetics make their entry into the discourse around industrial music and its politics. Crucially, the efficacy of the protest contained in camp fascism is entirely dependent on the ability of the audience to correctly decode political symbols that have very different, toxic meanings outside of this initiated group. This dependence on privileged knowledge separates camp fascism from other forms of protest and makes it much more fraught.

The danger of camp fascism being misread has never been greater than in 2017, especially in the United States. The artists examined in this chapter came to prominence at a time when white nationalist and neo-Nazi groups were exiled to the shadowed fringe of American and European politics, and the use of fascist elements was clearly more provocation than endorsement. The risk for misinterpretation has increased in the present day, as emboldened racist groups have rebranded themselves the “alt-right” and become a prominent voice in American politics, and when the American public has seen white nationalist marches where unmasked white Americans chant “Heil Hitler” and openly carry swastikas.

CAMP FASCISM AS PROTEST

Defining the terms “camp” and “fascism” is no easy matter. As Griffin and Feldman write in their edited volume *Fascism*, the political tendency “is becoming ever more difficult to classify and track in all its permutations”

(2004, 3). Ernst Nolte created a six-point “Fascist minimum”, articulated as: anti-Marxism, anti-liberalism, anti-conservatism, the leadership principle, a party army and the aim of totalitarianism (1970, 12). Roger Griffin provides a brief, cogent definition of fascism as “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism” (2016, 44). Perhaps the most concise definition comes from Michael Mann, who writes that “fascism is the pursuit of a transcendent and cleansing nation-statism through para-militarism” (2006, 13). Stanley Payne synthesises these and other definitions into his own, describing fascism as “a form of revolutionary ultranationalism for national rebirth that is based on a primarily vitalist philosophy, is structured on extreme elitism, mass mobilization, and the *Führerprinzip*, positively values violence ascend as well as means and tends to normalize war and/or the military virtues” (2016, 14).

To accept the theory of camp fascism that I propose, the traditional definition of camp must be expanded. At its core, camp is a shared aesthetic language specific to a given group that allows cognoscenti to communicate and interpret things in ways that are different than on their face. This shared and alternate valuation often privileges forms that are considered in poor taste: “In the cultural sphere, to be camp is to be perversely committed to the trash aesthetic or to a sort of ‘cultural slumming’” (Booth 1999, 70). The “gap” between those with a camp aesthetic and those without not only cements belonging in a specific group, it also provides an added comic benefit. While camp is a coherent comic sensibility, as Susan Sontag pointed out in “Notes on Camp” (1964), it is clearly no longer merely a secret code for uniting a disenfranchised population of homosexual men in a world of mass popular culture. Should it now be considered to do more harm than good in framing failure, cruelty and femininity as comedy? We must reflect upon a camp framework that goes beyond the stereotype of homosexuals reading movies and television against the grain. The fact that camp aesthetics help define and empower groups, be they gay men or young, angry white boys, means that camp is an inherently political tool. To view camp as political, rather than something frivolous, is a significant shift in from the traditional definition of camp. But that alone would not redeem the aesthetically challenging strategy of taking an ironic, detached attitude towards symbols of horrifying, even genocidal violence. When that camp aesthetic is camp fascism performed in industrial music for the purpose of inciting resistance, is the potential for harm amplified? Reflecting upon a camp framework that goes beyond the typical homosexual connotations, I want to begin a difficult conversation about camp as political action and the way that a shared aesthetic code can be utilized to protest. Placing camp in the realm of the political recognizes it as a tool of power; how that power is read determines how it is wielded.

Some may challenge my classification of industrial music and its performances as a breed of camp based on camp fascism's political nature. However, if all camp is inherently political—be it the “camp fascism” that I am discussing, the subject and intent of which is political; the homosexual sensibility demarcated by Sontag in 1964; or the cultural taste pop intellectuals feel free in discussing as laid out by Andrew Ross in 1989—then camp's nature as a code or a sensibility that not all people possess, depends on the differentiation of two groups: those who are included and privileged—*those who are in the know*—and those who are not. Those who are in the know ultimately build or form a community, a kinship built initially on personal taste, that leads to the sensibility, and then the reading or interpretation. This process of community building is, as is all community building, a political act. The particular political conditions during which industrial bands were formed made community building a necessity. In the case of camp fascism, it was neoliberalism that gave birth and continues to give rise to the particular kind of political camp that I am discussing.

In the 1970s and 1980s, camp fascism became a means of transmitting political subversion and a call for revolt against the growing forces of corporate consumption and production, as well as neoliberalism. Industrial music, a deeply political genre, has given rise to many songs of social protest, a large number of which appropriate and subvert symbols, aesthetic characteristics, and sonic representations of fascist ideologies to call audiences to political action in order to push back against institutions of power in society such as the church and the government. By utilizing a particular style of relating to their knowing audiences and attaching the iconography of fascism to people, the church, the government, or corporations whose politics they do not agree with, the industrial bands I use as examples, active in and from the United States, the United Kingdom and Slovenia—Marilyn Manson, Throbbing Gristle and Laibach—deal in camp fascism, playing sonic, visual and performative references to far-right totalitarian states, while attacking and protesting the politics of fear. These bands formed, produced recordings and toured during the same time in which neoliberalism became a shared condition of Western politics. The rise of neoliberalism also coincided with the growth of the evangelical Christian right's power within the Republican Party in United States beginning in the 1970s (Moreton 2010, 3; Hackworth 2012, 31). In 1975, (the same year Throbbing Gristle was formed), Margaret Thatcher became the leader of the U.K.'s Conservative Party and in 1979 she became Prime Minister. In the United States, Marilyn Manson was established during the presidency of George H.W. Bush (1989–1993).² Laibach came into existence in 1980, the year Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito died and socialism began to deteriorate in the country as it broke apart. What connects the bands I discuss here is an extensive shared network of ideas; understanding

what these are is what allows one to be “in the know.”³ Audience members should be able to discern the artists’ meaning and understand that the fascist references are an exaggeration of the thing they loathe, even though they mimic totalitarian governments in two ways: a mode of relating to crowds of followers, and the adoption of fascist imagery and musically rigid forms. The lead singers of the bands perform the recreation of a key element of actual fascism: the charismatic leader whipping up his audience into a state of ecstasy. This ecstatic state grants fans the cathartic experience of submitting to a charismatic leader without the political consequences of bowing to a dictator while showing the audience that even they are susceptible to this kind of manipulation—simultaneously performing two of protest music’s six persuasive functions by bonding audience members to each other and giving them firsthand knowledge of the ease with which a society can fall into totalitarian spectacle.

IDENTIFYING INDUSTRIAL MUSIC

There have been, in the Anglophone world, several distinct categories of music that have been described as industrial. Among them were: folk music performed by eighteenth and nineteenth century laborers, acknowledging urban concerns common to workers in need of unity; sequences of prerecorded music broadcast over factory speakers in the early 20th century to improve productivity; and a type of experimental electronic music performance art that first took shape in the 1970s (Korczyński, Pickering and Robertson 2013; Beckett, United States, and War Production Board 1947; Porter and Råberg 1992; Reed 2013). Beginning in the early part of the last century, recorded music was often piped into already noisy factories to keep work going. In England music was mandatory for all military factories and the national radio service, the BBC, created a show called *Music While You Work*, which was broadcast into the factories twice daily (Korczyński, Pickering and Robertson 2013, 211–14). This was functional music that was played for a purpose other than aesthetic enjoyment; it was played to make humans as machine-like and productive as possible (Reed 2013, 19). The musicians who created some of the first industrial music in the 1970s and 1980s grew up around factories. Early popular industrial music emerged from urban post-industrial centres like Berlin (Einstürzende Neubauten), Chicago (Ministry), Cleveland (Nine Inch Nails), Hull (Throbbing Gristle), Sheffield (Cabaret Voltaire), Canton (Marilyn Manson) and Vancouver (Skinny Puppy), all cities where factories once thrived but had emptied by the 1980s.

Like any musical genre or subgenre, trying to fit an artist into a specific genre world is a difficult task. While industrial music and its related

sub-genres are extremely diverse in their musical sound and their overall manifestation paratexts, there is a genealogical resemblance apparent in the ways most of the bands accord hermeneutic significance to iconographic elements that carry their historical traces as a kind of aesthetic haunting. Unlike heavy metal or electronic dance music, neighboring genres whose social histories are one of adaptation and cultural change, there has been a stable, even rigid aesthetic within industrial music since its inception. Even as the sound changed from the electronic screeching of Throbbing Gristle to the jackhammers of Einstürzende Neubauten and, later, to the distorted guitar riffs of Ministry and Marilyn Manson, the lyrical and visual principles that governed the genre barely changed, imbuing industrial bands and audiences with a sense of continuity, one based in the aesthetics of militarism linked to fascism.

In 1983, Jon Savage pointed to five key elements that represented industrial music culture: “organizational autonomy, access to information, the use of synthesizers and anti-music, extra-musical elements, and shock tactics” (Savage 1983, 5).⁴ Often highly dissonant with an emphasis on electronic sounds, third-wave industrial music evokes a sense of isolation and subjugation. As Paul Hegarty writes in *Noise Music: A History*, industrial music “offers an anti-aesthetic, using the tools of art to undo art” and its aim is to expose “the fetid state of capitalist society” (Hegarty 2013, 105). Intentionally abrasive, industrial music relies heavily on percussive elements enunciating driving and repetitive rhythms, often matched by repetitive lyrics vocalized in distorted or altered ways. The genre is notoriously white and male, both in its fan base and its artists (Reed 2013, 120, 223). According to Reed and my own experience in the scene, many of the young men comprising the industrial fanbase are angry, expressing feelings of alienation and pain and railing against systems and institutions they see as oppressive and controlling, like the church and state. This is why industrial music is both anti-social and inherently political. Ian Peddie writes that “the ideal of the anti-social is positioned as an axiomatic form of dissent,” and the meaning of the music is “located in what we might call ‘organized’ community values” (Peddie 2010, xxiii). The toying with fascist iconography and the use of offensive language in industrial music’s mode of camp fascism “often appear[s] anti-social to outsiders, or at times near legally deviant, [but it] is where much of their appeal to members is no doubt located” (Peddie 2010, xxiii).

Modern industrial music grew out of a specific, working class and labouring experience, and is deeply concerned with issues of agency, authority and power. As Alexander Reed states in *Assimilate*, his wide-ranging survey of industrial music culture, “One function of industrial music is that it seeks through caricature and cut-up to expose the face and the methods of institutional control” (Reed 2013, 60). If punk focuses on tearing down structures

to see what happens (Gracyk 2001; Ensminger 2016), then industrial music is about taking the normative structures in place and using them against themselves, co-opting them, cutting them up, reconfiguring them, and using them as weapons for change. In these instances, “the music becomes a way for its listeners to stay sharp, to hear and feel not sorrow for the betrayals that have led to their lost way of life but to see causes, feel rage, and be moved to resistance” (Carr 2011, 21). It is a call to arms, a call for protest, a call for the rejection of the status quo.

PROTESTING NEOLIBERAL CONTROL: THROBBING GRISTLE, LAIBACH AND MARILYN MANSON

Neoliberalism as an economic philosophy currently dominating the globe and “refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their potential profit” (McChesney 1999, 40). It favors the deregulation of markets and industries, lower taxes and tariffs, and the privatization of government services. Unending war and military production are key to neoliberal politics: in 2003 the U.S. federal government was “spending as much on war as it [was] on education, public health, housing, employment, pensions, food aid and welfare put together” (Monbiot 2003). As Naomi Klein documents in *The Shock Doctrine*, neoliberal proponents use crises to impose unpopular policies while people are distracted: for example, in the aftermath of 9/11, the Iraq war and Hurricane Katrina (Klein 2008, 5). Neoliberal thinkers perceive it as nothing more than “common sense”; but neoliberalism appears to its enemies as an insidious form of totalitarian control masquerading as democratic freedom. Neoliberalism, and attendant political apathy, is what the bands I discuss are protesting against.

Industrial pioneers Throbbing Gristle (TG) grew out of performance art collective COUM Transmissions, in which band members Genesis P-Orridge, Peter ‘Sleazy’ Christopherson, and Cosey Fanni Tutti were a part. It was here that Genesis’s public “quest for some kind of authentic pure self via a grueling regime of deconditioning” (Reynolds 2006, 125) began, quickly followed by public outrage at his performances. Following the opening of the COUM exhibition, “Prostitution”, at the ICA London in 1976, British parliament member Sir Nicholas Fairbairn denounced the show as “A sickening outrage. Obscene. Evil . . .” and stated that COUM were the “wreckers of civilization!” (Ford 1999) Later that year COUM, with the addition of Chris Carter, morphed into noise/music group Throbbing Gristle.

The acknowledged originators of the modern industrial music genre, the group created their own record label, Industrial Records, embracing the

slogan “Industrial Music for Industrial people.”⁵ They released music that sonically portrayed “what it’s like to be inside a house and hear a car go past or a train, or working in a factory or walk past a factory” (Savage 1983, 11). Throbbing Gristle was also the first band to use the symbols of fascism. They used a slightly altered version of The Flash and Circle, a symbol used by the British Union of Fascists (BUF) and wore military garb in their early career.⁶

From the outset, Throbbing Gristle continually articulated the politics of their projects, including the use of fascist symbols. Throbbing Gristle may have been playing with symbols, but they were, if anything, even more atonal than other industrial bands, coming nowhere near the structures of harmony and tone that were required of Nazi-era culture. Atonal music is music that is composed without a tonal center or a key and was something that Nazi Germany did not tolerate, “the ideological objection against atonal music was that it was subversive, a mode of musical expression cultivated by composers with Left-wing sympathies and a manifestation of anti-German sentiments” (Levi 1994, 102). Simply, some of atonal music’s greatest exponents were Jewish (Arnold Schoenberg) or mentored by Jewish composers (Alban Berg and Anton Webern). Thus, the “decadent” atonality of much of Throbbing Gristle’s music and industrial music in general subverts the ideology of fascism, even as it plays with fascist forms. In this sense, Throbbing Gristle are modernist in the lineage of Schoenberg, looking to free listeners from constraints both formally and metaphorically.

If a precursor were to be found for Throbbing Gristle, it would be the most anarchic moments of Italian Futurists (1909-1944), which, though supportive of the Italian fascist state, were also attempting to create “a new aesthetic language based on industry, war, and the machine” (Beiles 2017).⁷ Similarly, Throbbing Gristle’s music is “aimed to be both primal and at the cutting edge of contemporary culture” (Hegarty 2013, 105). However, Throbbing Gristle differed in their main mantra from the Futurists, in that their concern was in tearing down all structures of control, challenging all preconceptions of sound, music, language, and the body. Yet, vocalist P-Orridge still acted like a leader, and at times a magical guru, who was trying to lead his followers to a place of total freedom and self-knowledge. His leadership went well beyond being a front man for a band; extending to the production of a *Psychic Bible* (2009), which fills over five hundred pages, touching on topics from sex magic to extremities of physical pain to his views of the body as nothing more than an incomplete control structure to be augmented and shifted to reflect one’s own desire to physically embody the consciousness one wants to bring into being. None of this is easy to take at face value; though there was a much more serious note to Throbbing Gristle than my later case study, Marilyn Manson, camp fascism was still at work.

Consider their song “Discipline” and a now famous 1979 performance in San Francisco, California. Though Genesis repeats the words, “discipline, discipline, we need some discipline in here” (P-Orridge 1981) while wearing military garb, he is also spastically moving to and fro across the stage, pounding the microphone to his head while leading the audience into a chaotic state of submission. The performance as a whole is unbound, but contained by the repetition of electronic banging and clicking. Although fascism is referenced linguistically and decoratively, everything else going on completely undermines what a fascist state would find acceptable in public. Most certainly the male audience member who rises from the crowd in an apparent moment of religious ecstasy, contorting both face and body until he receives an elongated soul kiss from Genesis, would be an aberration under true fascism. The camp reading is enhanced when Genesis vocalizes in a playful timbre the line “Are you ready boys? Are you ready girls? We need some discipline in here.” Throbbing Gristle determined that musical forms and structures such as harmony, melody, tonality and rhythm were also part of the systems of control from which they wished to liberate their audiences. Genesis’ voice, which I would not call a singing voice, directs and disturbs as the song unfolds. The “song” begins by feeding P-Orridge’s vocal output through a homemade synthesiser, which distorts his language into indecipherable sounds, garbled and mechanized. The classic fascist relationship between technology and the human here is subverted, with machine overriding the human and rendering the person controlling it incomprehensible, rather than more efficient or perfect. These vocal traces are blasted out between bursts of noise, always out of synch with the rhythm—intentionally lag behind, droning or shouting and keeping the audience off kilter. Despite the ominous calls for “discipline”, neither the voice nor the band’s atonal noise can be disciplined. The performance camps the pseudo-fascist lyrics through a demonstrated lack of discipline.

Merging the often gruesome inhumanity of the twentieth century into their creations—their early album covers featured images from Nazi death camps juxtaposed with others of striking industrial banality—while questioning and exploring the limits of art, walking a very thin line between staged frenzy and delusional psychosis, Throbbing Gristle make an inside joke of control structures, especially those imposed by the incipient neoliberal state, to the few, brave audience members who did the work to understand their performances. Throbbing Gristle’s actions did not fetishise fascism, but instead invited their audience to traverse the aural extremities they created, anticipating that the results might jar a passive public out of its sheep-like state. Žižek’s assessment that “contemporary power no longer primarily relies on censorship, but on unconstrained permissiveness” (Žižek, Santner, and Reinhard 2013, 134) most certainly applies to Throbbing Gristle’s music. This same

“permissiveness” is undoubtedly at the core of what makes the “over the top” spectacle of camp so amusing. There are no limits or boundaries in where the humour comes from or how far an exaggeration can go.

Slovenian band, Laibach, stages a mixture of Nazism and Stalism. An extensive amount of discourse and ink has been devoted to Laibach, both in academia and the music press, trying to “prove” that about the band is either actually fascist or ironically critical of fascism (see Turner 2012; Karim 2014; Bishop 2012). Both claims lack the complexity that a camp reading brings. In 1987 Laibach covered the 1985 Queen song “One Vision”, renaming it “Birth of a Nation/*Geburt Einer Nation*”. The differences between the textual content of the songs are the titles and the language in which they are sung. The orchestration, tone and language of the lyrics, and the accompanying music video create the radical difference between the songs. Where Queen’s music has a typical pop-rock sound, Laibach’s music features a repetitive, military drumbeat, accompanied by triumphant orchestral melodies. Freddie Mercury’s operatic tenor that sings “One man one goal one mission, one heart one soul just one solution” is replaced by the guttural, forceful growling of Laibach’s lead vocalist Milan Fras singing “*Ein Mensch, ein Ziel, und eine Weisung, ein Herz, ein Geist, nur eine Lösung*”. Queen’s music video, typical of 1980s MTV, the band in the studio and shots of fans in a packed stadium chanting the lyrics along with Freddy Mercury. Laibach’s video shows the band in military outfits, mechanically hitting the drums and playing trumpets as in a victorious battle concert. The video has echoes of Leni Riefenstahl’s infamous 1935 documentary, *Triumph of the Will*. Laibach with their adaptation of the song revealed the camp fascism not only in their own work, but also in the performance and music of Queen—a behemoth of a stadium rock band that had the full support of the corporate music industry.⁸

Queen’s tune was inspired by the group’s participation in Live Aid and espoused a seemingly progressive leftist message of peace that is vastly transformed in Laibach’s reworking.⁹ While lyrics about one race, vision, and solution might easily be perceived as innocuous in that context, the lyrics’ authoritarian subtext becomes readily apparent as it is “retroactively transformed...into a Fascistic hymn to power” by Laibach (Monroe and Žižek 2005, 228) who also add campy imagery such as giant papier-mâché stags basking in pastel purple light. Watching vocalist Milan Fras in the spotlight, scrawny, and shirtless in military garb, one cannot help but laugh while at the same time understand the message.¹⁰ Their version of the song, far from being a simple cover, utterly transforms it, drawing out and amplifying the grotesque parallels between the pleasures of a mass-produced pop music spectacle and fascist modulation of crowd emotion through propaganda and epic scale theatricality. It is the exaggeration that illuminates what Laibach

is protesting, with the band performing a caricature of political authority and influence.

Laibach's performances are designed to undercut straightforward distinctions through the use of totalitarian aesthetics and a debasement of nationalist themes. Laibach operates by displaying imagery, and the codes of fascism and state power, pushing it to its limit, recombining it with other elements, other traditions, forging connections that "expose the 'hidden reverse' of a regime or ideology" (*The NSK Times* 2017). Laibach's performance is neither an acceptance or rejection of any particular system but rather, as Slavoj Žižek (whose interest in Slovenian culture is more than academic) notes, they are libidinally "frustrating" the system (the ruling ideology) precisely insofar as they present not its ironic imitation, but *over*-identification with it. By bringing to light the obscene superego of the system, over-identification suspends its efficiency. What I would add to Žižek's analysis is that this over-identification, this obscene exaggeration of earnest belief is camp.

As Žižek has pointed out, Laibach's followers are obsessed with a "desire of the Other". Paranoid fans clamor to know Laibach's actual position: are they "really" totalitarians or is it all just satire (Žižek 1993, 3)? They expect from them an answer, which they will never receive. The elusive character of their desire, the indecidability of their stand, compels fans to *decide upon their own desire* (Žižek 1993). Here, once again, is the expectation that at least a certain group of their audience will "get it." With that camp knowledge, then, comes pleasure at being part of a community *in the know*.

To become a savvy fan of the band Marilyn Manson takes an attentive eye; one must look both directly at and beyond their grotesque and theatrical stage shows while listening carefully to the lyrics, timbre and rhythms of their music. As one writer stated of their live performances, "the goal of this [performative and sonic] assault is . . . to make you see that blind faith of any kind—in God or Satan or even in Manson himself—is a trap, and that belief in yourself is the only source of strength" (Reighley 2015, xi). The Midwestern son of a Vietnam veteran, Brian Warner, who would later become Manson, learned to distrust the government from an early age.¹¹ Warner and his bandmates came up with their names in 1989 by putting the first name of an iconic female sex symbol and the last name of a serial killer together. Warner chose Marilyn Monroe and infamous Charles Manson—creating Marilyn Manson.¹² Manson said he was "struck by how they [daytime talk shows] lumped together Hollywood starlets with serial killers, just bringing everything to the same sensational level" (Reighley 2015, 15). Manson and his band became as, if not more, famously notorious for their outrageous performances than the starlets or the killers they named themselves after. By 1997, Marilyn Manson fear and backlash was at its peak in the United States. The state of South Carolina introduced a bill barring the singer from performing



Figure 21.1 Marilyn Manson, September 2007 at Verizon Wireless Amphitheater.

at any state-run facility, 5,500 Florida residents called the mayor of Jacksonville to protest a concert date and in most cities where the band was allowed to play, they and their fans were met with protestors. Yet, the shows went on and Marilyn Manson, from 1997 to 2001 staged some of the most elaborate camp fascist scenes of his career. During the *Antichrist Superstar Tour* (1997) Manson stated, “with people being so desensitized, things have to be really shocking and have to punch you in the face to get your attention. Then, once you’ve got their attention, you can say something they might remember” (Strauss 1997). Manson’s, music and performances during this era, exposed through his use of camp fascism, the incongruities and corruption within major systems such as neoliberal government and religion, the failings of which are often invisible or cloaked.

Manson is a prime example of this somewhat safe submission to a charismatic leader. He consciously toys with this theatrical trope, proving that, as both Jean Genet and Walter Benjamin noted, “fascism is theater”, and so it does not take much to adapt fascist dynamics to a theatrical performance. During their *Guns, God and Government* tour (2000–2001), Manson appeared in a Nazi hat, corset, and boots to perform “Antichrist Superstar” nightly in front of banners



Figure 21.2 Marilyn Manson, “Guns, God and Government” tour, October 2001.

and atop a podium with a black lightning bolt on a red and white circular field, simultaneously referencing the Nuremberg Rallies¹³ and the power of ungrounded electricity in a humorous, over-the-top display.¹⁴ In more recent years the costume has changed to a suit and tie, a clearer critique of neoliberalism and corporate greed, and the banners have encircled dollar signs or crosses made of rifles, filling the space where once the swastika resided with explicitly American fetishes.

Fascist and totalitarian states use powerful icons, images of idealized bodies, statuary, machinery and weapons because of their ability to create strong affective states in audiences and connect them to abstract concepts like strength, unity, fellowship and fortitude. But when these images reappear in industrial music, there is always something off, distorted or grotesque—maybe even a little bit *queer*. Camp fascism appears in industrial music’s performance because camp itself “has the power to force attention onto bodies” (Flynn 1999, 453), bodies which point to the non-ideal and the abject.¹⁵

Due to the way camp “strenuously insists on the body and its materiality”, (Flynn 1999, 453) when an artist like Manson pairs incongruent costumes, such as wearing a Nazi commandant hat along with a corset, with contorted or exaggerated facial expressions and gestures, there is an absolute denial of true fascist aesthetic production.

The iconography traditionally associated with power, purity, and idealized images of the human form is appropriated and paired with the abject by Manson.¹⁶ The key to camp fascism, then, in many ways lies in the relationship of the body to performance. A bodily act sheds light on the camp aspect, be it what covers the body, its movement during a concert, or the voice that comes forth from the physical presence.

Manson’s body betrays the fact that he and his band do not share fascist ideals. If an audience member is new to Marilyn Manson, does not know the lyrics or only pays cursory attention to the staged theatrics, they could misread the performance as a glorification of fascism rather than the understanding that the affect created by the performance is intended to be redirected towards institutions of control and power the artist views as problematic such as Christian fundamentalism or neoliberal capitalism. A camp reading of the fascist elements in industrial music is thus done by those seeing the imagery, hearing the sounds, and understanding the twist put on it all. If there were just fascist imagery without the grotesque, with no wink and nod in the performance, there would be no camp, and thus no protest.

The question is: what are we to make of this utilization of an aesthetic that is so clearly associated with the history of totalitarianism in general and fascism in particular? Certainly there exist industrial groups who are genuinely right-wing and who utilize these aesthetics for an obvious political purpose (i.e. Von Thronstahl and *Death in June*). However, there are a far larger number of artists who take either an apolitical or a leftist stance and who still utilize fascist symbols and demand audience submission.¹⁷ These artists rely on the power of the reaction that these symbols provoke in order to transmit political messages disruptive to normative power structures in the coded language of camp fascism—the performance is the site where audiences construct meaning.

The recording of “Antichrist Superstar” begins with a sample that sounds like an electronically processed church choir and then turns into electronic violin screeching. Suddenly, the hard and regular one-two pounding of the drums and straight Am guitar chords arrive and repeat. On the three, there is a sample crowd vocal of “Hey!” This drum/guitar led chant repeats seven times. When Marilyn Manson plays live, Manson cues the audience from the podium to shout “Hey!” with arms raised and fists clenched. The music itself directly plays a part in creating moments of fascist camp. The repetitive yet distorted guitar riff and the one-two pounding of the drum creates the space

for the audience to join while at the same time keeping a rigid form to the sound, holding tight to a rhythmic structure. Next, a slightly more complex but still restrictive and rigid guitar pattern moves Am to C to Am,⁷ keeping the forward marching motion going and giving the song its anthemic feel. It is constant repetition with very little variation until a crowd vocal chants “Hey! Hey!” across the barlines. The song only dips to D and Dm after Manson sings each line of the bridge. The very structure of this song is one of extreme constraint and simplicity within the boundaries of the genre, reflecting the restricted modes of thought in totalitarian states and providing a driving and insistent rhythm that informs the audience what their part is to play.

The song is about hidden desires in societies, and the ways in which those desires are played out and allow for corruption and authoritarian forms of government. The titular Antichrist Superstar is brought to life by those who are passive and obedient to the normative system, of which this “snake” is now a part and he asks “Whose mistake am I anyway?” (Manson 1996, “Antichrist Superstar”.) Church and state are targets, but of the song’s critique even more so, the aim is to awaken (and possibly change the minds) of those who allow these institutions control them. Referencing the cutting off of the hydra’s head shows the repetition of the recreation of structures of power and their problems, and that they just continue to grow back twofold. Lyrical and musical repetition goes on to highlight the betrayal of the song’s narrator, this time to emphasize that those who wanted this “snake” to relieve their suffering need to examine their own choices. This is a cautionary tale of following without questioning, amplified by the affective state induced in the audience when the song is performed live. The repetitive shouting of the prerecorded crowd combines with strong consistent percussion and the hero worship of a musician that the live crowd has paid to admire, leaving no doubt as to what an audience is meant to do—chant on command and raise their fists. This unified action, led by Manson from the podium, offers audiences a chance to realize how easily they become a controllable group, even as they sing along to lyrics denouncing political control.

There is another clue that Manson is camping up what appears at first glance to be a song about submission to a godlike star. Manson’s baritone voice is completely unrestrained and travels through modes of whispering, singing and screaming over the five minutes of the song. Atonal noise abounds during the verses, as the guitars duel with the synthesizers and mixes with the “decadent” pageantry of their live performance.

While simultaneously performing this leadership role and attaching the iconography of fascism to people whose politics they don’t agree with the audience is set into a furor and the front man directs them to look critically at the insidious deception of neoliberalism that cloaks itself in the guise of freedom. This kind of audience submission to a charismatic front man during live

music is not the purview of industrial alone. Other bands cultivate this type of dynamic. As I pointed out earlier in my discussion of Laibach, the stadium rock band Queen is a prime example. The chanting section of “Antichrist Superstar”, sounds a lot like Queen’s “We Will Rock You” (1977). Both songs share a common percussive rhythm that elicit moments of audience participation, where the crowd either claps their hands or pumps their fist to the rhythm and then shouts “Hey!” Brian May thought “We Will Rock You” (1977) was about control: “What would an audience do if you gave them permission, what would they do?” (May 2007). The band quickly found out: “We Will Rock You” became a worldwide sing-along. Mercury’s and May’s overdubbed vocals on the recording give the effect that there is a crowd already there singing, giving permission to Queen’s stadium audiences to join in the chant, and Freddie Mercury saying “sing it” at the end of each chorus helped encourage fans. Once the song was recorded it became a consistent highlight of their live shows. Queen, with their outrageous, over the top, bisexual lead singer Freddy Mercury (Blake 2011), is a less overt version of camp fascism. Mercury and his band were one of a handful of rock bands that became stadium acts, night after night filling venues like Wembley Stadium, which holds 90,000 people. While performers in other genres may work to exert command over their audiences, industrial is unique in the artists’ desire to reveal the dangers of this dynamic—they critique the impulse even as they work to encourage it.

Manson shows audiences, through his own charisma and ability to influence the crowd, how simple and satisfying it is to submit and be led, how *easy* it is to become fascist. There are no improvisations or individual solo moments in Manson’s music. He is the absolute leader; the band never strays from his blitzkrieg, an over-the-top spectacle of fascism that is at times silly and absurd. By whipping the audience up based on their own charismatic strength, lead singers such as Manson, Fris, and P-Orridge allow audience members to examine their own desire to submit. Concerts and political movements both rely on the human drive to be part of something larger than the single self, the rush one gets from being swept along in a wave of shared feeling and purpose. Manson forces the audience to confront how easy it is to be manipulated. By additionally attaching fascist symbols that are intrinsically attached to authority like the church and state, to something the audience *enjoys*—the show, and, by extension industrial music as a genre—the spectacle provides critique. This is not to say that audiences will not be dancing around and being ecstatic, but it produces the opportunity for critical reflection and a double attack on the things that can lead to the creation of a totalitarian state, which is this submission to a charismatic leader and falling for a politics of fear. Also, the combination of those two things creates a playfulness, extreme exaggeration and grotesque distortion—not just for shock

value or an inside joke but the performance is a creation of a scene where there can be a knowledgeable critical camp reading that is a call to resistance.

CONCLUSION

Industrial music, which is often perceived as offensive, dangerous and violent by mainstream criticism, is intentionally incendiary, designed to elicit just such negative responses, while veiling a politically disenchanting message that only some portion of the audience might “get.” It is a camp code directed towards those disenfranchised among the traditional power centers of conservatism: young white working class men who feel alienated within a system that so often blames “other” populations (gays, blacks, immigrants) for society’s ills. By exaggerating fascist elements within their own cultures, using fascist symbols to represent those tendencies, and combining the representation of fascism with an opportunity to experience firsthand desire to submit, industrial musicians use camp as immanent critique of neoliberalism. The goal is to render postmodern society’s ruling ideology impotent by exaggerating its most campy imagery of potency. Industrial music strips away the benign appearance of liberal democratic society to reveal the fascist threat beneath—and within. Industrial music’s camp fascism aims to undo fascism from that same within, to reach a vulnerable section of the population and allow them to push back against the status quo, getting their ya-ya’s out while having a wink and a good laugh along the way.

Marilyn Manson, Laibach and Throbbing Gristle are examples of industrial groups that critique Neoliberalism and call on their audiences to resist using their audiences informed reading of camp fascism to do so. Since Marilyn Manson, Laibach and Throbbing Gristle’s music and performances are political and the protest has a specific political aim, this type of camp has a unique potential to cause harm, as people may experience it as fascist manipulation or as an affirmation of fascism in its political messages, should it be interpreted from a non-camp perspective. What if Manson overestimates his public? What if Genesis Breyer P-Orridge is adopted as a deity or spiritual leader, rather than an artist and provocateur? What if the public takes seriously what Laibach mockingly imitates, so that Laibach actually strengthens what it purports to undermine? Can replicating fascist imagery or sonic structures that reflect such modes of control actually lead to its true and ultimate destruction? Or do these types of performances take something horrible and deeply problematic and make it more acceptable via its replication? Can performed violence bring about resistance to real violence or does it just breed more? The potential for harm is real, should the uninitiated consume the music and performance without the grain of salt that industrial music aficionados take as a

given. Without the arch understanding, these songs could be understood to be in support of the very politics that they are against. However, the risks posed to those without the cultural capital to appropriately understand the message is mitigated by the fact that industrial music is not often listened to casually or unintentionally, the obvious exception being Marilyn Manson, who exploded out of the subculture into the rock mainstream. To see the potential for misunderstanding, one only has to look at the widespread responses to him at the height of his popularity during the 1990s, when he was cited as the cause of ills such as the Columbine High School massacre.¹⁸ Still, I would argue that the potential for misinterpretation is outweighed by the power of the political message it transmits to those who are attuned.

At the time of writing, and from the perspective of someone based in the United States, America is suffering a constitutional crisis under the presidency of Donald Trump and neoliberal policies, such as the allowance of corporate and dark money being able to flow legally into the elections. The artists discussed in this chapter were operating under very different political conditions in the 1980s and 1990s than those at work in 2017. The efficacy of camp fascism as a tool of resistance to authoritarianism has not been tested in the American political landscape since Donald Trump's election and the emergence of the so-called alt-right at the center of our national government. In the wake of neo-Nazi and white supremacists showing up at rallies where self-confessed racists openly brandish swastikas and chant slogans against Jewish and black people, the danger of miscategorisation is heightened for artists like Marilyn Manson. At the point when overt acts of incitement and actual violence from neo-Nazi groups escape censure from the leadership of this country, it becomes incumbent upon these artists to change their iconography so as to more explicitly oppose such groups.

The need for songs of protest is great and Manson's ideas on the fascistic nature of the neoliberal tendencies within the American government and the corporate money that flows through it, seem increasingly relevant in the era of Trump in the United States, but shifting politics require new aesthetics and Manson seems ready to adapt. Speaking about his music video for "Say 10" released just before the 2016 presidential election in the United States he said, "Either way tomorrow goes, the visuals are meant to create contemplation. Because it's obviously bigger than just tomorrow", he says. "It's about the desperate acts of people who believe something that is preached by an unbeliever" (Stern 2016). Manson's protest music in 2016 has shifted from using camp fascism to making a more direct statement without veiling the neoliberal problem in fascist iconography, pointing to the "corporate suits" as the problem. In the video for "Say 10" (2016) Manson dramatically tears out pages from the book of Revelations, and viewers are then shown a bloody knife in Manson's hand. As the video concludes, Manson sings the words,

“As you say ‘god’ I say say10,” and the image shifts to a decapitated person in a blue suit with a red tie—a sartorial allusion to Donald Trump—in a pool of blood. The song’s lyrics point directly back to “Antichrist Superstar” with the return of the snake/hydra trope in the form of dollar signs and the shedding of scales, warning fans of the politics built on fear that vilify othered populations. Manson once more asks his audience to see how easy it is to normalize extreme politics and end up relinquishing individual freedom. Importantly, as Manson pointed out 20 years earlier in “Antichrist Superstar”, the head will grow back, bigger and stronger, which makes sustained and active resistance all the more necessary.

NOTES

1. Though I am using the term I have coined “camp fascism” specifically to discuss industrial musical acts in this chapter, I do not see camp fascism as being exclusive to the genre of industrial music, but rather suggest that it appears in an overt form within the genre.

2. Since Marilyn Manson is both the pseudonym of lead singer, Brian Warner, as well as the name of the band he fronts, to avoid confusion, from this point forward I will refer to the band as Marilyn Manson, and the lead singer as simply Manson.

3. Jon Savage points out, that as these bands came into being so did the phrase “Information War.” Bands such as Throbbing Gristle felt that understanding the control the popular media wielded needed to be exposed and attended to. The band created their own periodical *Industrial News* that provided information on control techniques and taboos, sex, politics, religion and were all openly examined (Savage 1983, 5). These writings, linked with the music and musical artists helped creating a common language and milieu of ideas and the common bond of questioning institutional power and normative structures of being.

4. All of these elements are self-explanatory except possibly anti-music. Anti-music refers to the construction of performed or recorded sounds through the atypical use of common instruments, by creating new instruments though a combination of acoustic and electronic items or found objects, and through the general use of noise (such as feedback and static).

5. This slogan was found on the label of the first Throbbing Gristle release and is attributed by Genesis Breyer P-Orridge to fellow artist Monte Cazazza in *Industrial Culture Handbook* (1983, 10).

6. The British Union of Fascist was founded in 1932 by Oswald Mosley. They were “convinced that a major economic crisis was imminent” and their ideology, “from the outset was invested with an ‘apocalyptic’ and messianic view of political struggle” (Linehan 2012, 3). For further examinations of the BUF see (Rawnsley 1981; Rubin 2017; Mosley 2017).

7. Futurism was a multidisciplinary movement launched in Italy in 1909 when Italian intellectual, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, published the “Founding and

Manifesto of Futurism”. To be a Futurist in Italy during this time meant you were youthful and aggressive, embracing modern technologies and war. To be disruptive to the status quo was the main aim of the Futurists. In his manifesto *The Art of Noises*, futurist composer Luigi Russolo encouraged the study and use of new sounds and noises from automobiles, airplanes, manufacturing, and other mechanized sounds of the industrial landscape in musical composition.

8. Queen has the unique privilege of being simultaneously among the most camp bands and the most fascist. As David Marsh wrote in *Rolling Stone*, “Whatever it claims, Queen isn’t here just to entertain. The group has come to make it clear exactly who is superior and who is inferior. Its anthem “We Will Rock You,” is a marching order: you *will not* rock us, we *will* rock you. Indeed, Queen may be the first truly fascist rock band” (Marsh 1979).

9. Live Aid was a dual-sited concert curated by Bob Geldof and Midge Ure in 1985 to raise funds for famine relief in Ethiopia.

10. Fray, in the video, is exposing his non-ideal body and therefore his vulnerability. This is in contrast to the strapping and athletic depictions of Aryan physicality present in fascist art as well as the symbolically masculine stags towering over him.

11. Manson’s father had been sprayed with agent orange during the Vietnam War and as a result Manson as a child went through a great deal of government testing to find out if it had had any effect on him (Reighley 2015, 2).

12. The remaining members chose the names Madonna Wayne Gacy, Daisy Berkowitz and Twiggy Ramirez.

13. Between 1923 and 1938 the Nazis held ten Reich National Party Conventions in the city of Nuremberg. They eventually grew to a full week with over 500,000 attendees. They were propaganda events with precisely planned aesthetics “the Nazis used to get their messages across to their supporters face-to-face in an age before television and the internet” (Rawson 2012, ii).

14. The logo that Marilyn Manson uses here is also a play on the British Union of Fascists party flag that Throbbing Gristle used 25 years earlier. Changing the colors of the banners to the Nazi’s black, red and white, the banners Manson uses double the referential meaning.

15. For a further and somewhat alternate reading of the perceived danger posed by a weaponized queer aesthetic to traditional Christian hegemonic values present in the performance of Marilyn Manson, see Judith Peraino’s *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (2003).

16. Industrial artists did not invent this type of transgressive assemblage. From almost the exact same moment that Throbbing Gristle formed, the combination of Nazi regalia and sex fetish clothing came into fashion within many subcultures and even found its way into films such as *The Night Porter* (1974). By the late 1980s the Nazi regalia as sexual fetish clothing became something of an avant-garde cliché.

17. Though only three bands are discussed in this chapter, there are many other bands worthy of exploration in relation to camp fascism including: Ministry, Snog, KMFDM, Grendel and Consolidated to name a few.

18. Twelve students and one teacher were shot by two students (who subsequently committed suicide) in Littleton, Colorado, on 20 April 1999.

Chapter 22

Protest Songs, Social Media and the Exploitation of Syrian Children

Guilnard Moufarrej

During the twentieth century, protest music played a prominent role in political movements and social upheavals in different parts of the world. In the United States, it accompanied the civil rights movement, the labor movement, and the antiwar movement after the 1960s. It also played a prominent role in the struggle against apartheid and more recently in the Arab uprisings that erupted in Tunisia in 2010 and spread to Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria. Songs of protest do not necessarily lead to immediate social change; however, they often succeed in promoting group solidarity and in raising awareness of social issues such as class, gender, and race (Friedman 2013; Malisa and Malange 2013; Trigg 2010). Roy Eyerman and Andrew Jamison in their seminal work *Music and Social Movements* argue that “in social movements, musical and other kinds of cultural traditions are made and remade, and after movements fade away, as political forces, the music remains as memory and as a potential way to inspire new waves of mobilization” (1998, 1–2). Similarly, Steven Friedman (2013, xv) notes “song’s poetry and music can change reality, maybe not by immediately resulting in changes in law, but by having a deeper impact on the society that makes laws”.

This chapter discusses the songs of protest that have accompanied the war in Syria since its eruption in 2011.¹ In particular, it focuses on protest songs performed by children and posted on social media. Contrary to the conventional understanding of protest singers as adults making political choices and rationally advocating social or political change, children are used here to turn protest songs into propaganda. Richard Alan Nelson defines propaganda as “a systematic form of purposeful persuasion that attempts to influence the emotions, attitudes, opinions, and actions of specified target audiences for ideological, political, or commercial purposes through the controlled transmission of one-sided messages (which may or may not be

factual) via mass and direct media channels” (1996, 232–33). Similarly, French sociologist and philosopher Jacques Ellul (1973, 25) noted:

the aim of modern propaganda is no longer to modify ideas, but to provoke action. It is no longer to change adherence to a doctrine, but to make the individual cling irrationally to a process of action. It is no longer to lead to a choice, but to loosen the reflexes. It is no longer to transform an opinion, but to arouse an active and mythical belief.

Using Nelson’s and Ellul’s definitions of propaganda, I aim to show how the use of children engaged in protest singing on social media has helped Syria’s militant groups mobilise local and diasporic communities. I argue that featuring children singing songs that express political views—songs which, I contend, do not reflect their own views, but transmit the views of the political forces and agents that are pushing their own agendas—is a type of child exploitation. It disfigures the children’s innocence and misrepresents them, even as it succeeds in rallying people to join in the fighting.² Drawing on the idea that nothing in sound is intrinsically revolutionary, rebellious, or political, and sounds are extensions or even reflections of our political cultures (Fischlin and Heble 2003, 11), I argue that, in the current Syrian context, songs both new and preexisting have embodied new meanings to represent the contending political cultures, and they can serve to inform our understanding of the war. I take into account the extensive use of social media platforms that has accompanied the Arab uprisings in 2010 and 2011 in general, and the Syrian conflict in particular (Klausen 2015; Leenders 2013; Zambelis 2012).

THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

In March 2011, anti-government protests demanding the resignation of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, inspired by what is now commonly known as the Arab Spring,³ fueled the beginning of a devastating war. According to several Western and Arabic media sources, including al-Jazeera, BBC News, CNN and I Am Syria, the conflict was sparked in Dar‘a, a rural town in Syria on the southern border with Jordan, when residents took to the streets to protest the torture of young boys who had spray-painted anti-government graffiti on their school building.⁴ As stated by these sources, the Syrian government’s crackdown on the protesters caused demonstrations to spread across the country.⁵ In October 2011, the mass protests and civil disobedience that started in rural areas and outlying suburbs were transformed into armed anti-regime insurgencies that spread to other parts of the country. What began as another

Arab uprising turned into a brutal proxy war, which has drawn in regional and world powers. Iran, Russia, and Lebanon's Shi'a⁶ Islamist Hezbollah movement have backed up the Alawite⁷-led government of President al-Assad. On the other side, the Sunni-dominated opposition has "attracted varying degrees of support from its international backers—Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan, along with the US, UK and France" (BBC News 2016). On the ground, Syrians and foreign fighters formed several militant groups, which include, on the one hand, pro-government forces consisting of the Syrian Army and pro-government militias, and on the other hand, opposition forces and their backers. According to BBC News, as many as 1,000 armed opposition groups were fighting in Syria, commanding an estimated 100,000 fighters. "Many of the groups are small and operate on a local level, but a number have emerged as powerful forces with affiliates across the country or formed alliances with other groups that share a similar agenda".⁸ The most prominent opposition group is the Supreme Military Coalition of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) formed in August 2011 by army deserters based in Turkey, whose goal was to bring down Bashar al-Assad's government.⁹ The coalition was backed by Western and Arab Gulf states. Whereas the coalition's chief of staff wanted it to be more moderate and strong, in contrast to the jihadist rebel groups in Syria, some of its aligned brigades have worked with hardline Islamist groups such as Ahrār al-Shām, and al-Qa'ida¹⁰-linked jihadists. The second most prominent anti-government group is the National Jihadis, whose goal was to restructure the state and Syrian society to adhere to fundamentalist principles of Islam (PBS 2017). The third group was the Islamic Front, formed in November 2013 with the aim of toppling the Assad regime completely and building an Islamic state; it welcomed foreign fighters, as "brothers who supported us in jihad" (BBC News 2013). Fourth is the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, formed in September 2012 by about twenty rebel groups that ranged from "moderate Islamist to ultraconservative Salafist in outlook" (BBC News 2013). In addition, Kurdish groups in northern Syria are hoping to establish an autonomous government within a decentralized Syria, and the jihadist groups have coalesced around the al-Nuṣra Front led by Abu Mohammed al-Jūlanī, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. According to BBC News, the al-Nuṣra Front is "a jihadist group believed to have been created in mid-2011 with the help of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), a militant umbrella group that includes al-Qa'ida in Iraq (BBC News 2016). It declared its existence in January 2012 and has since emerged as one of the most effective rebel forces" (2013), but it rejected ISIS, created in April 2013. In June 2014, ISIS formally declared the establishment of a caliphate—a state governed in accordance with Islamic law (Shari'a), by God's deputy on earth, a caliph. It became notorious for its brutality, including abductions, mass killings, and videotaped beheadings. Its

ideology seeks to “eradicate obstacles to restoring God’s rule on Earth and to defend the Muslim community, or *umma*, against infidels and apostates” (BBC News 2015).

CHILDREN AND WAR

Children’s involvement in warfare is hardly recent: it is perhaps as old as humanity and presents a historical and worldwide problem (Angucia 2009, 77). Human-rights organizations often report a high incidence of child exploitation and recruitment of child soldiers in countries constantly afflicted by violence and war (Marten 2002, 2). Angucia (2009, 80) notes:

Children do not start wars; neither do they understand their complex causes. Yet many children in the world today are growing up in families and communities in armed conflict. . . . The changing nature of conflicts from interstate to civil wars dictates that the community—the spaces where childhood is lived and experienced—becomes the battleground.

War normalizes violence and destruction for all who live through it, and children become accustomed to it, regardless of whether they understand its causes and effects (Dimitry 2011). This normalization makes it easy for militant groups to recruit children for their cause. They are exploited and abused by various means, including being forced to serve as soldiers, work as laborers, and become victims of sexual abuse (Attanayake et al. 2009; Human Rights Watch 2012; 2014; 2016a; Shaw 2003).

Since the beginning of the war, human relief organizations, including Human Rights Watch (2012; 2014; 2016), Oxford Research Group (2017), Save The Children (2016), World Vision (2016), and others, as well as journalists who have met with Syrian children in Syria and in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, have voiced concern about the exploitation of the children of Syria and the catastrophic effects of the war on a whole generation. In August 2016, Dr. Christine Latif, World Vision’s response manager for Turkey and northern Syria, asserted that “the children of Syria have experienced more hardship, devastation, and violence than any child should have to in a thousand lifetimes” (World Vision 2016). Some organizations have expressed fear of losing a whole generation if no action is taken. By mid-2017, the death toll in Syria had exceeded an estimated 450,000, of whom 10 percent were children. Furthermore, according to a report released by World Vision on 16 August 2016, more than half of the approximately five million Syrian refugees and more than 6 million people displaced within Syria are children.

MUSIC AND WAR

Music has always played a prominent role in social movements and wars. Governments have often used music as an “effective means for inspiring fervor, pride, patriotism, and actions in the citizens in order to gain manpower, homeland support, and funds” (Wells 2004, 1). Similarly, anti-government groups have always used music to relay messages of anger or shame at the government or to incite people to rise and revolt: “Revolutionaries know the power of music, and rulers fear the influence of music. Music is a double-edged sword, holding both influence for protesters with dire grievances, and menace for those against whom the grievances are held” (Byerly 2013, 230). In the United States, protest songs have existed since colonial times. Rosen (1972, 21) notes: the apparent emergence of the protest song was in reality the result of a long, slow process rooted in the beginning of the nation’s history. . . . A look at our history, and the history of other nations, shows that music has always been a mode of social expression. The earliest protest songs in the United States included anti-British songs, labor songs, agrarian songs, antislavery songs and anti-civil-war songs; later songs opposed discrimination and war, and supported civil-rights and personal freedoms, alongside songs about religion and society in general and religion (Rosen 1972, 145). Music occupied an important place during the world wars of the twentieth century. “The widespread use and familiarity of popular songs enables them to function effectively as mediums for messages, and the context and conditions, such as the emotional climate during wartime, can be used for further enhancement” (Wells 2004, 2). In the context of the Syrian conflict, I argue that music is utilized by anti-government and pro-government groups as a tool for both protest and propaganda. These groups have deployed music not only to incite people to revolt, but to advertise their political agendas and influence the international community.

SYRIA'S SONGS OF WAR

The mass demonstrations, which took place at the beginning of the conflict, opened many opportunities for cultural expression, especially through art and music. Protest songs, in particular, became an important propaganda tool in mobilising and rallying support. Since the country had been closed to Western journalists even before the war erupted, social media became the primary source of information and communication with the outside world, with videos posted on YouTube and Facebook attracting millions of viewers and generating thousands of comments. A reporter from Syria writing under the pseudonym Mariam Abdullah notes in a newspaper article: “the two sides—[regime supporters and opposition]—seem to compete to see who can hook more listeners emotionally by moving them to tears. . . . Each side seeks

to deploy [its] songs in the psychological war against the other” (2014). The music styles of the songs range from folk-adapted tunes and popular Arabic songs to Western-derived songs, including rap and heavy metal. The songs offer a wide variety of topics, representing, on the one hand, the ideologies and agendas of the groups fighting the government, including the non-jihadist rebels, the Free Syrian Army, the jihadists groups (al-Nusra Front and ISIL), and the Kurdish fighters, and on the other hand, the strategies used by them to get international attention. This tactic uses children to inspire sympathy and rally support by disseminating ideological and political messages through songs posted online. Dozens of videos published on social media platforms feature children participating in mass demonstrations and in some cases leading adults in song; others were recorded in a studio and produced as video clips. Some videos feature children singing songs of fanaticism and bearing arms or grieving over the disintegration of a once stable country. These videos have amassed millions of views and thousands of comments.

METHODS

The data that this chapter was based upon was collected through netnography fieldwork¹¹ conducted over a period of two years from February 2015 until December 2017. Multiple postings of the same songs and the constant shifts in the political and military landscapes in the Syrian conflict made it challenging to gather information about the release dates of the songs, the performers, and the producers. In addition, the violent character of some videos caused them to be removed from YouTube, which necessitated additional research to gather more information. In collaborative interdisciplinary research O’Callaghan et al. (2014, 409) argue that the constantly shifting landscape of the conflict in Syria suggests that it would be naïve to apply standard approaches to the study of online political activism, where “attention is often focused upon relatively static (often mainstream) groupings about which a considerable level of prior knowledge is available”. Similarly, one might ask how “social media and YouTube footage, uploaded by protestors and ‘citizen journalists,’ should be regarded as useful for analysts in getting some clues about the mechanism of mobilization”. Following Leenders’ assertion (2013, 283), I argue that the songs of protest examined here are excellent examples of “Syria’s digitalized stories of revolution” which “remain an incalculable resource if consulted and used carefully”. In what follows I present a textual analysis of a sample of the protest songs performed by children that reflect different political agendas and different strategies used by the militant groups and the forces that support them. Some of these songs were recorded live during the protests, but others were studio recordings.

SYRIAN CHILDREN'S WAR SONGS

I now look at five singers or groups of singers who represent different groups or forces involved in the Syrian conflict and whose performances have affected local and global communities. These songs have been posted multiple times on social media and have amassed millions of views and thousands of comments. Drawing on theories of visual discourse analysis combined with netnography fieldwork, I contend that the messages that the songs display do not reflect the children of Syria's level of understanding and maturity and do not represent them. All the videos feature children singing, either live during protests in battle zones among the fighters or in studios or outdoor settings. The children seem to be enthusiastic about their singing, especially in the live performances, when they are encouraged by adults, yet I contend that the extent to which they understand what they are singing is questionable. The studio-recorded videos show, in addition to the singer or singers, images of injured or dead bodies from the battle zones, especially those of small children crying, screaming or lying dead. The repertoire of songs varies in terms of musical genres (lyrics set to Western-derived tunes versus lyrics adapted to preexisting songs or to traditional folk tunes), types of performance (solo singing versus a group of children singing in unison or in harmony) and gender (mostly boys, but girls have been featured as well). Some songs have instrumental accompaniment, but others are sung unaccompanied. The diversity of the repertoire and the music styles reflects the different political ideas and ideologies among the fighting groups. For instance, fundamentalist Islam forbids the use of musical instruments and considers them un-Islamic. Therefore, the songs performed by the more extremist groups are all unaccompanied. They are not referred to as *aghānī* (pl. of *ughniya*) "songs," but as *anāshīd* (pl. of *nashīd*) "chants". The performers are called *munshidūn* (plural of *munshid*), "chanters or reciters," and not *mughannūn* (pl. of *mughanni*), "singer".

I examine below five songs and highlight the messages that they convey. First, I discuss a group of five girls whose song *Unshūdat Atfāl al-Shām* ("The Chant of the Children¹² of Shām)¹³" was posted multiple times on YouTube and has garnered millions of views. The second song features Omran al-Buqa'i, a male soloist, who on social media is introduced as "the child singer and *munshid* who evokes, through his voice, paintings from his country Syria and the suffering that his country's children and fellow citizens are living".¹⁴ In the third example, I present the girl performer called "Nasmat al-Thawra" (the Breeze of the Revolution), who sang in support of the Free Syrian Army and became an activist and a symbol of the "revolution." Example four presents a group of five boys who also sing in support of the Free Syrian Army.

In the fifth example, I show an example of a child performer from al-Nuṣra Front, which has ties with the fundamentalist group al-Qā'ida in Iraq. I refer to the first two examples by their titles, whereas in the next three examples I use the names of the child-performers or the group.

UNSHŪDAT AṬFĀL AL-SHĀM أنشودة أطفال الشّام

“The Chant of the Children of Shām” [Syria]

This song features five girls, with a soloist named Ilāf al-Jadī'ī standing in the forefront and four other girls behind her, singing the refrain and swinging their bodies to the music.¹⁵ The song has been reposted multiple times on YouTube. The earliest posting I found dates back to June 11, 2012; this posting alone has amassed more than 5 million views. The girls look distressed, with one of them sobbing throughout the performance. The chant is strophic, consisting of one refrain and three verses. The musical accompaniment consists of electronic keyboards and synthesizers. The song opens with the soloist calling for the world's attention to what is happening to them, the “children of Sham,” and how they are surrounded by killing, destruction, and fear and are dominated by terror. The soloist then asks the “tyrant of the people,” (in reference to the Syrian president) what wrong the children did for him to kill them. The soloist addresses the whole world, saying that its silence is killing them. She adds that it is their right to live safely, freely, and with pride. She mentions the children killed in the Ḥoula massacre, which took place on May 25, 2012,¹⁶ and how they were bleeding like waterfalls, and then she asks where their *umma* nation is. By *umma*, the girl means the Islamic nation whose citizens are expected to rise and help their fellow Muslims. In the third verse, the soloist again implores the world for help and asks if they accept small children being killed by the army (in reference to the Syrian army). The lyrics were adapted to a song titled *Al-Hilm al-'Arabi*¹⁷ “The Arab Dream”, which was first produced in 1996 and performed as a collaboration between famous Arab singers from different Arab countries.¹⁸ I contend that using a familiar song that had been aired frequently all over the Arab world and was already embedded in the general public's mind, but recontextualizing it with new lyrics is a strategy designed to increase the impact of the song. By using this strategy, the chant's producers and director aimed to get their message out to a large audience. In addition to the performers, the video includes scenes of injured and deceased children and people protesting against the president, accusing him of killing the children of Syria. One little girl is shown screaming over the singing saying: “You are capable of killing us, of making us suffer, become orphans, but you cannot change

what is in our hearts.” It is noteworthy that both the director and the performers of this song are from Saudi Arabia. The lyrics were written by Saudi poet Sā'id al 'Ojaymi, and the chant was produced in Saudi Arabia and directed by Saudi director Khaled bin Muhammad al Mansour. This shows one tactic used by foreign powers (in this case Saudi Arabia) to transmit, as Nelson (1996) argues, a one-sided message via mass media.

Unshūdat Atfāl al-Shām is a song of protest against the Syrian president and Syrian army. Despite its sad and afflicting character and the fact that it tries to show innocent children's suffering, it conveys strong political messages, such as calling the Syrian president an oppressor (without naming him) and accusing the Syrian army of infanticide. This is a clear example of a song of protest becoming propaganda. The agents behind the song succeeded in getting their message to a large audience. Comments posted by viewers express the sadness conveyed by the girls' singing. Some viewers write that they were crying throughout the song. Other commentators wished the girls—who they thought were Syrians—safety and peace and president Bashar al-Assad death. In a posting of the video published on 24 February 2014, a person named Kasir Muhajir asks God to give victory to the Free Syrian Army.¹⁹ I argue that “The Chant of the Children of Shām” does not serve the children of Syria well. It exploits their images and their voices. The contrast between the nicely dressed girl-performers and the photos of injured and dead bodies displayed in the video is yet another form of misrepresentation. The fact that the song was produced and performed by citizens of Saudi Arabia reveals the interference of the Saudi kingdom in the Syrian crisis. Wagner and Cafiero remark that while Saudi Arabia responded to the uprisings in Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia as a counterrevolutionary actor in the Arab uprisings, it provided financial aid and weapons to anti-Assad militants, as the Saudi government view regime change as an opportunity to deal a major blow to Iran and its Shi'a allies in Iraq and Lebanon.

ABKĪ 'ALA SHĀM IL-HAWA أبكي على شام الهوى

“I Weep Over Shām [Syria] the Beloved”²⁰

In a chant titled *Abkī 'ala Shām il-Hawa* “I weep over Shām the beloved”, a young Syrian boy mourns the death of martyrs, including women and children, and asks for God's help. Here again, the chant contains religious connotations that show solidarity with Muslims, portrayed as being oppressed and unarmed—a characterisation emphasized by the afflicting and emotional character of the lyrics. At the same time, the lyrics curse any oppressor by wishing harm to his hands, which he uses to kill his people, and that the

tears of bereaved mothers and widows will destroy him. The song, called an *unshūda* (chant), mentions the word *umma* “nation,” which refers here to the Islamic nation. The poem is nonstrophic with words in Modern Standard Arabic, unlike *Unshūdat Atfāl al-Shām*, which is in spoken Syrian Arabic.²¹ It was written by Abd al-Muhsin al-Tabtba’i, a Kuwaiti poet, and it was originally performed by Shaykh²² Mshary Rashid al-Afasi, a Kuwaiti preacher and Quran reciter. The chant starts with a short musical introduction on the ‘ūd—a pear-shaped, short-necked, fretless stringed instrument, which accompanies the voice throughout the chant. All the verses are recited in the same musical pattern, with a descending melody in a syllabic style. At the end of the video,²³ the director, a Kuwaiti woman, Nada Abu Sitta, has inserted bloopers from the recording session, showing the child performer being told to make a sad face, but we see that the child cannot keep from smiling, and it took him many attempts to do as instructed. This evidences that children are being taught to give statements and act in ways that do not necessarily reflect their thinking, cognitive level or their emotional and psychological maturities. Although the performer in this song is of Syrian origin, the fact that the song was written, composed, and directed by Kuwaitis reflects once again the involvement of foreign countries in the Syrian conflict.

Abkī ‘ala Shām il-Hawa is a song of protest (*unshūda*) turned into propaganda against the Syrian president and his regime. The lyrics do not explicitly name the president, but they wish death to “the oppressor” who killed innocent people. A single internet posting of the chant has garnered more than 5 million views and around four thousand comments. Most comments attack the Syrian president and the Alawites, while others address Syria and wish her safety and peace.

نَسْمَةُ الثَّوْرَةِ NASMAT AL-THAWRA

Nasmat al-Thawra is a girl (aged ten at the beginning of the Syrian conflict) who for five years became the voice of the rebels in the Free Syrian Army. Her first name, *Nasmat*, translates as “breeze”, while the last name, *al-Thawra* “the revolution”, was given to her, making her “breeze of the revolution.” Her own YouTube channel lists more than eighty videos from street protests or battle zones, where she would be taken to boost the fighters’ morale.²⁴ She often appeared with a boy named Qashush al Qasr who also played an important role in the protests or during interviews. For the purposes of this chapter, I limit my discussion to Nasmat. The beauty of her voice and the charisma of her personality made her a highly sought after performer inside and outside Syria. She is featured on the internet performing in Qatar²⁵ and Doha.²⁶ In her songs, she addresses deceased militants (whom she calls martyrs) by name. In

one song, titled *Ya Yumma*²⁷ (“Oh Mother”) she addresses her mother, telling her that she’s coming to her as a martyr, and asks her to wrap her in a shroud and be happy. She then asks her to forgive her because she has left her (she has died). Nasmāt’s songs consist of lyric adaptation of preexisting folkloric and popular songs that are familiar to Syrians. She always sings unaccompanied by musical instruments. The melodies are embedded in the community’s collective memory—which gives her singing more impact. In a video published on March 23, 2013, she announced that she had decided to wear a hijab²⁸ and that she would continue to support the “revolution” in Syria.²⁹ Most comments on the YouTube posting about her decision congratulated her and asked God to protect her, but some did criticize her.

Nasmāt is a remarkable phenomenon. She supports the FSA, whose main objective, according to Western and Arabic news reports and political analysts, is “to protect peaceful protesters and to initiate military operations against the Assad regime” (Lister 2016). It is ironic to see in such a conservative community, which imposes Islamic rules on women and prohibits them from mingling with males, a girl carried on men’s shoulders singing for the revolution and visiting battlefields with male militants. I argue that Nasmāt is seen by her people as a neutral human being, not as a female. In this case, the barriers that separate men from women and impose gender segregation become blurred. It is Nasmāt’s voice that matters, not her existence as a human being. Living under wartime conditions has made her the voice of her community, but at the same time, it has deprived her of her own identity. In a normal situation, her gender would prevent her from expressing herself, but here it is acceptable for her to risk her life by going to the battlefield areas and to sing in an exclusively male crowd. Her voice becomes a tool, a means to motivate the militants and incite them to keep fighting, and to rally support in her community and in the virtual community. I argue that she is being used to show a moderate image of the fundamentalist group that she represents. Her voice and her songs of protest serve as an example of war propaganda.

FIRQAT BARĀ’IM AL-THAWRA³⁰ فرقة براعم الثورة

“The Band of the Revolution’s Buds”

Among the children featured as performers in a dozen chants is a group of children who sing for the FSA and against the Syrian president and government. They were first presented as *Atfāl min āl Zayn al-Din* (“Kids from Zayn al-Din Family”). Later, they were named *Firqat barā’im al-thawra* (“The Band of the Revolution’s Cubs”). The band consists of five boys, aged somewhere between 4 and 10.³¹ They chant, in both Modern Standard Arabic

and Syrian dialect, unaccompanied and in a recitative-like style. They are featured in many chants wearing military uniforms and standing still while performing. In one video, *Allahu Akbar Hazzit al-A'ādi*³² they are recorded bearing arms and shouting “God is great.” They incite Muslims to hasten to jihad and become martyrs. The song is strophic and all the verses are set to the same melody. The headline in the YouTube video reads: “Terrible. Watch Syria’s Children, the Combatants, convulsing tyrants’ thrones and explaining to the Arabs the Reality of War.” Here again we have an example of songs of protest used for propaganda—which as Ellul argues, provokes action. The boys are calling Muslims everywhere to get up and hasten to jihad. Another chant by the Revolution Cubs is *Jānā al-naṣr min Allah* “Victory Has Come to Us from God,” or “God Has Granted Us Victory.” In the YouTube version, it is performed in front of a helicopter³³. The lyrics attack the groups they claim to be fascists (Russians, Iranians, and the Lebanese party Hezbollah) in addition to the president (whom they call a cad). The Cubs address Syria, saying that they will redeem it with their blood and money. In an interview on The FSA Television channel published on July 15, 2013,³⁴ they state that they have participated in the demonstrations and have recorded chants on different channels so the whole world can hear them. One of them says they are chanting what they are seeing in reality from bombing, displacement, and the destruction of their country. They have remained active throughout the Syrian crisis. Most of their performances have garnered hundreds of thousands of views and thousands of comments on YouTube. In general, the comments praise and encourage them. Some comments curse President al-Assad and accuse him of being a traitor; some, however, reprehend their singing songs of violence and demand that people refrain from using children in such a fashion. The Cubs, in contrast, through their statements to TV channels, support the rebels and express their willingness to take up arms and fight. Here again, I argue that these boys are being exploited through their singing and they are being indoctrinated into fundamentalist ideologies that encourage jihad and martyrdom. These songs of protest again serve as war propaganda.

THE CHILD ABBAS الطفل عباس

In addition to these different chant styles, chants directly calling for action and showing more extremism and fundamentalism are being used. Even the titles of the chants and the commentaries that accompany them are aggressive. The title of one of those chants, (ادلب الطفل عباس ينشد للملا عمر و الشيخ اسامة بن لادن) translates as “*Idlib: The Child Abbas recites for Mullah Omar and Sheikh Usama bin Laden.*”³⁵ The young boy recites with an aggressive and strong voice defying the Alawites, whom he calls *Nusayriyya*, and telling them

that they are ready to slaughter them. The boy goes on to praise Osama bin Laden,³⁶ former leader of al-Qa'ida and Mullah³⁷ Omar³⁸, former leader of the Taliban, describing the former as his leader, whose fearmongering in America he found inspirational. He says with pride, using the plural "we" in discussing the events in which they attacked the commercial towers in America and transformed them into a pile of soil. He responds to the accusations about him being a terrorist, saying that this is an honor to him and that his terrorism is a call from God. We notice here that the chants and the lyrics are more aggressive and thus reflect the more fundamental and extremist agenda of al-Nusra Front, which has ties to the al-Qa'ida group in Iraq. Unlike in the previous examples, the child Abbas is protesting not only against the Syrian president and regime, but also the Alawites (whom he calls Nusayriyya), the Shi'as, and America. In one video, the child-singer is told that he is being criticized for singing songs that emphasize sectarianism. He is then asked whether the chants that he sings after the prayer service on Fridays represent all the inhabitants in his village. He answers confidently "they ask me to chant, so I chant lest I disappoint them. I represent myself and not anyone else. For two years Bashar (the Syrian president) has been killing the children and the Muslims and you want me not to say anything sectarian? My chants are sectarian, and whoever does not like that, can knock his head against the wall or between his feet."³⁹ While the child Abbas proclaims that he is reciting sectarian chants because the president has been killing the children and the Muslims, his lyrics attack America and brag about destroying the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001. It can be argued that the lyrics that Abbas is chanting are above his understanding. Here is another example of children being indoctrinated and exploited through songs of protest turned into propaganda.

CONCLUSION

The five case studies discussed above evidence that different military groups or agents who are involved in the Syrian conflict have attempted, through the use of children singing / chanting, to "influence the emotions, attitudes, [and] opinions" of both local and global audiences, especially Muslims, with ideological and political ideas. They call on the Islamic nation (*umma*) to rise and support their Syrian brethren, who, according to them, are suffering oppression and mistreatment. The pleas for help and the messages transmitted by the children are not necessarily "factual". Images of injured and sometimes even dying children are being disseminated through social media to gain sympathy and support. In the Syrian conflict, the use of children and songs of protest as war propaganda, aims, as Ellul (1973) argues, not to "modify ideas," but to

“provoke action”. The child-performers are calling the Islamic nation to rise and go to jihad and support their Muslim brothers.

Scholars use different terms when talking about children affected by war. In *Children, War, and Propaganda*, Ross Collins uses the term *militarization* in reference to the use of propaganda in the United States during World War II to create a wartime culture for American children. According to Collins, propaganda allowed the authorities to control “what they wanted children to think, what they hoped children would learn, what they intended children to accomplish and what they believed children should not know” (Collins 2011, xv). The same strategy is evidently in use in Syria where children, through protest songs, are being taught what they should believe, and are misrepresented for the sake of advocating war and violence.

NOTES

1. Unlike most news sources and reports that refer to the war in Syria as a civil war, I choose here not to label it as such. I refer in my argument to an article published in the *Washington Post*, on December 14, 2016, by Hanin Ghaddar. In this article, Ghaddar argues that naming the Syrian conflict as a civil war is inaccurate because it absolves the international community of responsibility and allows international terrorist groups to justify their involvement and violence. Accessed June 5, 2017.

2. It is noteworthy that pro-regime songs have also featured children singing songs in support of the Syrian armed forces and praising the president. Since this chapter deals with songs of protest turned into propaganda, I limit my discussion to the songs used by the anti-government groups to protest against the Syrian president and regime and to disseminate different ideologies and political ideas.

3. *Arab Spring* is the term given to the wave of demonstrations and protests that began in Tunisia in December 2010 demanding the resignation of President Zayn al-Abidin Ben Ali and calling for political and social reforms. It quickly spread to other Arab countries, including Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria. Lately, scholars are questioning the validity of the term because what started as a popular demand for political reforms and social justice resulted in more wars and violence and a crack-down on people who dared to speak out (Amnesty International, 2016). For more literature on the Arab Spring and its aftermath, see Gelvin 2012; Jones 2012; Spindel 2011; Tottem 2012.

4. For more information on how the conflict in Syria started, see ABC News 2013; Aljazeera 2017; BBC News 2016; I Am Syria 2015.

5. Contrary to the above-mentioned news sources on the Syrian conflict, others, including Reuters and The Independent, have reported that the government crack-down on the protesters followed attacks against Syrian police that resulted in the killing of many soldiers. According to journalist and writer Neil Clark, “[T]he dominant western narrative says that the conflict was started by Assad after the ‘evil dictator’ clamped down on peaceful protests against his rule in March 2011. The reality is

that peaceful pro-democracy protests were hijacked at a very early stage by those determined to provoke a violent response from the Syrian authorities. In the border city of Daraa, where the conflict effectively began, seven police officers were killed and the Ba'ath Party headquarters and a courthouse were torched." <https://www.rt.com/op-edge/358507-top-10-western-lies-syrian/>.

6. There are two major sects in Islam: the Sunni sect, considered by many the orthodox branch of Islam, making up the majority of practitioners in the world, and the Shi'a concentrated mainly in Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon. The division between these sects is more of a political nature than creedal, as the dispute is over the Prophet Muhammad's successor. While the Shi'as believe that the prophet's successor has to be from the prophet's family, the Sunnis believe that the prophet's successor should not be chosen through hereditary lineage.

7. The Alawite faith is the religion of President Bashar al-Assad. Alawites are found mainly in Syria, where they make up around 10 percent of the population, with other minority groups in Turkey and Lebanon. They are an offshoot of Shi'a Islam; Muslims who revere Ali, the prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law. They have added to their religion aspects of other faiths, including Christianity, and "have a Holy Trinity of their own, comprising Mohammed, Ali, and Salman the Persian, a Companion of the Prophet. They used to call themselves Nusayris, after their founder, Ibn Nusayr. Their practices are socially liberal, with women not covering their head and alcohol consumed" (Spencer 2016).

8. For more information, See "Guide to the Syrian Rebels." <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24403003>.

9. For more information on the Free Syrian Army, See Wagner, Daniel. 2013. "The Dark Side of the Free Syrian Army." *Friends of Syria*. https://friendsofsyria.wordpress.com/2013/02/20/the-dark-side-of-the-free-syrian-army/?fb_source=pubv1; and Harress, Christopher. 2015. "What is the Free Syrian Army?" *International Business Times*. <http://www.ibtimes.com/what-free-syrian-army-russia-targets-cia-trained-rebels-opposed-assad-regime-2122967>.

10. Al-Qa'ida (from an Arabic term that means "the base.") is a broad-based militant Islamist organization founded by Osama Bin Laden in the late 1980s. For more information on Al-Qa'ida, see "Al Qaeda: Islamic Militant Organization." *Britannica*. Accessed June 6, 2017 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/al-Qaeda>.

11. The online sources utilized include YouTube, YouTube channels, such as *Nasmat al Thawra* (نَسْمَةُ الثَّوْرَةِ), websites such as *The Creative Memory of the Syrians' Revolution* (الذاكرة الإبداعية للثورة السورية), *The Revolution of the Free Syrians* (ثورة السوريين الأحرار), and Facebook pages. *Nasmat al Thawra* (نَسْمَةُ الثَّوْرَةِ). YouTube channel. Accessed February 20, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/user/nasmaalrabee/videos?shelf_id=1&view=0&sort=dd; *The Creative Memory of the Syrian's Revolution* (الذاكرة الإبداعية للثورة السورية). Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.creativememory.org/?cat=17>; *The Revolution of the Free Syrians* (ثورة السوريين الأحرار). Accessed March 2, 2017. http://thawrtalsoryienalahrar.blogspot.com/2013/05/blog-post_5036.html.

12. The word *atfāl* translates literally as "infants," but I use (in this context) the word *children*, which may refer to infants, toddlers, and children.

13. In recent history, *al-Shām* refers to Syria, but historically *Bilād al-Shām* “Land on the left hand” that is to the left of the holy sites in Arabia as opposed to Yemen, which is to the right side, encompassed modern Syria, a sliver of southern Turkey, part of northern and western Iraq, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Lebanon. Hence the name ISIL “The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant” translates in Arabic language *Al-Khilāfah al-Islāmiyyah fi al-Iraq wa Bilād al-Shām*.

14. *Shaam Network* accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.shaam.org/revolution-gallery/revo-videos.html>.

15. The earliest posting I found was from June 11, 2012. This posting alone has garnered 5,012,834 views. Accessed September 15, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf8il6Sz4cs&list=RDPf8il6Sz4cs&index=1>.

16. For more information on the Houla massacre, see Tim Anderson 2015.

17. *Al-Hilm al-‘Arabi “The Arab Dream” Operetta*, accessed April 22, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iV83LFsLpjQ>.

18. *Al-Hilm al-‘Arabi “The Arab Dream”* is called an operetta, although it does not follow the Western conventional definition of an operetta, since it does not involve acting, and the subject is rather serious. It featured 22 male and female singers from different Arab countries and was composed by renowned Egyptian composers Hilmi Bakr and Salah al-Sharnubi. It was first produced in 1996 as an awakening call to the dormant Arab nationalism and it was broadcast frequently in 2000, following the onset of the second Palestinian Intifada (uprising).

19. The video was accessed April 22, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SeBuKqCqqmU>.

20. This chant has been published numerous times. One posting published on 11 October 2013, has garnered more than 5 million viewers. Accessed April 22, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eY3zg6RCYks&list=RDeY3zg6RCYks&index=1>.

21. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the official Arabic language and is the same across the Arab world, unlike the Arab dialects that differ from one country to another. It is the language of literature and the media and is taught at schools and universities. Spoken Modern Standard Arabic is used in television programs, official meetings (such as academic and business conferences and seminars), and religious contexts (including sermons and prayers).

22. Shaykh is an Arabic word that refers to three different types of people: a Muslim religious or clergyman, an elder person, and a tribe chief or leader. In this context, it refers to a Muslim clergyman.

23. See minutes 2:54 until 3:20 on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eY3zg6RCYks&list=RDeY3zg6RCYks#t=12>.

24. The following link contains a news report about Nasmat and how she was visiting the militants to sing for them and boost their morale before the battles. In the report she is filmed between minutes 1:13 and 1:28 entering one of the fighters’ strongholds and singing with them. Accessed February 22, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=etmd5rb6stI>.

25. Video Nasmat’s performance in Qatar, accessed February 22, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8NSWElenzWU>.

26. Video of Nasmat's performance in Doha, accessed February 22, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E46kVOy4E_s&spfreload=10.

27. The song *Ya Yumma* "Oh Mother" accessed February 22, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IB2fO9Bc_rA.

28. The *hijab* (an Arabic word) is a "cover." Muslim women wear the *hijab* for various reasons. Some believe that God has instructed them to wear it as a means of fulfilling his commandment for modesty. For them, wearing it is a personal choice, made after puberty. Other women wear it as a means of visibly expressing their Muslim identity.

29. The following video contains Nasmat's decision to wear the *hijab*. Accessed February 22, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRvFgqY_SeA.

30. The literal translation of the name *Firqat Barā'im al-Thawra* is "The Band of the Revolution's Buds." However, on YouTube, the English name of the band is "The Revolution Cubs Band."

31. This is my estimate since I was unable to find the accurate ages of the kids.

32. Video of the chant *Allahu Akbar Hazzit al-A'adi* accessed April 22, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZzNQAAY-ro>.

33. Video of the chant *Jānā al-naṣr min Allah* "Victory Has Come to Us from God". Accessed April 22, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsTx9BSTQL0&spfreload=10>.

34. Interview with *Firqat barā'im al-thawra*. Accessed April 22, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTIgItaFpbg>.

35. The chant can be retrieved in a posting from February 9, 2013. Accessed April 25, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLjNtoWjebg>. The chant has been reposted multiple times garnering hundreds of thousands of views.

36. Osama bin Laden was the founder of al-Qa'ida, the organization responsible for the September 11 attacks on the United States and other mass-casualty attacks worldwide. On May 2, 2011, President Barack Obama announced that bin Laden had been killed in a terrorist compound in Pakistan. For more information on bin Laden, see "The Free Syrian Army a Decentralized Insurgent Brand." *Brookings*. Accessed June 10, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-free-syrian-army-a-decentralized-insurgent-brand/>.

37. The term *mullah* is primarily understood in the Muslim world as a title for a religious man educated in Islamic theology and sacred law.

38. *Mullah Omar* (or *Mohammad Omar*) was an Afghan militant and leader of Taliban, an ultraconservative political and religious faction that emerged in Afghanistan in the 1990s following the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the collapse of Afghanistan's communist regime. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed June 10, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Taliban>.

39. Video featuring the child Abbas. Accessed June 10, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK7xQR3CELY>.

Part VII

**PROTESTING BODIES
AND EMBODIMENT**

Chapter 23

“Bread and Roses”

A Song of Social Protest or Hollowed Out Resistance?

Gwen Moore

James Oppenheim’s 1911 poem “Bread and Roses”¹ was set to music most famously by Mimi Baez Fariña, sister of the iconic American folk singer Joan Baez, and was first sung by Judy Collins in 1976. This version has been recorded by various artists including Judy Collins, Ani DiFranco and Utah Phillips while artists such as John Denver and Josh Lucker have set the poem to different melodies. Written and published in *The American Magazine* in 1911, the poem is most closely associated with the 1912 Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike in which 25,000 workers (mostly immigrants, women and children) united in protest against lower wages and poor working conditions (Ross 2013). Scholarly work employing the phrase “Bread and Roses” can be found across numerous academic papers in studies of labour, gender, immigration. Curiously, scant research is available on the song within existing studies on protest song or from a musicological or socio-musical perspective, thus creating fertile ground for inquiry here.

Taking “Bread and Roses” as a socio-musical case study of protest song, this chapter examines the ways in which the meaning ascribed to this protest song changes from one social group to another, asking whether the appropriation of the song for different purposes dilutes this meaning of protest as found in the original manifestations of the song. The chapter considers the relevance of Adornian theory as it applies to an analysis of protest song and it proposes that an application of Green’s (1988; 2008) theory of musical meaning to a number of appropriations of “Bread and Roses” can shed new light on the meaning of social protest within protest songs.

Social protest is understood here as expressing opposition to hegemony in the context of labour, feminist and LGBT power relations. As Allan Moore (2013) explains, the definition of a protest and its relationship to song depends on a number of factors. Any kind of protest entails an expression of

opposition to a situation or to hegemonic norms by particular social groups or actors. In critiquing the difference proffered by Laing (cited in Street 2012) between a protest song and a song of resistance—the former specifying opposition to an enemy or particular issue where the latter may not—Allan Moore argues that the internal sonic relations and the articulation of these play a key role in the expression and reception of a song as protest.

This chapter builds upon Allan Moore's (2013) view that the sonic relations and the various appropriations of the song play a key role in the efficacy of "Bread and Roses" as a song of social protest. In considering an interdisciplinary approach, combining musicological and sociological analysis, and supported by theories of Adorno (1973) and Green (1988), I argue that the meaning of social protest in "Bread and Roses" can be hollowed out or bolstered depending on three distinct yet connected aspects of engagement with the song: first, the text and historical context; second, the articulation and reception of the musical materials when appropriated by female and male vocalists; and third, the retention of the song's protest heritage when performed through female collective singing, along with the emotions associated with such an experience.

I begin by examining the historical origins of "Bread and Roses" within the context of the social protest movement on labour rights. This is followed by a musical analysis of the lyrics and score of the song. I then consider Adorno's rebuttal of protest song, his perspectives on mass production and the culture industry and how his perspectives on the musical materials as meaning in and of themselves fall short in questioning the potential power of songs to drive social protest across cultural, social and political divides. This leads to a discussion of DeNora's (2002) work on physiological responses to music and to Green's (1988) theory of musical meaning which I apply to "Bread and Roses" in order to explain how intersonic and delineated musical meanings can dilute or bolster resistance in terms of gender and power associated with social protest movements. Shining an original socio-musical lens on this protest song as a case in point enables an examination of the efficacy of the meaning of protest when the song is re-appropriated by male singers and in collective group performance contexts. In sum, I argue that the power of a protest song lies not only within the lyrics and score, or in the production and reception of the song as artefact; rather, it is in the collective singing of the protest song that a strong unity of purpose is fostered. This unity of purpose relates closely to the historical origins of the text to which I now turn.

BREAD AND ROSES AND THE LAWRENCE TEXTILE STRIKE

The Lawrence Textile strike began on 11 January 1912, when a group of women weavers abandoned their posts in the Everett Mill to protest against a

reduction in pay despite reported profits for the owner of the company (Robbins 2012). Thousands followed the women in solidarity and the walkout continued for nine weeks before a confrontation in the courtroom. Employees and their families were already experiencing poor living and working conditions. Recruiting wagons called slavers sought out women and children who could be paid half the wages that were given to men, describing this as a 'family industry'. It is also reported that one in every three workers at the mill died before the age of twenty-five (Robbins 2012).

Most significant at the time was the symbolic nature of the wage cut which equated to the cost of three loaves of bread or \$0.32. Whether the political slogan "Bread and Roses" actually originated with this particular strike has been questioned by some (Sider 1996). Others have highlighted the significance of the slogan in representing the prevailing political and ideological concerns at the time (Buhle 1996). Notwithstanding such uncertainties about the slogan, Oppenheim's poem was written at the time of the Labour movement in Chicago and the Lawrence Textile Strike in Massachusetts and so the slogan "Bread and Roses" became associated with this particular strike (Robbins 2012).

Oppenheim's contribution in 1911 is significant as the turn of the twentieth century saw the establishment of unions such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or the Wobblies) which sought to represent all workers in the struggle against the hegemony of the wealthy employers (Bierman 2013). More importantly, music was embedded within the structure of IWW meetings, as a front-line device for rousing protests, and led to the publication of the union's *Little Red Songbook* in 1909 (Bierman 2013). Regardless of the many uses of the slogan in numerous publications, a semiotic analysis may prove useful here in the denotation, connotation and myth (Barthes 1968; 1972) behind "Bread and Roses". At a basic level, bread denotes food while roses represent flowers. Bread connotes or symbolises sustenance, nourishment and basic human needs. Roses on the other hand, signify more than basic survival. The image and scent of roses suggest beauty, love, romance and femininity. Another connotation might be that of binary opposite classes; bread symbolising the working class and roses symbolising the bourgeoisie. Taking this notion further, the basic provision of bread points to the right to have fundamental human needs met while roses symbolise the right to dignity, art and love. Combined, the importance of the right to work and nourishment and the right to develop and flourish as human beings are underscored in the title of the song. The suggestion then is that the bourgeoisie (the ruling class of factory owners), in the historical context of the Lawrence Textile Strike, denied the working class (mostly women) not only money but also time to indulge in beauty, art and love.

Interestingly, most historical accounts ignored the role of gender in the labour movement associated with the Lawrence Textile strike until Cameron's 1995 analysis of this strike in which she highlights the unique relationships

and solidarity built between women of different ethnicities in the Lawrence textile factory. Women occupied a crucial space as producers, consumers and primary carers in households and communities. Women mobilised within and across these networks and were at the heart of the singing and parading that characterised the “Bread and Roses” strike. Surrounded by enemies, with death a very real possibility, the Lawrence strikers, most of whom were women, sang to foster strength, courage and solidarity. Thus, gender was crucial in shaping the direction and interconnectedness of the strike (Cameron 1995). Moreover, the underlying gender dimension of the song “Bread and Roses” becomes particularly pertinent later when I discuss male ‘appropriations’ of the song.

The most important of the IWW’s contributions at this strike is recorded as an incessant emphasis on solidarity (IWW). Respect for the language and culture of each nationality in the group was key to unity of purpose. The vast majority of strikers (in some accounts 25,000) were immigrants who spoke dozens of languages among themselves yet united in communal protest song, despite linguistic differences (Ross 2013). While others have argued that accounts are unclear as to what the strikers actually sang (Sider 1996), and the fact that the *Little Red Songbook* contained many other protest songs (Bierman 2013), the strike represents a poignant moment of social protest in the history of the labour movement which inspired writers and artists decades later to engage in protest poetry/song.

Scholarly work highlights the propensity of protest songs to promote unity among like-minded members of similar groups (Denisoff 1983; Stewart et al. 1989; Knupp 1981; Sellnow 1999) thus functioning mostly as ‘in-group’ messages (Knupp 1981, 388). As Sellnow (1999, 67) articulates, songs of social protest may “prove to be effective in terms of reinforcing the beliefs already held by movement members and sympathizers”. However, Rodnitsky highlights Arlo Guthrie’s observation that “You don’t accomplish very much singing protest songs to people who agree with you” (*Newsweek* 1966, cited in Rodnitsky, 2006, 10). The argument could be made, therefore, that the appropriation of protest songs for affirming ‘in-group’ messages may achieve very little beyond the group itself. Furthermore, if the ‘group’ comprises producers and consumers of popular protest songs such as “Bread and Roses” primarily for commercial gain, it could be argued that songs of protest achieve nothing more than hollowed out resistance? Such a view is held by Adorno whose argument requires further examination.

A SOCIO-MUSICAL LENS: ADORNO ON PROTEST MUSIC

In his work *Negative Dialectics*, German critic and philosopher Theodor Adorno (1973) argued that all cultural objects, including songs, reflect the

society in which they are created. Great works of art express the positive and negative realities of the social totality as a consequence of the dialectical relationship between the parts of the cultural work and its whole (Adorno 1990). In other words, the structure of ‘serious’ (by which Adorno mean, Western Art) music demands that the listener understands the ways in which the various elements of a work are related to the piece as a whole. For Adorno, popular music with its predictable structures and repetitive features represented the social control inherent in capitalist societies. From his perspective, the uncritical consumption of music by people not only reflected a quasi “false consciousness” but also that the massification of the culture industry created unintelligent listeners or what Adorno termed a “regression of listening” (1991).

Adorno’s emphasis on the analysis of the musical materials as a means of explaining social relations was based on his assumptions of listeners’ consciousness. He was particularly dismissive of sociological research on people’s engagement with or behaviour towards music, because in his view, the majority of people were not equipped with the musical terms or analytical skills to explain their experiences (Adorno 1976). For Adorno, the culture industry conveys false images and notions to the masses and in so doing manipulates thoughts, experiences and needs (Adorno 2001). In such a reading, genres such as jazz or pop create a form of escapism whereby capitalist ideals and structures are subliminally transmitted vis-à-vis uncritical listeners. While not documented in any of his scholarly works, his views of protest music are clearly articulated in a television interview, where Adorno vehemently decries protest music thus:

I believe, in fact, that attempts to bring political protest together with “popular music”—that is, with entertainment music—are for the following reason doomed from the start. The entire sphere of popular music, even there where it dresses itself up in modernist guise, is to such a degree inseparable from past temperament, from consumption...that attempts to outfit it with a new function remain entirely superficial... And I have to say that when somebody sets himself up, and for whatever reason sings maudlin music about Vietnam being unbearable, I find that really it is this song that is in fact unbearable, in that by taking the horrendous and making it somehow consumable, it ends up wringing something like consumption-qualities out of it. (Ramirez 2010).

However, as Green (1988; 2008) and DeNora (2003) have observed, without actually asking people what effects music may have on them, Adorno blatantly ignored the possibility that music can impact collective musical consciousness. Unsurprisingly, Adorno’s assertions have been widely criticised as elitist because his analyses were restricted to three centuries of Western art music. A considerable number of music sociologists (Martin 1998; Middleton 1990; Green 1988; *inter alia*) have dismissed Adorno’s belief that music

“presents social problems through its own material and according to its own formal laws” (Adorno 1978, 130). Adorno appears to imply that social meanings reside in hidden codes within the musical materials themselves. While the musical materials inevitably enable interpretations of meaning from the various appropriations of “Bread and Roses”, in isolation, they fall short in explaining people’s ability to make meaning collectively in protest song. Value-laden statements such as “popular music is objectively untrue and helps to maintain the consciousness of those exposed to it’ (Adorno 1976, 37-8) illustrate the extent to which Adorno does not qualify the assertion with specific examples of how music as a temporal art might operate within and across time and space.

In critically interrogating Adorno’s views, Green (2008, 16) argues that people are not mere passive recipients of cultural messages and social structures, but rather that they “act to create and re-create society, its institutions, its ideology and its music, and their creations act back upon and structure their consciousness and actions”. Thus, people are active agents not only in the production and consumption of music but also in musical participation, an agentive site for resistance and social protest. While it can be agreed that certain songs tend to have personal resonance with our experiences (DeNora 2003), understanding this from music’s textual properties alone is insufficient (Green 1988; 2008). As DeNora (2000, 74, 107) points out, music is “a material that actors use to elaborate, to fill out and fill in, to themselves and to others, modes of aesthetic agency...a resource for producing and recalling emotional states”. So how does “Bread and Roses” give rise to modes of action or feeling when performed individually or as part of a collective?

DIALECTICAL MUSICAL MEANING

In her theory of musical meaning, Green (1988; 2008) proposes a dialectic of intersonic and delineated meanings that creates affirming or aggravating experiences for the listener. Inter-sonic meaning is found in the musical materials, i.e. the melody, the structure, harmony of a piece or song, and will give rise to aural expectations by making the listener wait, be carried forward or reminded of musical ideas exposed at the outset. An experience with music is temporal; in other words, consciousness mediates music through time and space (Green 2008). However, Green continues, the inter-sonic qualities of the musical materials only account for half of the experience, especially in the case of a listener. What is neglected in Adorno’s arguments (see also Meyer 1953) and highlighted so well by Green (1988; 2008) is music’s meaning as historically, socially constructed and collectively defined. When we listen

to music, we assimilate the sound within the context of the meanings within our social world. Thus, musical experiences are intrinsically bound with the social world, relationships with family or friends, with memories of times/places. Martin (1998, 275) suggests that "people tend to remain loyal to the music which involved them in their formative years" because particular genres, he argues, "...offer, above all, a sense of who you are and where you belong".

Other musicologists and social theorists (Blumer 1969; Elliott 1995; Small 1998; Shepherd 1991) have also argued that musical meaning is socially constructed, but what Green (1988; 2008) contributes is a theory of *how* the meanings we ascribe to or associate with musical styles and their intersonic materials are not only mutually tied to each other, but also in turn profoundly influence our musical experiences. Music communicates imagery, associations, memories and so on but these are subjectively delineated from our social world experiences and work to affirm or aggravate our musical experiences (Green 1988; 2008). Thus, when we experience both intersonic and delineated meanings simultaneously our experience is that of affirmation; but when both do not accord with our prior musical experiences and the delineated social meaning ascribed to the musical style, we experience aggravation.² The argument that musical meaning is not only derived from the musical materials or the social context but also from associated experiences may be applied to a discussion of "Bread and Roses", especially in terms of the meaning of social protest in various performances/appropriations of the song.

CONSIDERING 'BREAD AND ROSES' THROUGH A MUSICOLOGICAL PRISM

An in-depth musical analysis of "Bread and Roses" first requires an examination of the lyrics and musical score in order to understand the social context in which they were conceived (Frith 1998), and to ascertain the extent of the power of the nondiscursive emotional message: "when words and music come together in song, music swallows words... song is not a compromise between poetry and music" (Langer 1953, 152–53). As Dillane et al. (2017, 49) posit, "layers of meaning and feeling are created through the interconnectedness of text, context, sound and embodied performance". Therefore, while I first explicate the significance of the lyrics as written by Oppenheim, the musical analysis considers how the intersection between lyrics, melody and harmony can alter the meaning when re-appropriated by male singers and more importantly, how they operate together as a unifying force for expressing social protest most meaningfully through collective singing.

The poem has four verses with four stanzas in AABB form. From the beginning of the poem/lyrics through to the end, the listener is transported through a series of images, values and emotions of protest, women's identities as workers and nurturers, and a sense of disempowerment/empowerment. It is a reminder that women have long sought to participate in and enjoy all that life has to offer, refusing to be confined to a separate sphere. These lyrics still resonate, reflecting challenges facing society and families in the twenty-first century. The poem opens with an image of grey, dark spaces that are "touched" by hope, metaphorically represented by the radiance of a "sudden sun" and an awakening of the people who "hear us singing, Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses".

As we go marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill-lofts grey
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing, "Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses."
(Oppenheim 1911)

An acknowledgement of the women's leading role in challenging power within this protest is referenced in verse two of the song where the women challenge power in their "battle, too, for men". The concept of life cycle and the importance of women's dual roles in giving birth to the men and nurturing while also working to earn money illustrate the struggle to provide food and love, culminating in a demand for both bread and roses.

As we go marching, marching, we battle, too, for men
For they are women's children and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us Bread, but give us Roses!
(Oppenheim 1911)

Previous generations of women are recognised in verse three where reference is made to bread and survival. While it is clear throughout the song what 'Bread' represents, and 'Roses' would appear to indicate love and beauty, the first mention of art is made at this point, "Small art and love and beauty", as something yearned for yet denied in "their drudging spirits".³

As we go marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient song of Bread
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew
Yes, it is bread we fight for but we fight for roses, too.
(Oppenheim 1911)

In verse four the call to protest resounds; a call for equal rights and access to the good things in life. Emphasis is placed on the bringing of "Greater Days" in "the rising of the women". The opposition to the arduous, laborious nature of over-work is expressed and every factory owner is told these must be "no more the drudge and idler ten that toil where one reposes". There is a call for an equal share of food, art, beauty and love in "the sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses!"

As we go marching, marching, we bring the greater days
 The rising of the women means the rising of the race
 No more the drudge and idler, ten that toil where one reposes
 But the sharing of life's glories, Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses!
 (Oppenheim, 1911)

A transcription of the melody (see figure. 23.1 generated by the author from a piano score of the song by Mimi Fariña⁴ Bread & Roses Presents), reveals a number of ways in which the rhythm, tempo and melody of the song come to represent strength, resilience and hope. The song comprises four verses containing four stanzas in an AABB format. Set in the style of an anthem,

Bread and Roses

Words by
 James Oppenheim

Music by
 Mimi Fariña

Slow marching tempo
 Tacet

As we go march-ing, march-ing in the beau-ty of the day, a
 5 mil-lion dark-ened kitch-ens, a thou-sand mill lofts gray, are touched with all the
 10 ra-diance, that a sud-den sun dis-clos-es, for the peo-ple hear us
 14 sing-ing: "Bread and ros-es! Bread and ros-es!"

Figure 23.1 Bread and Roses Transcription by G. Moore. Permission granted by Bread & Roses Presents, www.breadandroses.org.

an upbeat emphasis drives the lyrics “As we go marching marching” in each verse. Set in simple time, the rhythm of the song moves mostly in a marching style with occasional dotted notes for emphasis, evoking the resolute sense of marching in protest.

The song is strophic in structure with melodic binary form AABB reflecting the binary form within the poem. Although the keys of those who have sung the song differ, it is presented here in its original key in order to illustrate the range and the melodic contour of the song.

Musically, Fariña’s composition offers predictable patterns with regard to the rhythmic structure, phrasing, melodic contour and harmony. The extensive use of step-wise movement in the melody coupled with the walking rhythmic movement reinforces a declamatory articulation and forward moving sense. The success of this declamatory feel is also due to the very accessible musical elements and structure whereby even the most reluctant singer could readily participate in song; these include the consonant triads⁵, relatively slow chord changes with predictable imperfect cadences, and a return to the tonic and the end of each verse. This predictable musical structure creates the opportunity for listeners/performers/protesters to join, thereby allowing them to become “active participants in the persuasive process” (Stewart et al. 1994, 204). These music patterns continue even as the lyrics shift to images of tragedy and the “unnumbered women dead”. The persuasiveness of the song, then, lies in the intensity of its optimistic, determined patterns thereby making the overall argument credible (Irvine and Kirkpatrick 1972).

Singer Judy Collins recorded the song in 1976 on her album entitled “Bread and Roses” (Elektra 1976). It is claimed that the inspiration for the song originated after the death of the husband of Mimi Fariña, Joan Baez’s younger sister, who had started a nonprofit organization in San Francisco called the Bread & Roses Foundation in 1974, to provide free entertainment for people in homes, jails and hospitals (Bread and Roses 2012). Collins recorded it with a choir in a church in New York – an important factor to which I shall return later. In both performances of the song, by Judy Collins and by Joan Baez and Mimi Fariña (TheTollundwoman 2010), their soprano voices give the song a rich and shrill timbre, affording clarity to the song’s lyrics. In these renditions, the ensuing verses gradually become vocally harmonised by a choir of female voices only, adding depth to the song’s texture, while in Judy Collin’s version, a snare’s ostinato underscores the ‘marching’ aspect of the lyrics. Hearing women’s voices in a protest song associated with the Lawrence Textile Strike would seem to resonate with the historical origins of the song and its association with the Labour movement. For example, it has been argued that music as sung by Joan Baez was able to represent ‘the intersection between the lives of people and the history of their society’ (Jager 2010, 23). Thus, the historical and social context can be seen as an integral part of

Joan Baez's activism and music. In her autobiography, Baez (2010, 29) states that she put "her most famous and most important songs (and performances of the same) into a specific cultural and protest context which transformed her artistic work into the continuing tenor of a unified political message". Not content with simply singing protest songs, Baez actively protested against racism, travelled to Vietnam and was imprisoned for her activism. Rosenberg (2013, 179) notes how Baez saw music and protest as mutually reinforcing when she said "politics would be very unrealistic in the streets unless it involves music". This statement would seem to resonate with Green's (1988) theory of delineated meaning, whereby when various actors engage with music in context, connections can be drawn between musical and social structures revealing how particular social relations such as gender and class are legitimised and reproduced. Thus, the delineated meaning of a song of social protest is critical for its efficacy in inspiring a call to action. Applying Green's theory of musical meaning to what I see as appropriations of 'Bread and Roses' by male popular artists, I argue that these performances fall short in communicating the full meaning of social protest in relation to the song.

Appropriation has been defined as the means by which something associated with or belonging to another is used to further one's own agenda (Shugart 1997). Lwanda (2003, 120) defines appropriation as "the wholesale or part acquisition of, the copying of, the mimicking of or the adoption, and adaptation, by males of female musical lyrics, melodies and patterns". While Lwanda's (2003) study refers specifically to male appropriation of the music of women in Malawi and Southern Africa, the composition and arrangements of 'Bread and Roses' in focus here may benefit from a closer examination of female to male appropriation whereby the appropriation favours the more powerful gender while concomitantly ignoring the feminist resistance within the text. "Bread and Roses" as set to music by male artists John Denver (1988) and Josh Lucker (2017) appears to alter and contradict the musical meaning of the song as one of social protest through the intersonic materials (melody, tempo) and the sex of the singers (delineated).

In John Denver's version, there is a newly composed melody, which features the same metre, upbeat and tempo as Fariña's, but with a relatively static melody, which returns to the tonic on all but one stanza of each verse. The immediate entry of harmonies, accompanying uilleann pipes, and other instruments seem to obscure the lyrics and textual meaning of the song. Denver alters the lyrics of "Our lives shall not be sweated" to "Our lives shall not be sweetened" and he omits the third stanza of the original text. This treatment of the lyrics, which may have been for personal, musical or song duration reasons, belies the historical meaning of social protest and feminist resistance within the original text of the poem and the song as written by Farina. Furthermore, the intersonic relations as outlined above coupled with the delineation

of Denver's audibly male vocal appear to jar with the meaning of the inherently feminist lyrics (notwithstanding that men may be feminists).

Describing himself as a "Labor folk singer, socialist, and militant" (Lucker 2017), Josh Lucker's composition features an extremely upbeat, forte, and fast-strumming guitar that leads into another new melody. Lucker alters the strongly pointed female-oriented lyrics in verse two from "we battle too for men for they are women's children and we mother them again" to "we battle too for men, for they are in this struggle and together we can win". This re-appropriation of the text could be interpreted as a practical solution that Lucker came up with in realising that he couldn't "mother" as a male, yet this re-appropriation of the text omits any reference to women, and thus the essence of historical, feminist meaning within the text is lost.

It is hard to reconcile how both male singers can convey the female, embodied resistance associated with the origins of the song. The delineation of the male voice in a song of female resistance seems at once inappropriate and misappropriated. I am not suggesting that men should not or cannot sing feminist lyrics or convey feminist ideals. It should also be remembered that the original poem was written by a man (albeit inspired by a woman). However, because this chapter focuses on the intersonic and delineated meaning of the text as protest song and not protest poetry, the sonic materials with their upbeat, busy arrangements are also delineated by the gender of the artist. In addition, the re-appropriation of the text falls short in communicating the meaning of social protest at the heart of the original poem. Thus, the depth of social protest meaning the song achieves, through the female voices expressing feminist concerns, is hollowed out in the recordings and re-appropriations of the text by the aforementioned male artists.

Taking Green's (1988; 2008) theory further, merely listening to a protest song may not fully accomplish the goal of arousing calls to protest action since the musical meaning resides not simply in the song's materials (intersonic) but in what social group, context, culture that the song appears to represent (delineated). 'Musicking' as a social act or event is simultaneously embodied, and is replete with emotion (Small 1998). From an ethnomusicological perspective, music creates an "environment of feeling" that combines the social with the personal (Coplan 1991, 45). Schusterman (2008) asserts that the body and associated emotional responses are vital in any discussion on meaning making. More pertinently, suggestions of a "vocal anthropology" invite a consideration of the collective voice as "the material embodiment of social ideology and experience" (Feld et al. 2004, 332). Seen in this light, musicking in protest is a practice within and across social groups that can simultaneously engage aesthetics, emotions, and the body. It is to this idea of social group consciousness as aroused through collective singing that I now wish to turn.

COLLECTIVE SINGING

Many studies document the numerous effects of communal singing in arousing excitement and energy of mutually connected social groups (Finnegan 2003; Goodwin and Pfaff 2011) while others describe the power of collective singing in forging mutual determination (Young 1996; Morris 1984) and opposition or protest (Lindsey 1994). Through its stimulation of the autonomic nervous system, music seems to elicit a wide range of emotions (Juslin and Sloboda 2010). In turn, emotional responses induce physical responses, such as changes in dopamine, serotonin, cortisol, endorphin and oxytocin levels (Van Eck et al. 1996). Fields such as music therapy and music medicine have examined the role that collective singing plays in therapeutic contexts (Delaney 2015), while studies in music psychology (DeNora 2000; Dibben 2006) highlight the effect music has on human behaviour in everyday contexts such as engaging in aerobics and or shopping.

In relation to vocal music, according to Bruscia (1987), the human voice is unique in its ability to express power, needs and emotions. Recent research has shown not only that respiration and heart rate can synchronise within a group when singing as part of a choir, but also that synchronisation is higher when singing in unison (Muller and Lindenberger 2011). Thus, it can be argued that physical and emotional responses are undeniable when we consider the act of singing and the act of collective singing within a group unified in social protest. To this end, I now consider the role of collective singing of the song “Bread and Roses” in the movie *Pride* (2014), and from my own personal experience.

The collective singing of “Bread and Roses” in the dramatisation of the movie *Pride* also exhibits what could be described as the palpable nature of shared emotion and endeavour. Based on a true story, *Pride* is set during the time of the UK Miners Strike of 1984–1985 where Mark Ashton of the London chapter of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) began a fundraising campaign to support families affected by the strike and closure of the mines. The National Union of Mineworkers was hesitant to engage with the support offered by the LGSM group due to prejudicial concerns about being associated with homosexuals. As a consequence, the LGSM group brought their monies directly to the small mining village of Onllwyn in Wales which resulted in strong alliances being forged.

At a poignant moment in the movie where there is obvious disconnect between the miners and the LGSM group, the actor playing the role of Mark Ashton explains the similarities within which their social groups are ostracised and calls them to unify in their struggle. At that moment, a woman begins to sing “Bread and Roses” a capella (unaccompanied). Following the iteration of the first verse, one by one, the people present begin to join in

singing the song, demonstrating solidarity and unity. This moment in the film is particularly moving and though one could argue that the pre-orchestrated, dramatic direction operates on a profound moment within the drama, the moment is nonetheless poignant. This is not simply due to the relevance of the song at that moment in time, or indeed due to listening to the song itself, it is also due to the social and historical context and the gradual collectiveness in singing that draws each person (regardless of background or sexuality) closer together in shared values and goals. It is one thing to point to the efficacy of collective singing of a protest song from what could be described as a clichéd, successful movie; it is quite another to actually experience being part of a group collectively singing in protest. I share the following from my own personal experience, using an autoethnographic method (Denzin 2014) to speak to the efficacy of this moment.

The autoethnographic method places the self (I) within a particular social context of performance experience whereby expressions of protest song were dominated by male vocalists. On April 9, 2014, local artists and singer-songwriters were invited to perform in Dolan's Warehouse, Limerick City, in the southwest of Ireland, as part of the Limerick Spring Festival of Politics and Ideas. Entitled 'The Revolution will not be Spotted⁶', playing on the idea of the Revolution will be not be Televised', the event was organised in protest at the objectification and commodification of artists within the music industry. However, it was also a key event sandwiched in between political debates organised by the Limerick Spring Festival. Most importantly, the event requested that singers sing only protest songs. Apart from singing my own rendition of Sheryl Crow's "Redemption Day" (1996) in protest at the war in Syria, I was part of a group of female singers who came together to consider feminist articulations of protest through song. We chose two songs to perform on the night and came together on four separate occasions to rehearse. The two songs were "Turn me 'round" and "Bread and Roses", both which had been sung by Joan Baez.

In rehearsals, we took turns to lead in the warming up of voices and collectively arranged and harmonised both songs. The process of forming the female group for that occasion only is traced in the "Bread and Roses" private Facebook group that we established for communication and music sharing purposes. It was the first time that I had sung this particular song, and while I had previously been an avid listener of the music of Joan Baez, I had never encountered this particular song. The song itself did not appeal much to me on my initial hearing, with its plodding rhythms and upbeat but simplistic melody. On reflection, merely listening to the song had me inclined to dismiss any potential power within the song for expressing resistance of any kind on foot of its seemingly banal musical features and anthem-esque qualities. However, my assumptions were unfounded.

On the night of the performance, the collective singing of "Bread and Roses" by a group of like-minded women in a concert which was dominated by music written and performed by men, left me with an indelible sense of empowerment. Indeed, it forced me to reconsider my assumptions about the power of protest music. The sense of anticipation from the group and the shared values and desire to communicate unity as a female collective in protest at neoliberal, globalist political agendas was powerful and palpable.

Applying Green's (1988) theory of musical meaning to the original purpose of the song, it would seem that the intersonic meaning (musical materials/elements) and the delineated meaning (social, historical and cultural aspects) are equally important in order for the song to be truly affective. As I have argued, the simplicity of the melodic and harmonic framework of the song not only bring the lyrics to the fore, but also make the song accessible and memorable for the purpose of joining in. The associated social, historical and cultural context of the song itself is vital, but it is also highly subjective. The initial responses I had to the song were akin to Adorno's in that I took an initial dislike to it because of its simplistic form, and also because I don't particularly like folk music in general. Such delineations were a consequence of enculturation at university where the 'superiority' of classical music was inculcated vis-à-vis the curriculum, through ideological means (Apple 1979), through control (Bernstein 1996), through the idea of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) and through the overemphasised notion of music as beautiful, universal, and an object (Hanslick 1891; Cooke 1959) reflecting truth in society (Adorno 2001). However, through the process of collectively singing the protest song in a new social context, the delineations I previously had were completely altered. I did not sense 'aggravation'. In fact, in singing the song with a group of like-minded feminists, I felt a sense of 'affirmation' (Green 1988; 2008). Through an autoethnographic lens, the experience of this performance and unity of purpose was, for me, an embodied performative experience of celebration and protest. As Everhart (2014) acknowledges the power of the song "We Shall Overcome" to "communicate emotions of confidence" and the ability to "convince individuals of becoming part of a social movement" (Everhart 2014, 274), so too does "Bread and Roses". On reflecting on the power of music in her memoir, Baez (1987, 339) notes, "Every word of the *songs* was once again alive and vital, and nothing mattered except for that moment of song and union".

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored Adorno's supposition of negative dialectics followed by an application of Green's theory of musical meaning to the song

“Bread and Roses” as a socio-musical case study of protest song. The historical and socio-cultural origins of the context of social protest inherent in the poem and the song are inseparable from the meaning one draws from listening to or indeed performing the song. While the musical materials inevitably enable us to interpret meaning from the various appropriations of “Bread and Roses”, in isolation, they fall short in explaining our ability to make meaning collectively of protest song.

What “Bread and Roses” does, in terms of its role as a song of social protest, is entirely dependent on the ways in which the music is heard, performed and perceived or, in other words, how its meanings are ‘delineated’. As DeNora (2003, 57) states, “music is active... as and when its perception is acted upon and this circularity is precisely the topic for socio-musical research into music’s power. Thus, music is much more than a structural ‘reflection’ of the social”. For music sociologists and music theorists, attention to *practice* is vital in any consideration of musical textual ‘objects’. The intersonic and delineated meanings of the music must be considered for music/song is an event, (DeNora 2003), and its relations (Green 1988) and uses are central to understanding its power.

Oppenheim’s poem is about women and was inspired by a feminist. It was appropriated by female singers during a time when folk protest music was well established (Rodnitsky 2006) and can be seen as a reflection of social protest action on the part of Fariña and Baez who themselves actively participated in protest movements. The song speaks to the abuse of power by the wealthy over workers a century ago and still holds currency today. We know that women workers continue to bear a particular burden of exploitation in global capitalism. In 2010, fires in textile factories in Bangladesh resulted in the tragic and unnecessary loss of the lives of forty-nine women workers (National Labour Committee 2010; Hammadi and Taylor 2010). In both cases, fire exits and doors were locked leading to the death and injury of many women. These instances remind us of how the powerful mouth of capitalism consumes women just as the women’s bodies were deemed disposable one hundred years ago. As a song of social protest, the power of “Bread and Roses” lies in the meaning drawn from the lyrics of unity and solidarity in tandem with Fariña’s simple but powerful melody. Its simplicity highlights the importance of the lyrics for us as listeners, but more importantly, the accessibility of the melody affords a collective performance of the song. As a socio-musical case study of protest song, “Bread and Roses” forces us to question the intersonic and delineated meanings we can draw from this song of social protest. More critically, I have argued that the song’s efficacy as a song of social protest lies in its potential for collective performance. In sum, its function is not that of an object for consumption; rather, it is through the

social, collective singing of the song, that “Bread and Roses” can ‘perform’ resistance, unity and social cohesion.

NOTES

1. The phrase Bread and Roses was coined by the labour union leader, socialist and feminist Rose Schneiderman (1882–1972). See Endelman (1981)

2. A concrete example of aggravation might occur where some people were attending a performance of classical music where the intersonic materials sound unfamiliar but the musical style resonates with identity markers with which one might not wish to be associated, for example, upper middle class, fur-wearing people (see Cook 1998). As Green (1988; 2008) points out, the reason why formal education (see also Moore 2012; 2014 on higher education) tends to focus on classical music over popular music is due to prevailing *Western* ideologies about music’s ability to convey truth and universality.

3. Yearning for more than sustenance is a theme that resonates with a study of the Venda tribe in the 1970s by John Blacking. When immersed in an ethnographic study of the Venda tribe in South Africa, Blacking (1977) discovered that the tribe did not have the noun ‘music’ in their language; rather music is something the Venda ritually ‘do’. Of particular relevance here for the themes in “Bread and Roses”, is where Blacking (1977) notes that when the Venda tribe’s basic needs are met, music making occurs: ‘when their stomachs are full because consciously or unconsciously, they sense the forces of separation inherent in the satisfaction of self-preservation, and they are driven to restore balance with exceptionally cooperative and exploratory behaviour’ (Blacking 1997, 101). Thus, Blacking’s (1977) research as real-world ethnography would seem to echo the ideals espoused of a balance between basic human needs and the essence of humanity as expressed in art, love and beauty.

4. Mimi Fariña was the younger sister of singer Joan Baez and was also a talented musician and songwriter. In 1974, she founded Bread & Roses, a non-profit organization that aimed to provide free music to shut-ins at hospitals, convalescent homes, prisons, psychiatric wards, homeless shelters and drug rehabilitation centers in the Bay area. By the late 1970s, Bread & Roses had become well known and successful and is still in existence today.

5. A triad comprises three notes or pitches in a particular spatial relationship and performed simultaneously that generally sound pleasing (consonant) to those culturally attuned to its structure.

6. *Spotify* is a digital music streaming service whereby music can be browsed or searched for via various parameters, such as artist, album, genre, playlist, or record label. It has come under severe criticism from artists as the remuneration per music download is minimal thereby necessitating numerous downloads before an artist can be paid. Reducing the value of the labour/artistic endeavour for less than \$0.005 has led to artists taking their music down from the streaming platform in protest at the extreme commodification of their music.

Chapter 24

“We Shall Overcome”

Communal Participation and Entrainment in a Protest Song

Thérèse Smith

This chapter examines “We Shall Overcome” as a stellar exemplar of an African American protest song, performed as communal music by a collective united in a single cause—the American civil rights movement—and, by extension, other protest movements thereafter. First, I explore a brief history of this song, its adaptation by Pete Seeger and its incorporation as the anthem of the civil rights movement. Thereafter, I discuss the overall importance of the “Freedom Songs” as they were known, drawing on the writings of prominent individuals within the movement in order to assess their indispensability to the morale of the movement. My key assertion is that a deeper analysis of the rhythm of these songs of protest, drawing on the concept of *entrainment*, can lead to a more nuanced and detailed appreciation of the power of song in, and for, protest movements. To this end, in the latter sections of the chapter, I explore how singing can be understood as interacting with and creating communal identity, and how communal performance of song, in particular, creates community through a sense of shared intent.

A BRIEF HISTORY

While some African American freedom songs utilised during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s in the United States were newly-composed, a number of the most successful were adaptations of pre-existing songs, more specifically spirituals and gospel songs. The adaptation of the Charles A. Tindley (1851–1933) gospel hymn “I Shall Overcome Some Day” to the melody of the Gospel song “I’ll Be Alright.”¹—arguably the anthem of the civil rights movement—is the most famous of these. Sources vary as to what combination of pre-existing material was used to generate “We Shall

Overcome,”² and while the provenance of orally transmitted materials is, of course, always difficult if not impossible, to accurately assess, the above seems to me the most satisfactory contemporary combination. It is a moot point, of course, whether deciphering exact sources is of critical concern—I am of the opinion that it is not and, even if it were, it would probably be impossible to prove definitively. Tindley’s contribution to “We Shall Overcome” is most evident in the lyrics. His insistent and repeated “I’ll overcome someday” resonates with the similarly repetitive line of the song under scrutiny here, “We shall overcome, some day”. Tindley is considered one of the founding fathers of African American gospel, and his songs, this one among them, are still current in African American churches today.³

The song seems to have come to prominence with its performance by Lucille Simmons at the time of the Congress of Industrial Organisation’s Food and Tobacco Workers Union strike in 1946. Here it was learned by Zilphia Horton (then Music Director of the Highlander Folk School in Mouteagle, Tennessee, which trained union organizers). Zilphia taught it to folk singer and activist Pete Seeger (1919–2014), who published it in either the 1947 or September 1948 issue of the *People’s Songs Bulletin*.⁴ This was a publication of the organization “People’s Songs” of which Seeger was the director and guiding light.⁵ The song appeared in the bulletin as a contribution of, and with an introduction by, Zilphia Horton, with a strong 4/4 pulse (march time)—as opposed to the long-metre style in which Lucille Simmons had sung it—and transformed from “I Shall Overcome” to the plural and more democratic and inclusive “We Shall Overcome”.⁶ This assertion is stated three times in the lyrics of the verse, leading to a statement of heart-felt belief, followed by a final assertion that “we shall overcome”.

The song thereafter had a chequered history. According to Seeger, it was taught at a weekend workshop entitled “Singing in the Movement” organised by Guy Caravan and Frank Hamilton in 1960, in a swinging 12/8 time, and was the hit of the weekend.⁷ Caravan had stepped into the important role of song leader at the Highlander School in 1959. Originally established in 1932 in Mouteagle, Tennessee, in order to train labour activists, the centre rapidly became a training centre for civil rights activists from across the United States, amongst its most famous students, Rosa Parks, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr, and the Rev. Ralph Abernathy. Through its location and orientation the Highlander Folk School—as it was known in the 1960s—effectively brought together conservative white communities in Appalachia, African American civil rights activists, and the relatively affluent, largely white, civil rights student activists who had espoused the cause. Advocating non-violent protest to achieve societal change, the school saw communal protest song as a key component in generating unity from disparate groups of individuals dedicated to a common cause.⁸

Thus, Guy Caravan, in his role as song leader at the Highlander School, taught “We Shall Overcome” to students at the founding meeting of SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) at Raleigh Institute (now Shaw University, North Carolina) in April 1960. It was subsequently performed by Seeger and recorded live at his concert in Carnegie Hall, New York City on June 8, 1963, and was released as the final song on side 2 of the album, through the aegis of the famous promoter John Hammond, by Columbia Records. But although, as Seeger has remarked, Columbia could record and ship it, they could not ensure its distribution: some producers perceived Seeger as too left-wing in his political stance, and the album was not well marketed and did not achieve commercial success.⁹

PETE SEEGER AND “WE SHALL OVERCOME”

“We Shall Overcome” became inextricably associated with Seeger and the American civil rights movement, although it has, of course, been adopted by many other singers and protest movements in the years since. Seeger performed the song at Carnegie Hall on June 8, 2013, the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his initial Carnegie Hall concert, and also only a couple of months before his death.

A recording of this 2013 concert, which was made publically available via YouTube in 2016 (April 14, 2016) presents the music accompanied by graphics comprised of still photography from the 1960s, arguably the time when the song was at its most powerful, certainly in terms of African American protest songs. This montage of photographic stills references particular historical events, with captions and dates that allow the viewer to situate her/himself in these historical moments. The photographic stills reference many aspects of the 1960s civil rights movement, from notorious points of conflagration (in Selma, Alabama, or Little Rock, Arkansas), to the “ordinary” individual—child or adult—in the street, to some of the iconic figures of the movement. Thus we see Rosa Parks on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama (1955), Martin Luther King Jr. at the march on Washington, D.C. (1963), evoking his extraordinary “I Have a Dream” speech, the white student Freedom Riders seeking to register African American voters in Mississippi (1965), the “I Am a Man” march in Memphis, Tennessee (1963), and a Ku Klux Klan march in Atlanta, Georgia (1967), to mention but a few.

This is a powerful recording with iconic imagery, but it also begs the question of from where the undeniable effect of the song comes: the song itself has been used as an iconic referent in a myriad of contexts, from the civil rights movement that took to the streets of Derry in Northern Ireland in 1968, to its performance on that movement’s Bloody Sunday, on January 30, 1972,

when it echoed through the ranks of marchers protesting against internment who had their path blocked by British soldiers; to the anti-apartheid struggles focused on the Soweto township of South Africa (1976); the massacres of students at Tianamen Square (1989); protests against China’s repatriation of North Korean refugees (2008); protests against bombings in Beirut (2015); and protests against the shootings at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, South Carolina (2015).¹⁰ It has been used as a refrain in the world’s press (see for example, *The Economist* 2014), and features widely as an iconic referent for a non-violent, but not to be defeated, struggle against injustice.

In considering the power of Seeger’s 2013 performance, one must acknowledge the almost religious fervour of his rendition, the pulsing 12/8 meter articulated clearly in his guitar (his addition to Lucille Simmons’ long metre version). This is also an unashamedly positive lyric, intensely repetitive,¹¹ but allowing for verses to be generated at will, almost ad infinitum—a necessity for a movement where such non-violent protests as sit-ins could last for many, many hours. The melody itself is aspirational in its contours, rising to its peak on “some day” in the second line, and thereafter falling sequentially to its inevitable conclusion, only to rise again in subsequent verses; and it is underpinned by goal-directed, primary colour, tonal harmony. This is not a strident or, indeed, a confrontational song, but in the alliance of the aspirational melody and lyrics, it is a gentle, but tenacious, assertion of faith.

The song is structured in traditional African American call-and-response form, facilitating leadership by the song leader, and participation from the group. Seeger’s mixture of sung and spoken delivery, moreover, facilitates improvisation in a particularly effective fashion. It allows him to extemporise, to ad lib above his guitar, thus freeing him, if you like, to preach the Gospel and, significantly, to also mention particular individuals for any number of reasons: these references have served to generate the variety of visual montages that have been published, on the web, in accompaniment to his rendition over the years.

OVERALL IMPORTANCE OF THE “FREEDOM SONGS”

From the testimony of the freedom singers, to that of many other political activists who participated in the civil rights movement, it is evident that the unifying, and morale-boosting power of the freedom songs was invaluable. These were not simply songs that one sang to pass the—sometimes tedious—time, nor were they necessarily “battle hymns”, but they were songs that forged community and unfailing unity of purpose from an agglomeration of individuals of an almost unimaginable disparity of backgrounds—racial, educational, geographic and socio-economic. These African American protest

songs, as exemplified by “We Shall Overcome”, propelled a movement forward (often literally), a movement that, in a very real sense, marched to their beat.

Howard Zinn (1964, 6) had the following to say when assessing the power of the Freedom Singers.

There has never been a singing movement like this one. [...] Every battle station in the Deep South now has its Freedom Chorus [from SNCC’s Freedom Singers, all of whom were field secretaries in the movement] and the mass meetings end there with everyone standing, led by the youngsters of SNCC, linking arms, and singing.

Or, as one student of the movement remarked.

when police clubs, snarling dogs and hoses start to attack the line of march, praying to one’s self gives some courage, but when hundreds sing their hope together, the songs provide the shield and identification necessary to withstand even the fury of the hostile mob. (quoted in Dunson 1980, 66–67)

Martin Luther King Jr., was himself aware of the indispensability of the “freedom songs” to the morale of the movement. Writing in 1964, King commented:

An important aspect of the mass meetings was the freedom songs. In a sense the freedom songs are the soul of the movement. They are more than just incantations of clever phrases designed to invigorate a campaign, they are as old as the history of the Negro in America. They are adaptations of the songs the slaves sang—the sorrow songs, the shouts for joy, the battle hymns, and the anthems of our movement. I have heard people talk of the beat and rhythm. “Woke up this Morning with my Mind Stayed on Freedom” is a sentence that needs no music to make its point. We sing these songs today for the same reason the slaves sang them, because we too are in bondage and the songs add hope to our determination that “we shall overcome”. (King 1964, 60)

While King is, predictably enough, but mistakenly in my view, focusing on the lyrics of the songs, almost to the exclusion of music—“it needs no music to make its point”—it is a truism that reciting a poem is a far cry from singing a song, particularly when the song is sung by a group united in a cause—whether something as mundane as a football chant or, at the other extreme, marching for freedom. In such situations, of course, the “beat and rhythm” that King discounts create a sense of togetherness, to unify a crowd of individuals in a single, clearly and rhythmically articulated cause. As psychologist Carl Seashore commented (if somewhat vaguely) some eight

decades ago in 1938, "Rhythm gives us a feeling of power, it carries [...] the pattern once grasped, there is an assurance of ability to cope with the future. This results in [...] a motor attitude, or a projection of the self in action; for rhythm is never rhythm unless one feels that he himself is acting it, or, what may seem contradictory, that he is even carried by his own action" (Seashore 1938, 162). Thus, he entwines rhythm, power, confidence, and hope in the future. Or, in a more contemporary context, as rapper Common asserts, in the theme song "Glory", from the film *Selma*, released on December 11, 2014: "The movement is a rhythm to us, Freedom is like a religion to us."¹² The conflation of the [civil rights] movement, rhythm, freedom and religion in these two lines of the rap is not incidental: this is a melding that characterised the civil rights movement, not least in the prominence and importance of church elders as leaders.

RHYTHM, FREEDOM SONGS AND ENTRAINMENT

Entrainment is a process whereby two independent rhythmic processes synchronise with each other so that they come to share a common beat. People can synchronise to one another—as when, for example, two people synchronise their steps when walking—or to an external beat—a pianist practising to the beat of a metronome, for example. Entrainment has been explored quite extensively in the natural sciences, but not much attention has been given to it in the musical sphere, aside from some studies in the bio-musical sphere. Rhythm, that essential component for integration of communal performance, has nonetheless been a matter of fascination for humans, whether one thinks as far back as theories of the music of the spheres (which governed the cyclical movement of planets in the heavens), or of twenty-first century studies of "beat-based induction" (e.g., Patel 2008). In 1665 Dutch physicist Christiaan Huygens (the inventor of the pendulum clock) observed that, no matter where they started, the pendulums of two clocks in a single housing invariably synchronised their movements within about 30 minutes. The reason for this happening remained a mystery for more than 200 years, when, in the second half of the nineteenth century, British physicist Lord Rayleigh described the synchronisation of two similar but slightly different organ pipes and introduced the distinction between forced and maintained oscillations (Rayleigh 1894–1896).¹³

While it is not possible to dwell in detail on this history of entrainment here, suffice it to say that it has taken until the 2000s for this phenomenon to be explored in relation to music, albeit largely through the so-called "hard" sciences—biology, neuropsychology and psychiatry.¹⁴ Amongst ethnomusicologists, Charles Keil and Steve Feld were at the forefront of moving beyond

strict concepts of beat and meter to the idea of groove, or “participatory discrepancies” as Keil referred to them (1987), seeking to account for the particular swing that distinguishes one performer—and performance—from another (1994).

In 2008 neuroscientist Ani Patel proposed beat induction—referring to it as “beat-based rhythm processing”—as a key area in music-language research, suggesting that beat induction is a fundamental aspect of music cognition that is distinct from cognitive mechanisms that also serve other, more clearly adaptive, domains, such as language, for example (Patel 2008, 402–15). But prior to Patel’s extensive elaboration on the relations between music, language and the brain, the idea had already been taken up seriously by ethnomusicologists at panel discussions at the European Seminar in Ethnomusicology, in Rauland, Norway (2001) and Druskininkai, Lithuania (2002), resulting in an article in *ESEM Counterpoint* entitled “In time with the music: The concept of entrainment and its significance for ethnomusicology” co-authored by Martin Clayton, Rebecca Sager and Udo Will, and published online in 2005.¹⁵ The authors define entrainment as “a process whereby two rhythmic processes interact with each other in such a way that they adjust towards and eventually ‘lock in’ to a common phase and/or periodicity” (3). There are two basic components involved in all instances of entrainment:

1. There must be two or more autonomous rhythmic processes or oscillators, i.e., oscillators that are independent: thus, this is distinguished from resonance, where one object depends on the other.
2. The oscillators must interact, i.e., they cannot be so far separated that they cannot perceive each other.

A further distinction needs to be made between symmetrical and asymmetrical entrainment. The former occurs when oscillators—whether animate or inanimate—mutually influence each other, as in the two pendulum clocks described by Huygens (see above), or in our case, as in human beings’ communal singing. Asymmetrical entrainment most generally occurs between a living organism and an inanimate object, the obvious example for musicians is perhaps practising to the beat of a metronome or other external beat source: the musician cannot influence the metronome, but the metronome almost inevitably dictates the beat expressed by the musician.

The idea of entrainment can very fruitfully be applied to many aspects of human activity: communal music making particularly, and has been, for example, applied to emotion and meaning in traditional Irish music sessions (van Heeswijk 2013). Thus from Alan Merriam’s feedback model for ethnomusicology (1964) to John Blacking’s “humanly-organised sound” and “soundly-organised humans” (1974), we have come a long way in our

understanding of how music, brain, body and community interact. Certainly entrainment goes quite some way to explaining, in a more nuanced and detailed fashion, the power of song in, and for, protest movements, and in our case African American protest songs in particular.

SONG, SINGING AND COMMUNAL IDENTITY

Of all the performative contexts that ethnomusicologists consider, singing is uniquely of the self. The energy that produces song is one's very life breath; the instrument—or, the primary sound producer, as Hornbostel and Sachs (1914) referred to it—is the voice box; its medium is at the nexus of music and language—our two auditory means of communication—and its realisation results from the intersection of memory and creativity, a primary source of meaning and identity. Song and singing are, additionally, available to everyone, regardless of means, technical ability or skill; and songs interact powerfully with memory, history and creativity, evoking scenarios far beyond what exist in the "simple" entity of an individual song.

Yet songs of social protest transcend this sense of the individual that is conjured through individual singing, to create community and unity of purpose from a group of disparate individuals, united in a common cause but separated, inevitably, by a profusion of social differences.¹⁶ It is essential, therefore, that a common sense of identity is forged through the activities of protest and, for our purposes, enacted and articulated through song. In this regard, we might fruitfully consider Simon Frith's assertion that "music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experience it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives" (Frith 1995, 124).

Language is uniquely crucial to the articulation of identity in song (in all of its many manifestations) for, as Benedict Anderson (1983) remarked almost four decades ago, people imagine themselves as connected through language, especially through their experience and understanding of shared texts, most notably poetry and song which produce, he argued "a special kind of contemporaneous community" (160). This sense of shared community is critical for the cohesion of social protest movements and, inextricably, for their expression and unification in song. If one accepts Nina Eliasoph's and Paul Lichterman's (2003, 784) assertion that "the meaning of culture depends in part on what it means to participate in a group setting that filters that culture", then how the culture of protest is filtered through song is critical for the fashioning of an efficacious group culture from individuals with a diversity of social and cultural backgrounds. And it is not simply that song facilitates

social cohesion, it generates a rhythmic and motor impulse that unifies group expression in a very physical sense, not only in the physicality of song, but also (and crucially for both marches and sit-ins) in the embodied physicality of the group body.¹⁷ The embodiment of sound in song, the very physicality of the voice, “objectifies the experience of sociality in a way that can be perceived by the senses,” to quote Thomas Solomon (2000, 276), and the embodiment of sound, through entrainment, in the communal performance of protest songs, invokes a powerful harmony, undergirded by a tenacious and deeply felt belief in the truth of what one is doing that is difficult, if not impossible, to turn aside.

SONG, COMMUNITY AND COMMUNAL PERFORMANCE

In 2014 Ian Cross posited that the entrainment that occurs with music performance allows for greater sociability, partly because participation with others in the performance of music conveys a sense of shared intent. Music offers the possibility for relational interaction, conveying a sense of shared purpose and honest communication. Cross’ interest lies primarily in exploring how music can alleviate situations of social uncertainty, essentially by creating a sense of belonging and shared intent. It is difficult not to feel a sense of oneness with others when singing together, perhaps holding hands, and also walking in tandem, as African American civil rights activists did repeatedly, whether marching in circles in protest in a particular town, or across large geographic distances, the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, for example, and it is, naturally, no coincidence that one of Seeger’s iconic verses is built on the lyrics “We’ll walk hand in hand”. Numerous studies have shown that it is virtually impossible for individuals not to synchronise their movements when walking together (e.g., Knoblich and Sebanz 2008) through entrainment, unless, of course, their strides are considerably disparate physically as, for example, with a small child and adult. Thus, in singing protest songs, we experience feelings of reciprocity and a common purpose, even when our backgrounds, and aspects of our intents and ideals, may be far apart. Or, as the student quoted earlier by Dunson remarked, “when hundreds sing their hope together, the songs provide the shield and identification necessary to withstand even the fury of the hostile mob” (Dunson 1980, 66–67). Communal singing, thus, not only creates community, it encircles that community with boundaries that are perceived to protect it, harking back to Fredrik Barth’s (1969) theories on the function of boundaries for groups. Or, as Judith Becker (2004, 154) has remarked, “musical cohesion becomes a model for social cohesion”.

Giving his Presidential Address to the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in 2007, Stephen Warner had the following to say about the use of music (and dance) in religious expression.

The elemental, sensual, preverbal, nondiscursive nature of much of the interaction occasioned by music and dance—[...] "rhythmic entrainment"—is a key to its social significance. Musical interaction is sociable at the same time that it is profoundly embodied. In the words of Roy Rappaport (1999, 228), rhythmic entrainment reaches "in two directions at once—into each participant's physiology on the one hand and outward to encompass all of the participants on the other" (2007, 6–7).

Certainly, this is one of the great strengths of communal singing—the creation of community—although how we understand the term "community" has expanded considerably over recent decades. Writing in 1983, political scientist Benedict Anderson stated that "all communities, other than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (95). Anderson's ideas, which have resonated across a wide range of disciplines, have facilitated constructions and analyses of communities, from diasporic communities to "social network" communities, where members of the community may never meet. Two years later anthropologist Anthony Cohen published his *Symbolic Construction of Community* (1985) and enriched this discussion by suggesting that communities are constructed not by attributes or ascription, but by individual choice, where individuals see themselves as engaged with certain ideas or ideals. Thus boundaries of time, space, geography, ethnicity, gender, etc., are removed, and communities can expand almost infinitely. This is, of course, not without its own complications: the term "community" might thereby become meaningless. For ethnomusicologists throughout the 1990s, the focus moved to diasporic and virtual communities formed across geographic boundaries. Thus, with increasing global reach and interaction, the nature of community was changing beyond recognition (see, for example, Finnegan 1989; Gardner 2004; Guilbault 2005; Lornell and Rasmussen 1997; Slobin 1993; Straw 1991; and Wong 2004). Two emerging ideas are particularly pertinent to this discussion.

The first comes from Thomas Turino who in 2008 defined two main types of social groupings (or communities): cultural cohorts, based on aspects of the self, such as gender, class, etc.; and cultural formations which he defines as constructed through "broader, more pervasive patterns of shared habits" (95). If we accept ideals that give rise to social protest under this latter category, we have political formations, which articulate their beliefs not necessarily

through direct engagement with the formal political process (although they might) but through protest activities expressed through protest songs. The second draws upon Kaufmann Shelemay's 2011 work. Arguing for retention of the concept of community as a valuable scholarly tool, potentially more valuable on the foot of the challenges issued in the previous decades, Kay Kaufman Shelemay proposed a variety of ways of defining community that proves potentially useful here. She notes: "A third type of community, defined largely by affinity, emerges first and foremost from individual preferences, quickly followed by a desire for social proximity or association with others equally enamored [sic.]" (2011, 73). Though Kaufmann Shelemay does not specifically conflate affinity communities with communities expressing dissent, such an interpretation might be read as reinforcing Turino's idea of "cultural [protest] formations" (2008, 95), with a desire for social proximity necessary for effectual creation of community.

The various types or definitions of communities considered above are not mutually exclusive, but often intersect and thus emerge communities of dissent or protest. As Kaufman Shelemay is most interested in communities of musicians, she asserts the role of musicians in galvanising such a community. "Nowhere is the role of charismatic musicians more prominent than in communities of dissent, where a leader will often serve to galvanize a new social movement" (2011, 377) and, as we have noted earlier, the freedom songs—whether articulated by a single, charismatic musician such as Pete Seeger—or sung in integrated communal performance, were indispensable to the civil rights movement. It must be noted, however, that this is in no way to imply that Seeger was a primary catalyst for the movement, nor even at the vanguard of the civil rights movement: I am interested here in his association with this song and its evolution.

CONCLUSION

"We Shall Overcome" is, evidently, but one of many songs that galvanised the civil rights movement in the United States and, subsequently, in a variety of areas around the globe. While "We Shall Overcome" was modified to fit the mode of protest, other equally iconic songs might be referred to as "unadulterated" protest songs, adopted without modification to articulate protest. These songs were equally iconic, if in a slightly different and arguably more directed way. One obvious example of this is the spiritual "Wade in the Water," which was famously adopted by protestors to desegregate bathing places around Lake Michigan in Chicago. This spiritual, while perhaps not as universally associated with the civil rights movement as "We Shall Overcome," is still commonly used for baptisms in African American Baptist

churches (perhaps partly as a result of the consequentially more neutral identity of the spiritual, as opposed to that of "We Shall Overcome").

But, whether utilised for protest or for ritual (and who is to say that the processes are particularly distinct?), processes of identity formation, community building, embodied cognition expressed through entrainment to music, and communal performance (whether standing together, holding hands, marching, or singing together) offer some explanations across a variety of disciplines for why communal performance of protest songs is such a potentially powerful tool for societal transformation.

In order to balance the discussion, however, it must be acknowledged that there are also songs of social protest that are more directly confrontational: Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam"¹⁸ is an obvious case in point, and has been cited as "one of the most powerful [...] protest songs of the Civil Rights' era" (Brooks, 182). Yet, as powerful as it is in her live rendition at Carnegie Hall in 1964, this is a deliberately (if expertly) tailored performance, directed at a particular audience (whose members are mixed in their responses). It makes a powerful statement, but it is not intended to generate community, or to galvanise to action. It is a call to arms, certainly, and biting in its cultural and socio-political critique, but it does not draw on key concepts that have been under discussion here in relation to songs of social protest: community formation, communal singing, entrainment, marching and solidarity.

Whether modified or adopted, these concepts offer the means to achieve a deeper understanding of communal performance of protest songs as a potentially powerful tool for societal transformation. This chapter has made a strong argument for the importance of entrainment processes activated by communal performance, in understanding and giving power to protest songs such as "We Shall Overcome". Clayton, Sager and Will (2005, 41) conclude that

analyses of entrainment processes produce abundant evidence to show that there is considerable leeway for -if sub-conscious -intelligence and creativity that mark entrainment as an important adaptive capability of living systems to be found *whenever coordination and cooperation within a group, not the achievements of individuals, are of importance.* (author's own emphasis)

I argue that the synchronicity that results from communal performance in song, the beat-based rhythm processing that engages the human body as the natural mediator between mind (focused on musical intentions, meanings, significations) and physical environment (containing musical sound and other types of energy that afford human action) is a very powerful force that should be explored from a wide variety of musical perspectives. Singing uniquely engages the self—emanating from ones very life breath—in performance.

When ideologically and politically motivated, and harnessed through communal performance and processes of entrainment, it creates community and engenders unity of purpose that can transform both individuals and society.

NOTES

1. As this is a song that has been transmitted orally over several generations, details of origin are hazy, at best, with a variety of respected scholars (Eileen Southern, Bernice Johnson Reagon, amongst the most prominent) ascribing conflicting sources as *urtext*. Possibly the most comprehensive analysis of possible musical sources is detailed in Victor V. Bobetsky's introduction, "The Complex Ancestry of 'We Shall Overcome'" to the 2014 edited collection *We Shall Overcome: Essays on a Great American Song* (1–16). While his analysis of the processes of oral transmission may seem somewhat naïve to ethnomusicologists, his musical analysis and interpretation are sound. A second study, Stuart Stotts' 2010 book, traces the history of the song via African slave songs and their interaction with Christian hymnody, elaborating on the long-narrated history of double-meaning in spiritual lyrics, amongst other things. And for those interested in the song by SNCC, in particular, and some brief history, the 2007 collection edited by Guy and Candie Caravan, is a valuable resource.

2. It is worth noting that from this point on, the vague and somewhat procrastinatory "Some Day" is dropped from the song title, thus lending a new certainty and immediacy to the song's taxonomy.

3. Both the original lyrics for Tindley's song and the lyrics for 'We Shall Overcome' can easily be found online. For "I'll Overcome One Day" see, for example, http://www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/ti/tindley_ca.htm and for "We Shall Overcome" see the Library of Congress teaching resource at <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/lyrical/songs/overcome.html>.

4. None of the sources consulted states definitively in which of the two issues the song was published: some state that it was published in both 1947 and in the September 1948 issue. Issues of the *People's Songs Bulletin* are, however, currently being uploaded to the *People's Songs Archive* (<https://singout.org/ps—archive/>), but the latest issue uploaded—as of April 2017—is the April 1946 issue. Noah Adams asserted that Seeger himself stated that he published the song in 1948: see <http://www.npr.org/2013/08/28/216482943/the-inspiring-force-of-we-shall-overcome>. To complicate matters further, Seeger stated in an interview with Tim Robbins for Pacifica Radio in 2006 (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-FmQEFFFko>) that he published it in *People's Songs* in 1947.

5. For detailed consideration of Seeger's complex interaction with the song, and his role in its popularisation, see Rob Rosenthal's essay in Victor V. Bobetsky 2014 (17–26).

6. For unequivocal assertions that Simmons sang "We Shall Overcome" in slow, long metre style, see interviews with Pete Seeger listed in endnote iv above. Additionally, see comments accessed April 6, 2017, from Gary Ginnell (posted September 23, 2013) at <http://blogtrans.megatrax.com/ransacking-public-domain-part-9-wrote->

shall-overcome/, as well as Susanna Kalweit (posted June 4, 2002) at <http://mysong-book.de/msb/songs/w/weshallo.html>.

7. Rob and Sam Rosenthal explore this issue in depth in chapter six of the 2012 book, *Pete Seeger: In His Own Words*, written in collaboration with Seeger (or Pete, as he was generally known). This is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Seeger’s life, activism and philosophies, drawing on primary documents, as well as providing valuable analysis. Rosenthal also features in this volume writing on Seeger.

8. For further information on the school, now located in Newmarket, Tennessee, and renamed the Highlander Research and Education Center, see websites below, accessed April 7, 2017. <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/highlander-research-and-education-center-1932>; <http://highlandercenter.org/media/timeline/>.

9. While it is not the subject of this paper, the interested reader is directed to Jacquélien van Stekelenburg and Bert Klandermans (2013) for an overview of the sociological literature on the history of protesting, and why people persist in doing so, even when they are pessimistic about the probable outcome of their efforts.

10. This particular confrontation resulted in the fatal shooting of thirteen unarmed protesters.

11. The efficacy of repetition has been widely studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (see, for example, Agres et al. 2017; Baileyshea 2006; Brown et al. 2004; Gillian 2007; Livingstone et al. 2012; Madison et al. 2011; Mahtt 2012; Nunes et al. 2015; and Reyes-Fournier 2013).

12. The film *Selma* portrays the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches, pivotal to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. This song was so popular that Paramount Pictures released a music video on January 12, 2015. The song also went on to win the award for “Best Original Song” at the 87th Academy Awards (2015) and at the 72nd Golden Globe Awards (2015), as well as the award for “Best Song Written for Visual Media” at the 58th Academy Awards (2016).

13. This also begs the question (parallel, if somewhat unrelated) whether this might not be one source of the persistent fascination with Balinese gamelan, where instruments are tuned in pairs a micro-tone apart. The resultant non-synchronisation of pitch—these are tuned, generally metal-slab instruments—results in a “shimmer” effect which gives the ensemble a very distinctive sound.

14. The most developed theories in the area of music research are, arguably the following publications: Patel 2008; Patel et al. 2009; and Honing 2012. It is important to note, however, that a plethora of publications had come out, in journals such as *Current Biology*, *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, *Computer Music Science*, *Neuroscience*, *Journal of Human Movement*, etc., as well as many medical journals prior to this. And it is also, of course, true that music psychologists had been studying the role of beat and rhythm in music from new perspectives since the 1990s (e.g., Large and Jones 1999).

15. This article is perhaps unusual, as while drawing on neurological research, it does not involve collaboration between neuroscientists and ethnomusicologists, as many of the other successful publications do (for example, Witek et al. 2014, involving collaborators from music, psychiatry, neuroscience and semiotics).

16. I have discussed this issue of generating a sense of community from a disparate set of individuals in some detail in Smith 2003.

17. This physicality of entrainment expressed in and through music is, in fact, a quality that has been studied by scientists to, amongst a myriad of other things, improve balance in patients with Parkinson's disease, to improve athletic performance, the social engagement of children with autism, in music therapy, speech therapy and a whole range of other applications.

18. Simone, Nina. 1964 "Mississippi Goddam". *In Concert* (CD). UK: Philips BL 7678.

Part VIII

**BORDERLANDS AND
CONTESTED SPACES**

Chapter 25

The Language We Use

Representations of Morrissey as a Figure of Protest in Queer Latino Los Angeles

Melissa Hidalgo

Morrissey is a Manchester-born popular singer of Irish immigrant parents. He began his music career as lead singer and lyricist of the 1980s band, The Smiths. Morrissey forged a successful solo career in 1988, a year after The Smiths disbanded. The popular music icon continues to write and record new music and tour the world extensively. Using Hall's (1997) theory of cultural representation and Chicana feminist theories of the US-Mexico borderland region as its primary critical frameworks, this chapter analyses two recent texts that highlight Morrissey's status as a figure of social and political protest for queer¹ Latino/a/x² fans in millennial Los Angeles: the 2010 song, "Gay Vatos in Love", by acclaimed Los Angeles band Ozomatli;³ and the 2013 play, *Whittier Boulevard*, by the Los Angeles-based playwright Michael Patrick Spillers.

Ozomatli wrote "Gay Vatos in Love" in 2008⁴ in the thick of the charged political climate of California's Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that sought to eliminate same-sex marriage.⁵ The song features a key reference to Morrissey in its celebration of same-sex love and relationships; at the same time, the song represents the culture of danger and violence often associated with being an out queer Latino/a/x person in the contemporary United States. As a popular song, "Gay Vatos in Love" operates as a way of "generating discourses of self and belonging" (Zuberi 2010, 245); as a protest song, "Gay Vatos" conveys "slogans" ("Gay vatos in love! Equal rights for all! No on H8!")⁶ wherein its political power rests (Frith 1996). For these reasons, "Gay Vatos in Love", a pop song with a message written and recorded by an internationally acclaimed band from Los Angeles, warrants our critical attention

as a popular cultural representation of Morrissey as a subversive figure (Woronzoff 2011) amongst queer Latinos/as/x.

Spiller's 2013 short play *Whittier Boulevard* features a queer protagonist in its trans youth character, Vic, in conflict with his father's gendernormative expectations of his 'daughter.' Vic models his emerging queer masculinity on his idol, Morrissey, whose songs and style become unexpected mechanisms for Vic's personal-is-political protest against heteronormative, homophobic, and transphobic cultural imperatives. Significantly, *Whittier Boulevard* enjoyed a four-week run as part of *Teatro Moz*, the "world's first" Morrissey-inspired theatre festival (Ochoa 2014), which was staged at the renowned CASA0101 theatre centre in the historic Boyle Heights neighborhood of East Los Angeles. Its place in a festival that combines Morrissey's popular nickname ("Moz") with a uniquely Chicano form of political theater ("teatro") makes *Whittier Boulevard* a compelling example of a short act in the teatro style of Chicano activist theatre. (Valdéz 1971; Huerta 1982) In this spirit of cultural affirmation and political struggle, we can regard Spiller's play and his poignant representation of Morrissey as a political icon for a young trans Latino living in LA.

In the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, a host of creative works—including documentary and feature films, novels, plays, poetry, graphic art, and musical tributes (Hidalgo 2016)—have emerged as cultural documents of the particular subculture of Los Angeles and Latino Morrissey fandom. I have chosen to examine "Gay Vatos in Love" and *Whittier Boulevard* over others because, to my knowledge, they are the only works of the cultural archive of "Mozlandia" (Hidalgo 2016) that evoke Morrissey within the context of social and political protest. Together, Ozomatli's song and Spiller's play are two high-profile cultural texts that reflect Morrissey's position as a central figure for queer Latino/a/x fans who look to and appropriate his iconic image, songs and lyrics, personal style, oppositional politics as platforms for their own forms of social, political and personal protest. With regards to Morrissey and queer Latinos in Los Angeles, this case can teach us about the fundamental value of musical protest as giving voice to the voiceless (Power, Dillane and Devereux 2012) and the power of a Smiths or Morrissey song to "incite and inform" (Campbell and Coulter 2010, 16). Beyond Morrissey and queer Latinos in LA, this case can offer insights into the uses of songs as vehicles of political and social protests in communities and for groups of people who are targets of discriminatory legislation and social oppression. In the end, "Gay Vatos in Love" and *Whittier Boulevard* challenge us to expand our notions of what a protest singer and song can look like to a given group of people engaged in political struggle.

“I FACE MY RACE”: REPRESENTING MORRISSEY AS PROTEST SINGER IN THE BORDERLANDS

My analyses of Ozomatli’s song and Spillers’s play are grounded in Hall’s (1997) formulation of representation in culture. He writes:

Representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer* to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events. (Hall 1997, 17)

Following Hall, I aim to unpack the referential “concepts and language” of “Gay Vatos in Love” and *Whittier Boulevard*. I read them as two discrete and yet related texts that rely on the same “conceptual maps” that bring into view Morrissey, “Moz Angeles,” and queer Latinos through “a set of correspondences or a chain of equivalences” within specific cultural, political, and social contexts. (Hall 1997, 19) Finally, in my treatment of Ozomatli’s musical and Spillers’s theatrical representations, as well as select Morrissey songs, I focus on the “language” they use, including song lyrics, scripted dialogue, “signs,” and culturally coded language found in both texts. I find Hall’s and other cultural studies, literary studies, and Chicana/o feminist approaches to be key frameworks in making an argument and bringing forth a sharper picture of Morrissey’s ‘real’ and symbolic value to the “gay vatos and “trans-butches” who incorporate him in their political struggles.

In his songs Morrissey has built a reputation as a “champion of the ‘Other’” (Power, Dillane and Devereux 2012, 2) and the “marginalized” (Campbell and Coulter 2010, 9). Morrissey’s Smiths and solo song lyrics consistently reflect his sympathetic leanings towards society’s outcasts and outlaws such as the criminal, the gangster, the victimized school boy, the prisoner, and the teen mother (Power 2011). In Smiths songs such as “The Headmaster Ritual” (1985) and “I Want the One I Can’t Have” (1985) to solo songs like “The Last of the Famous International Playboys” (1990), “Mountjoy” (2014), and “Teenage Dad on His Estate” (2004), Morrissey’s lyrics generally express counterhegemonic, mostly left-progressive take on social issues ranging from class (Power 2011), gender and sexuality (Woronzoff 2011; Hubbs 1996), animal rights abuse, the environment, and “Neoliberal government policies” (Power, Dillane and Devereux 2012, 2) in the UK and United States.

Significantly, Morrissey’s work “chooses to explore queer themes, in the most knowledgeable ‘inside’ of queer-insider language” (Hubbs 1996: 285, cited in Power 2011, 105). Scholars have noted that “homoerotic longing” and “gay sexual encounters” (Devereux and Dillane 2011, 194) are frequent

themes in Morrissey's Smiths and solo compositions. Songs such as "Sheila Take a Bow" (1987), "Piccadilly Palare" (1990), and "Dear God Please Help Me" (2006) demonstrate Morrissey's willingness to subvert "dominant understandings of sexuality [and] take an active stance in presenting himself as an agent who negotiates and seeks to change dominant codes" (Woronzoff 2011, 238).

More often than not, the 'language he uses'⁷ in songs point to Morrissey's alignment with the underclasses of society. Accordingly, we can categorise Morrissey as singer of social protest songs in the following ways. Lynskey (2011) describes "protest song" as a song that, "in its broadest sense... addresses a political issue in a way which aligns itself with the underdog" (xiv). Dunaway (1987, 269) goes a step further to identify the radical, oppositional potential of a "political song," which "offers resistance to an abstraction of the social order" and "includes some spirit of opposition to the condition depicted." A song such as "Mexico" (2004) resists and opposes the poisonous "American chemical waste" and "hate from the Lone Star state" (Texas) that adversely affects people on the Mexican side of the border.

Another example, "Ganglord" (2009), fits Lynskey's profile of a "protest song" that addresses and challenges the "political issue" of police brutality from the point of view of gang members. "Ganglord" condemns police violence, brutality, and racial profiling practices of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) by exposing the brutal irony of their motto, "to protect and to serve." In "Ganglord," "'To protect and to serve' is conveyed as 'To Harass and Dominate'" (Power 2011, 109), where "more police translates into more harassment, more beatings, and more unexplained deaths" for people of color (A. Aldama 2002). To illustrate, Morrissey sings about police kicking their way through houses in order to violently enforce laws of segregation, which Morrissey expresses through the song's refrain: "get back to the ghetto," which serves as a punishing bottom line. In US cultural representations, "ghetto" is code for black or brown working-class or poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Winant 2002; Jaffe 2012). The urgency of "Ganglord" as a protest song and outright condemnation of endemic police violence in the United States is especially striking in an era of high-profile police killings of black and brown bodies in cities such as Ferguson, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; Oakland, California; Waller County, Texas; and Los Angeles.⁸

Morrissey's willingness to tackle in his songs hot-button social and political issues like police violence ("Ganglord"; "World Peace is None of Your Business," 2014), toxic hegemonic masculinity ("I'm Not A Man," 2014), animal cruelty ("Meat is Murder," 1985), and racist US border policies ("Mexico"), and his worldview in general, have been attributed to his working-class background as a child born to Irish Catholic immigrant parents in Manchester, England (Kallioniemi 2010; Power 2011). These realities of Morrissey's life

are oft-cited reasons for his “storied” (Tongson 2011) connection to Latino/a and Chicano/a communities in the United States (Arellano 2002; Anguiano 2014; Cabral 2014; Hidalgo 2016) and in particular, Los Angeles. A “Mexicanized” city (Davis 2000) with a majority Latino population (Viesca 2000, F. Aldama 2016),⁹ Los Angeles has been dubbed “Moz Angeles” by both the singer and his fans (Morrissey 2013; Devereux and Hidalgo 2015) for its rich Morrissey history that goes back to “Mozmania” in 1991 (Ohanesian 2009; Devereux and Hidalgo 2015; Hidalgo 2016). “Moz Angeles”, a moniker that appropriates Morrissey’s nickname “Moz,” is best understood as a “fluid and transcultural imagined community of active fans—many of whom are politically, socially, culturally and otherwise marginalized as outsiders—who create intersectional spaces of identity and belonging through Morrissey and his music” (Devereux and Hidalgo 2015, 204)¹⁰ Accordingly, “Moz Angeles” serves as an important cultural context for understanding the emergence of Ozomatli’s protest song and Spillers’s play.

Finally, as the ‘patron saint’ of “Moz Angeles” and “[a] man who lives between borders, an insider-outsider.” (Simpson 2004, 187, quoted in Martin 2011, 235),” I conceive of Morrissey as a “border artist,” a formation unique to the US-México borderlands, in the terms set out by Chicana feminist theorist Anzaldúa (2009). She writes:

The Mexico/United States border is a site where many different cultures “touch” each other, and the permeable, flexible, and ambiguous shifting grounds lend themselves to hybrid images. The border is the locus of resistance, of rupture, implosion and explosion, and of putting together the fragments and creating a new assemblage. Border artists cambian el punto de referencia [trans.: they change the point of reference]. By disrupting the neat separations between cultures, they create a culture mix, una mezcla in their artworks. (177)

As a native of northern England, Morrissey has undoubtedly been shaped by the realities of a fragmented borderland existence that reinforces the feelings of being the outsider, the other, even when ostensibly he is home. This border-crossing, borderland condition helps Morrissey to connect with his fans all over the world with fierce ardor. More specifically, Anzaldúa’s notions of the US-Mexico borderlands as “permeable, flexible, and ambiguous shifting grounds” and site of “resistance”, and of the border artist who “disrupt[s] the neat separations between cultures”, amplifies the special relationship between Morrissey and his Latino fans in Los Angeles.

Recognizing Morrissey as a “border artist” in Anzaldúa’s terms places Morrissey firmly within the realm of queer borderland Chicana/o-Latino/a popular culture, such as “Gay Vatos in Love” and *Whittier Boulevard*. Viewing Morrissey through the lens of “border artist” further compels us

to recognize the complex and innovative ways in which he and his many fans, particularly his US Chicana/o-Latino/a fans in the US-Mexican borderlands, “mix cultures” and “change the point of reference” in a “permeable, flexible, ambiguous, fragmented, and ruptured” (Analdúa 2009, 177) borderland existence. We see Morrissey engage in such practices when he performs on stage with a Mexican flag draped on the monitors and sometimes draped around himself—an act which is itself a form of protest in the age of a Donald J. Trump presidency¹¹ as much as it is an act of Mexican solidarity—as he has done recently in concerts around California, Texas, and New York.

In the first decade of the 2000s, Morrissey toured extensively, and he writes about many of his stops in his *Autobiography* (2013). Among the more memorable for Morrissey were his concerts in Fresno, California, and El Paso, Texas, where he observes, “There are no Caucasian faces....The new Morrissey audiences are not white—not here at least” (Morrissey 2013, 411). Morrissey’s recollection of the crowds at his Fresno show, a mid-size city in California’s San Joaquin Valley, are particularly memorable. He writes, “I face my race. All Mexican mellow, yet ready to put the chill on. Here in Fresno I find it—with wall-to-wall Chicanos and Chicanas as my syndicate....For once I have my family” (410).

To those aware of Morrissey’s wish to have been “born Mexican” (Arelano 2002; Naboia y Rivera 2016), a desire he stated during his 1999 *¡Oye, Estéban!* tour,¹² the “Irish Blood, English Heart”¹³ singer’s (not unproblematic) identification with his “race” and “family” of Chicanos, Chicanas, and “new Latino hearts” (Morrissey 2013, 411) seems apt, if not expected. In the United States, Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, Mexicans and other (generally non-white or non-European) immigrants have historically been treated as second-class citizens by the establishment. We can read Morrissey’s “face my race” Chicano “family” comment as an expression of the affinity he shares with a population that he recognizes as mistreated, outcast, other, as a Manchester-born son of Irish Catholic immigrant parents. For our purposes then, it helps to frame Morrissey’s self-representational comments about facing his Chicana/o and Latino “race” in the following terms: his relationship to Los Angeles, California; the imagined Morrissey fan communities of “Moz Angeles;” Morrissey’s reputation as a “champion of the ‘Other’” (Power, Dillane and Devereux 2012) and queer icon; Morrissey’s “storied” connection to Latino fans (Tongson 2011); and Morrissey as a “border artist” (Analdúa 2009). Together, these critical contexts give specific meanings to “Gay Vatos in Love” and *Whittier Boulevard* as cultural texts that show us the ways in which Morrissey is positioned as a protest singer for queer Latinos/as/x in Los Angeles and across the geopolitical region of the US-México borderlands.

OZOMATLI'S GAY VATOS IN LOVE AS CELEBRATORY PROTEST: WHAT'S MORRISSEY GOT TO DO WITH IT?

Los Angeles band Ozomatli wrote “Gay Vatos in Love” in the thick of the charged political climate of California’s 2008 Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that sought to eliminate same-sex marriage.¹⁴ In the band’s words, “Gay Vatos In Love” advocates for “equal rights and questioning violence against people” as it celebrates same-sex desire and love relationships.¹⁵ In the song, “violence against people” takes the form of a hate crime against Angie Zapata, a transgender Latina murdered in Colorado also in 2008. The song’s political and social contexts suggest that “violence against people” also means state-legislated hate: an organized counter-Prop 8 campaign made popular the slogan “No on H8”, which conflates the proposition’s aim of banning same-sex marriage with the word “hate.” Indeed, “Gay Vatos in Love” confronts the dangers associated with being out in a climate of state-sanctioned violence and culture of homophobic repression directed at queer and LGBT people in the world.¹⁶ At the same time, I argue that the song represents an anthem of “celebratory protest” (Kershaw 1992) an alternative theatre tactic of “carnavalesque resistance to the oppressions promoted by the status quo [and] dominant ideologies through the production of alternative pleasure” (Kershaw 1992, 40). As such, “Gay Vatos in Love” challenges the homophobic environment fomented by California’s Proposition 8 in 2008 and the homophobia and racism of contemporary anti-Latino, anti-Mexican, and anti-LGBT discourses in the United States more generally (Lipsitz 2004).¹⁷

Notably, Ozomatli’s “celebratory protest” song contains a reference to Morrissey, including him in a list of other important queer Latino figures such as the Mexican singer and cultural icon, Juan Gabriel.¹⁸ To add their voices to the “No on H8/No on 8” anti-Proposition 8 chorus, to protest the homophobic messages and overall anti-gay climate that put this initiative on California voters’ ballots in the first place, was decidedly apropos for Ozomatli, a band with a reputation of being firmly committed to social justice issues (Viesca 2000; 2004). However, for a band comprised of self-identified straight guys to summon Morrissey in this way also serves to affirm Morrissey’s significance as a well-known queer Chicana/o/x Latina/o/x icon in Los Angeles, someone worthy enough to keep company with the much-loved “JuanGa.”¹⁹ Morrissey and Juan Gabriel “hold relevance to Mexican-American culture as subversive social assumptions of masculinity;” they are singers whose “sexuality remains intentionally ambiguous, though publically called into question” (Medina 2014, 18–19). In naming Morrissey in this way, Ozomatli not only “plays with the cliché of ‘all Mexicans love Morrissey’” (Medina 2014, 19), but upholds Morrissey as a viable symbol of social protest. Ultimately, I argue that “Gay Vatos in Love” represents Morrissey as a politically

subversive singer (Woronzoff 2011) and someone “gay vatos” and Ozomatli can symbolically put to work for their “No on H8” political interests.

Ozomatli places the lyric about Morrissey in the song’s first verse: “The more I hear Morrissey, the more I feel alright. Gay vatos in love.” When applied to the specific context of Latino Los Angeles in the climate of Proposition 8 and other recently-passed racist and anti-immigrant voter initiatives, the suggestion that Morrissey’s music makes gay vatos “feel alright,” and for some, saves lives (The Smiths, “Rubber Ring,” 1985; Goddard 2013), I will argue, is not a hyperbolic overstatement. Kun’s theorization of “audiotopias” is useful here in considering the impact of Morrissey’s music and its liberatory implications for the “gay vatos” in the song. Kun (2005) describes audiotopias as:

sonic spaces of affective uptopian longings where several sites normally deemed incompatible are brought together, not only in the space of a particular piece of music itself, but in the production of social space and the mapping of geographical space that music makes possible as well...[R]eading and listening for audiotopias (through an analysis of both lyrics *and* music) has a dual function: to focus on the space of music itself and the different spaces and identities it juxtaposes within itself, and to focus on the social spaces, geographies, and identities that music can enable, reflect, and prophecy. (23, original emphasis; see also Zuberi 2010)

Kun’s concept is highly productive here in terms of considering the musical spaces of both the Ozomatli song and Morrissey’s songs as audiotopias for “gay vatos” in “Moz Angeles” and other geographies. It emphasizes the transformative capabilities of popular music (Frith 1996)—the ways it brings together seemingly divergent or “incompatible” objects, like Morrissey and (gay) Latinos/as—and highlights listeners’ agency in the “production of social spaces” of inclusion. Importantly, audiotopic soundscapes are transportable and created in a variety of spaces such as one’s car, bedroom, on public streets (Reyes 2013)²⁰ and in the gay club, as the song’s “Club Cobra” lyric suggests. With their Morrissey lyric, Ozomatli acknowledges the audiotopic “feeling alright” effects and affects of “hearing Morrissey.” Furthermore, this lyric locates Morrissey in a position of power, “as a conduit to potential political activism” and “pathway to the activation of the pleasure senses [“feel alright”], which is where much of the power of music resides” (Power, Dillane and Devereux 2012, 2).

Although billed as an endorsement and celebration of same-sex love and relationships, “Gay Vatos in Love” also confronts the dangers associated with being out in a climate of violence and hate directed at queer and LGBT people in the world. The song’s lyrics reinforce the spatial limitations of, and the dangers associated with, the actual lived expression of “gay vato” love and desire. Whether “fronting on Crenshaw” or “looking for love in the protection of the dark,” the “gay vatos in love” identified in the song are nevertheless

condemned to the shadows. And the message is: if you're not careful, there's danger and violence lurking—the song suggests this much in its sobering reference to the tragedy of Angie Zapata, a transgender Latina teen murdered in Colorado the same year California voters passed Proposition 8. In other words, gay Latino dudes, or queer folks for that matter, it seems, can only express mutual affection when “walking through the park” in the “protection of the dark,” or dancing the night away at Club Cobra (or any other such designated gay/lesbian club), any place where one might “hear” Morrissey and Smiths songs around Los Angeles (Reyes 2013; Vértiz 2014). These audiotopic spaces—imagined, physical, material, ephemeral—transform into “temples in the night” and provide a kind of longed-for, albeit temporary, safety haven for the song's gay vatos. “Gay Vatos in Love” thus shows us that Morrissey and his music play a central role in the formation of “audiotopias” by providing viable and critical spaces, however fleeting, for enacting public expressions of queer desire. In the contemporary moment of millennial US culture, such public declarations and expressions of queer desire are considered acts of political protest in and of themselves. (Moraga 1993; 2011)

Through its “systems of representation” (Hall 1997), including the song's Chicano musical stylings (Cruz 2010; Viesca 2000, 2004) and referential universe that includes Morrissey, we can see and hear how “Gay Vatos in Love” give listeners a “shared language”, a way to make meaning of concepts (Hall 1997) such as queerness, social protest, and what it means to be a gay vato in love in the contemporary social and political climate of Proposition 8. Through “Gay Vatos In Love,” Ozomatli takes the statewide, nationwide, and international debate about gay marriage and localizes it. As popular songs, “Gay Vatos in Love” and Morrissey's “audiotopic” songs give gay vatos and others like them the language they use “to incite and inform” (Campbell and Coulter 2010, 16) listeners to work against hatred and homophobia in celebratory protest. In these key ways, Ozomatli's “pro-gay rights” song takes the form of a song of social protest; it insists on recognizing Morrissey as an advocate for “gay vatos”, who look to him and his music to help them cultivate powerful, every day acts of protest and resistance. From this perspective, I argue, we can see Morrissey's clear position as an ally and protest singer for gay vatos in love in Los Angeles and beyond.

**'HE SINGS ABOUT ME, AND I LIKE HIS
STYLE:' MORRISSEY AND TRANS-BUTCH
PROTEST IN WHITTIER BOULEVARD**

Billed as a play about “fathers, sons, Thee Midniters, and East Los trans-butth Morrissey realness” (Spillers 2013), the original 2013 version of *Whittier Boulevard* features Morrissey as a prominent figure of inspiration,

protest, and salvation for Vic,²¹ the play's young queer "East Los trans-but^{ch}" (transitioning FtM²² teen) protagonist. The main conflict in *Whittier Boulevard* pits Vic against Will, Vic's old-school Mexican American father who espouses traditional gender beliefs. Underage Vic needs his father to sign the permission slip to begin testosterone treatments. Will refuses to sign, while Vic insists on being seen by Will as a boy and his son. By the end of the play, despite his father's and other outside challenges to his masculinity—and the still unsigned permission form—Vic emerges as the victor with his newfound queer masculine identity intact, having won over the girl of his dreams and the unexpected respect of his father. In the process, Vic upholds Morrissey as a symbol of social protest by putting the singer's songs and style to work in the personal-is-political²³ project of queer transmasculine affirmation.

In *Whittier Boulevard*, Morrissey represents an avatar appropriated by Vic in his queer protest against the cultural constructs of heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobia that circumscribe the play's action. Specifically, Morrissey's solo songs "First of the Gang to Die" (2004) and "Every Day Is Like Sunday" (1988), as well as the singer's personal style—from Morrissey's signature pompadour-like hairstyle to his 1990s-era suited look—serve as the means by which Vic mounts his own protest of conventional gender expectations. The 2013 stage set showed audiences a poster of a younger, 1990s-era blazer-sporting Morrissey adorning Vic's bedroom wall. Stage directions tell us that Vic dresses in "full Morrissey drag—slick pompadour, tailored suit, skinny tie" (Spillers 2013), in homage to his sartorial and musical hero. The visual elements of the Morrissey poster and Vic's outfit establish the youngster's fandom and admiration of the singer: Vic wants to look like Morrissey, viewed by Vic as an ideal model of his emerging queer masculinity. This fandom, significantly, forms the basis for Morrissey's transformation from a fan-object to a symbol of active protest for Vic.

The turning point of the play comes when Will spies Vic's black eye and assumes that Vic was "bashed" because of how he dresses (wearing a "clown suit") and acts ("girls kissing girls"). To Will, Vic's Moz-inspired style is too masculine: "you don't have to dress like him" (Spillers 2013, 4), says the father to his "little girl." Will's comments deny Vic's masculinity and reveal his own refusal to accept Vic as his son and a *boy* who wants to kiss girls. However, Vic insists on wearing his Morrissey-esque threads, telling his father, "He sings about me, and I like his style" (Spillers 2013, 4). Like the "Gay Vatos" in the previous section who "hear Morrissey" and "feel alright," Vic recognizes himself ("he sings about me") in Morrissey's songs and, we can assume from Vic's adoption of Moz-like outfits, feels validated about his transmasculine identity by what he hears and sees in Morrissey's singing. In fact, Vic is proud of his look and tells his dad he likes dressing like the English singer, looking "so fly in my grey silk, my swaggar, the Tres Flores

rolling through my hair like ribbons” (Spillers 2013, 5).²⁴ In embracing Morrissey’s masculine suited style and asserting his right to wear such clothes, Vic embodies protest and challenges his father’s insistence on calling Vic “m’ija”, his daughter.

Vic’s Moz-inspired style also give him the confidence he needs to assert his newfound masculinity in public, which also means taking ownership of his black eye. Vic was not bashed, as Will believes, but hit when he started a fight over a girl at an open-mic night. What appears to be a private battle between father and son has public implications for Vic, who welcomes the opportunity to take his queer gender protest ‘to the streets’—to Whittier Boulevard, a main thoroughfare of East Los Angeles, to be exact.²⁵

The transformative moment in the play, Vic’s black eye, happens at the open-mic night on Whittier Boulevard, where Vic sang Morrissey’s hit, “Every Day Is Like Sunday” (1988) to an admiring crowd. A beautiful girl with “ruby lips”, uninterested in her disrespectful cis-male²⁶ date, smiled at Vic as he sang Morrissey’s song. Vic recounts the story of his black eye to Will: “I squeeze past him and I look her in the eye and I say to her: ‘You. Have never. Been in love’. You have never been in love. And her homie looks at me like ‘What?’ And I kiss her” (Spillers 2013, 5). Vic borrows his pick-up line, “You have never been in love”. from the opening lyric of Morrissey’s song, “First of the Gang to Die”. Much to Vic’s delight, the line works. When the girl’s humiliated date hits Vic after Vic dares to kiss ‘his’ girl in front of him and everyone else at the club, Vic nevertheless claims victory: the girl grabs Vic’s hand and runs out of the club with him, leaving the jilted date behind. Suddenly, a Morrissey lyric-turned-smart pickup line becomes something much more for Vic. In taking responsibility for his black eye, Vic refuses victimhood and instead, claims his right to assert his transmasculinity in public—a powerful act of queer protest, resistance, and self-realization through music (Taylor 2012; DeNora 2000).

This key scene reveals a few things about Vic’s character and the extent to which Morrissey’s language in the form of song lyrics serves Vic’s multiple acts of assertive resistance, including social protest. In stepping in to kiss the girl, Vic enacts Muñoz’s (2009) definition of queerness as “a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present.... Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (1). While we do not see this action on stage, we know that Vic’s queer romantic act represents a pivotal point in the play’s narrative: he rejects the “here and now” of gender normative, heterosexual imperatives and “insists on [the] potentiality for another world” where he can be himself with the girl he likes in the world of *Whittier Boulevard* and beyond. Accordingly, we can recall Kun’s (2005) notion of “audiotopias” in understanding the

impact of the two Morrissey songs in creating the transformative and affective spaces for Vic to fully embody his queer masculinity.

In *Whittier Boulevard*, Morrissey's songs "Every Day Is Like Sunday" and "First of the Gang to Die" serve as effective agents for Vic's poignant self-assertions in the face of cis-men's denial—his father's and the girl's date—of his transmasculinity. Moreover, Vic's use of these particular songs expands our notions of what a protest song can be: "Every Day Is Like Sunday" and "First of the Gang to Die", in contrast to the typical Morrissey protest songs "Meat Is Murder" and "Ganglord". Unlike the celebratory public protest song by Ozomatli, the former are transformed here into improbable protest songs by Vic, who acts through them to protest heteronormativity and challenge transphobia in his personal and public life. Therefore, in the specific contexts of queer romantic love, trans identity and familial conflict resolution represented in *Whittier Boulevard*, "Sunday"—a lush and melancholy tune about a neglected "seaside town" in England, and "First of the Gang", Morrissey's ballad-like ode to a fallen Latino Los Angeles gang member—become vital to Vic's self-preservation and, at the end, unexpected songs of his own personal protest.

More to the point: "Sunday" and "First of the Gang" become alternative kinds of protest songs in the specific conditions and contexts of Vic's acts. From dressing like him and using his song lyrics to advance his queer romantic agenda, Vic represents the "spirit of opposition" that transforms Morrissey from a lover's crooner to a fighter's rebel yell, his songs from romantic odes to "political song[s]" that "offer resistance" (Dunaway 1987, 269) to the social and political conditions of gender oppression. Finally, we can attribute these moves to the very context of the play itself, a politically-informed Chicano teatro-inspired acto that reflects a "tone of social critique" (Broyles-González 1994, 27), illuminates a social problem (gender oppression, transphobia), and "inspire[s] the audience to social action" (Valdéz 1971; Huerta 1982). In *Whittier Boulevard's* representation of queer Latino Los Angeles, Morrissey's song lyrics become "language we use", to echo his song "Glamorous Glue" (1992), in a trans-butche's fight against oppressive heteronormative, homophobic, and transphobic imperatives: Morrissey, perhaps unassumingly but not without grounds, becomes a protest singer for the Vics of the world.

CONCLUSION

If Morrissey "look[s] to Los Angeles for the language", as he sings in "Glamorous Glue" (1992), I have attempted to demonstrate how "Gay Vatos in Love" and *Whittier Boulevard* show us how and to what ends Los Angeles Latinos/as, especially queer Latinos/as/x, look to Morrissey for their language of protest. I have highlighted gender, race, class, historical, geographical

and sonic contours of Morrissey's song "Ganglord," Ozomatli's song "Gay Vatos in Love", and Spillers's play in my analysis of song lyrics, musical stylings, scripted action, and contextual signs. As "systems of representation" (Hall 1997), the texts foreground queer Latino figures of "gay vatos" and "trans-butches" to "negotiate dominant and oppositional codes...and interpret Morrissey's language, lyrics and appearance as reflections of their own identity" (Woronzoff 2011, 283), as we see Vic do in *Whittier Boulevard*. I have illustrated the ways in which "Gay Vatos In Love," and by extension Morrissey's songs, operate as "celebratory protests" (Kershaw 1992) of homophobic discourses, exclusionary legislative practices and racism directed at Latinos/as and other people of color in 1990s and 2000s in the United States.

The signs and codes of Morrissey as a figure of social protest are put to work for a range of political projects, and they take different forms, in each of the texts I discuss. For Ozomatli, this means invoking Morrissey as a Mexican cultural symbol (*vis-à-vis* Juan Gabriel) in a way that aligns him with a range of liberal political agendas, from LGBT "equal rights" and anti-hate campaigns to calls for the world to understand the particular oppressions experienced by gay vatos in love. Spillers shows us that for Vic, Morrissey takes the form of fan-object and model of queer masculinity, which has personal-political implications for him. Furthermore, the play shows us how Morrissey's songs "Every Day Is Like Sunday" and "First of the Gang to Die" take the forms of unexpected protest songs: they are Vic's language for self-assertion and public ownership of his queer trans masculinity.

On their own and working together, "Gay Vatos in Love" and *Whittier Boulevard* in the end demonstrate that Morrissey's position as a figure of protest and resistance is largely predicated on his status as a pop music icon who is also someone with something to say to and for the communities that look to him for their political needs and desires. The specific forms of Ozomatli's celebratory popular protest song and Spillers's teatro-style *acto* also work to summon Morrissey in highly political ways, assigning to him the status of a social protest singer by virtue of his representation in these particular texts. In many ways, while Morrissey and his vast catalogue of Smiths and solo songs can duly stand on their own as songs of social protest, I would venture to say that he could not be a proper protest singer without the "gay vatos" and "trans-butches" who need him to be.

NOTES

1. I use "queer" as a critical term that pivots on a critique of normativity and aims to challenge hegemonic constructs and binaries that include, but are not exclusively tied to, gender and sexuality.

2. “Latino/a” is an umbrella term used in the U.S. to denote those populations with origins in Latin America, including Mexico, Central America, South America, and Caribbean nations such as Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. “Chicana/o” is a political identity that refers to US-born people of Mexican descent. I will use “Latino/a” accordingly as a general descriptor term (e.g., “Latino Los Angeles,” “Latino/a fans”) that includes, but is not limited to, Chicanas/os. I will use “Chicana/o” alone or with “Latina/o” for emphasis where appropriate. “Latinx” and “Chicanx” are more recent terms that challenge the inherent gender binaries of the masculine “-o” and feminine “-a” endings. I will use “Latina/o/x” and/or “Chicana/o/x” when appropriate to refer to queer fans in an effort to be inclusive of gender identities.

3. Ozomatli was formed in 1995 in Los Angeles. Its main members include Jiro Yamaguchi on percussion, Wil-Dog Abers on bass, Asdrú Sierra on piano and vocals, Justin Porée on percussion, Ulises Bella on saxophone, and Ray Pacheco on guitar and vocals. The band have roots in community organizing throughout LA’s historically immigrant and working class Eastside, playing local fundraisers and community events with other LA-based activist-oriented bands (Viesca 2000, 2004) before bursting onto the national Latin-alternative music scene in 1998. Ozomatli have since released ten albums, won Grammy awards, were appointed Cultural Ambassadors by the US State Department, and continue to tour in cities across the United States and beyond.

4. The song appeared on the band’s 2010 album, *Fire Away*.

5. Federal courts overturned Prop 8 in 2010, ruling it unconstitutional.

6. See www.noh8campaign.com. Accessed August 2016.

7. I refer to the lyrics in Morrissey’s 1992 song, “Glamorous Glue”, the second track from his album *Your Arsenal*. In “Glamorous Glue”, co-written by Alain Whyte, Morrissey sings, “We look to Los Angeles for the language we use, London is dead”.

8. I refer to the high profile US media coverage of the police-related deaths of Michael Brown (2014), Freddie Gray (2015), Oscar Grant (2009), Sandra Bland (2015), and Jesse Romero (2016).

9. Davis (2000) writes of “the Mexicanization of Southern California” (2), while F. Aldama (2016) describes the “massive growth in the demographic presence of Latina/os in the U.S.” (3). “Mexican”, “Chicana/o” and “Latina/o” are discrete but related terms and should not be conflated. As explained in note 1 above, “Latina/o” includes Chicanas/os and Mexicans living in the United States.

10. This is not to suggest that all fans in “Moz Angeles” are Latino/a/x, nor that all Latinas/os/x in Los Angeles are Morrissey fans.

11. Trump campaigned on a racist platform that demonized Mexicans and Muslims, promising that as president, he would “build a wall” along the US-Mexico border and “ban Muslims” from entering the United States.

12. The *¡Oye, Estéban!* (Spanish for “Hey, Steven”, a familiar reference to the singer’s first name) tour from 1999-2000 marked the first time Morrissey performed in Mexico and South America. Two years later, Morrissey would support the Mexican alternative rock band, Jaguares, in three California shows. These and other gestures account for the proliferation of media coverage on what has been called “the Mexican” and more broadly “the Latino” Morrissey fan phenomenon. See Hidalgo 2016.

13. The track “Irish Blood, English Heart” appears on Morrissey’s 2004 album, *You Are the Quarry*, recorded in Los Angeles.

14. See note 5.

15. Band members describe the song’s message as such in the official promotional video for “Gay Vatos in Love”, available on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/K6pe3LUL5Z4> Accessed March 2015.

16. This song takes on new resonances for gay Latinos in the U.S. under the Trump-Pence administration and in the aftermath of the Pulse club “Latin Night” shooting incident in Orlando, Florida, on June 12, 2016.

17. Proposition 8, the ‘gay marriage ban’ bill as it was known, must be understood in relation to the plethora of anti-immigrant legislation passed by California’s voters through the 1990s. These include: Proposition 187 (1994) which sought to ban undocumented immigrants from accessing public services; Proposition 209 (1996), which eliminated race-based considerations in state hiring practices and public university admissions; and Proposition 227 (1998), which banned bilingual education in schools. All three of these bills disproportionately targeted the Spanish-speaking, immigrant populations in California. This pervasive anti-immigrant (read: anti-Mexican, anti-Central American) racist climate aided and abetted the homophobic discourse of Proposition 8.

18. Juan Gabriel died on August 28, 2016. Mexican fans of Morrissey and Juan Gabriel often compared the two (Jonze 2015).

19. “JuanGa” is the nickname of Juan Gabriel, akin to “Moz” for Morrissey.

20. In her 2013 poem, “Torcidaness: Tortillas and Me”, Reyes describes the street scenes of East Los Angeles: “[F]rom the barrios of East L.A..../Morrissey The Smiths dominated airwaves of Mexican Impala cars.” Reyes uses the term “torcida” to mean “crooked” and a slang term for queer.

21. In the 2013 production of the play, the lead character is named Vic. Spillers changed the name of his transgendered protagonist to André for the short film version of *Whittier Boulevard*, which differs from the stage versions produced in 2013 and 2016. I quote from the original 2013 stage version of *Whittier Boulevard*. I thank Michael Patrick Spillers for generously providing me with scripts of all three versions of *Whittier Boulevard*.

22. “FtM” describes a transgender man, or someone assigned female (F) at birth and has transitioned to a male/masculine gender identity (tM). We can understand this in the play as Vic’s transition from “m’ija”/daughter to “m’ijo”/son. “M’ija” is a Spanish contraction for “mi hija”, meaning “my daughter”.

23. “The personal is political” is a feminist tenet and slogan associated with the US women’s movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

24. Tres Flores is an old-school hair pomade popular with Mexican men.

25. Johnson (2013) provides a critical insight into the historical significance of post-World War II-era Whittier Boulevard as a physical place and an imagined utopian space immortalized by the East Los Angeles band, Thee Midnites, where people “moved themselves through space, shaped the spaces where they congregated, and asserted their entitlements with the cultural currency they created” (65).

26. A person whose gender identity corresponds to his/her birth sex.

Chapter 26

Rising from the Ashes of “The Grove” *The Efficacy and Aesthetics of Protest Songs Represented in Ry Cooder’s Chávez Ravine*

Donnacha M. Toomey

This chapter interrogates American singer-songwriter Ry Cooder’s songs of social protest, from his 2005 concept album, *Chávez Ravine*¹. Focussed on the plight of a Los Angeles Mexican American neighbourhood² of the same name during the Cold War, Cooder’s re-examination is particularly symbolic as contemporary tensions between the United States and Mexico come under intense global scrutiny. Having reinterpreted numerous socio-politically motivated songs early in his career³, *Chávez Ravine* spearheaded Cooder’s foray into the protest song “genre” (Martinelli 2017). Deploying content analysis, I examine the efficacy of “musical utterance” (Nettl 2010, 45) as anti-gentrification protest. This is partially achieved through consideration of the communicative measures advocated by cultural theorist and literary critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin⁴. What Frith (1996, 1986) terms “non-verbal devices” are also examined in enriching the listener experience. Ultimately, it is the reciprocal relationship between the lyrical content and musical accompaniment which sustain Cooder’s socio-political narratives, a dialogue which becomes integral in contextualising the wider legacy of Chávez Ravine. Drawing on the political views expressed in other recordings throughout his career and sources which include other protest singers, part of my analysis considers the evolution of Cooder’s sound as sonic protest.

Underpinning the protest songs of *Chávez Ravine* is the global phenomenon of “gentrification” (Atkinson and Bridge 2013, 51–70; Smith and Williams 2013), a term originally used by sociologist Ruth Glass (1964) to describe the displacement of working class Londoners from urban centres by middle class colonists. Often expressed as regeneration, or urban renewal, gentrification is a process which in addition to altering an area’s socio-cultural infrastructure, is consistently negotiated in the name of *progress*. While according to Slater (2011, 572–74) gentrified neighbourhoods undergo a “spatial”

metamorphosis as a consequence of their prolonged neglect, he argues that the phenomenon stems from a wider issue of "class inequality". Although pre-dating the first wave⁵ of gentrification by several years, displacement of the Mexican American inhabitants of Chávez Ravine echo its more contemporary interpretations as "white Anglo appropriation of urban space" (Atkinson and Bridge 2013, 52) or the "transformation from low-status neighbourhoods to upper-middle-class playgrounds" (Shaw 2008, 1698). The transformation of an enclave such as Chávez Ravine into a state of the art *playground*, (in this case an elitist sports stadium), is an early instance of what Smith (2002, 427) terms "neoliberal urbanism". Lees (2012, 161) shares such a view, arguing that the prevalence of gentrification is predicated on its accordance with neoliberalism⁶, where economic interests triumph over human values. Moreover, financially motivated "replacement" is deemed intrinsic to *Latino gentrification* (Inzulza-Contardo 2011, 2103), with "traumatic" results for those who attempt resistance. Despite efforts to reimagine gentrified areas as "urban renaissance" (Lees 2008; Evans 2002) or "creative cities" (Florida 2005; Tay 2005; Peck 2005, 742), maintaining continuity with the traditions of existing neighbourhoods remains problematic. The neighbourhood of Chávez Ravine represents a particular case, as subsequent to being denied improved housing, the area was completely demolished, hence the cataclysmic bearing on its inhabitants. While the protest songs of Ry Cooder on *Chávez Ravine* voice adversity towards the process of gentrification they also forewarn listeners of its wider societal repercussions.

METHODOLOGY

Broadly speaking, I concur with Weinstein's (2006, 4) assertion that the word "protest" in "protest song" signifies "opposition to a policy, an action against the people in power that is grounded in a sense of injustice". While I argue that Cooder's voice is combative on *Chávez Ravine*, his form of protest song is invariably codified so as to accommodate both historical and cultural context. For this reason, it does not strictly adhere to the "explicit statement of opposition"⁷ in the description of protest song advanced by Laing (2003, 345). Pre-eminently, *Chávez Ravine*⁸ represents social protest songs which preserve their integrity as "functional music" (Martellini 2017, 9) encouraging solidarity on behalf of the listener. Central to the effectuality of protest songs is their ability to communicate sonically, which is "why we don't read protest songs, we listen to them" (Moore 2013, 397). While content analysis (Krippendorff 2012; Krippendorff and Bock 2009) has proven effective in interrogating audio scientifically (Stemler 2015, 9–10) rather than conform to a stringent interpretation of this method I focus on one which considers

communicative measures both in terms of “meanings” and “intentions” (Prasad 2008, 173). As a methodology, its strength according to Prasad (Ibid., 176), lies in dealing with a “social phenomenon such as prejudice, discrimination or changing cultural symbols”. My analysis begins by contextualising Ry Cooder’s connectivity to the recorded work of *Chávez Ravine*, giving consideration to influences from his early years as a session musician in Los Angeles. This is supported through illustration of the political backdrop from which Cooder emerges in the late 1960s and early 1970s, drawing parallels with the quandary which became known as “The Battle of Chávez Ravine” (Hines 1982). Cooder’s form of protest is *social* in the way he constructs a “sonic vocabulary” (Regev 2013, 162) with a view to actuating change. Features of Bakhtin’s “dialogic communication” (1979; 1984) are considered in understanding the connection the artist (Cooder) strives to achieve with the listener (other). As Bakhtin (1990, 170) affirms “the voice can sing, only in a warm atmosphere, only in the atmosphere of possible choral support” and I posit that Cooder secures allegiance by composing a tangible identity for Chávez Ravine largely through the *subjects* of the aesthetic experience (listening audience). Drawing on the work of sociomusicologist Simon Frith (1996, 159) I consider “words (as a source of semantic meaning), rhetoric (words being used in a musical way) and voices (“human tones” as “signs of persons and personality”). On occasion, rhetoric and voices are substantiated through the musical interplay between English, Spanish and Mexican-American slang as articulated by Cooder and his musical collaborators.

CONTEXTUALIZING CHÁVEZ RAVINE

The son of an Irish German father and Italian American mother, composer and multi-instrumentalist Ryland Peter “Ry” Cooder was destined to become an astute observer and commentator on politics and multiculturalism having spent his early years growing up in post-World War II California. Since his return to recording solo albums again in 2005, following a lengthy period in collaboration with a wealth of international performers, Cooder’s gravitation towards the powerful storytelling models of his early musical influences is palpable. There is evidence to suggest that he was intrigued by the work of political songwriters such as Woody Guthrie even as a child: “Those records and those photographs, the farm security photographs, they made a big impact. I was intrigued by his voice. Of course, the guitar interested me. I was trying to learn them when I was a kid” (Cooder, cited in McKinley Jr. 2011). Furthermore, a deep-rooted blues upbringing resulted in heightened expressivity having learned the music firsthand in his local community. Cooder’s early exposure to Bahamian guitarist and singer Joseph Spence (Metting 2001, 86)

and blues guitarist and vocalist Blind Boy Fuller (Cooder 2014) were particularly inspirational. He cites influential music venue The Ashgrove⁹ however as being instrumental in mastering his craft (Sullivan 2011, 38). At the epicentre of the folk and blues revival of 1950s and 1960s Los Angeles, The Ashgrove was an environment where young musicians such as Cooder could observe established performers informally. In addition to providing exposure for political songwriters including Pete Seeger and Phil Ochs it attracted blues masters like Mississippi John Hurt, and Reverend Gary Davis whose techniques Cooder could study up close. In effect, Cooder was fully immersed in what Brian Eno (2009) calls a Scenius¹⁰, a dynamic musical scene which gave people a place to work across communities and spaces. Notably, at The Ashgrove, Cooder formed the Rising Sons with Henry Saint Clair Fredericks Jr. (better known as Taj Mahal) in 1964 at just seventeen years old, becoming part of one of the first multi-ethnic performing acts of the time (Jackson 2015). The venue however became associated with political unrest in the late 1960s. Following a 1968 visit to Cuba, U.S. academic Donald Bray reports being "heckled" and "assaulted" by a band of Cuban exiles "under the command of Comandante Duarte, a residual part of J. Edgar Hoover's COINTEL¹¹ Program" (Bray 2009, 124–26). Scheduled appearances by Bray prompted two arson attacks on The Ashgrove, leading to its closure in 1973. It was evident that as a Santa Monica native, in addition to his proximity to both the Norteño and Conjunto musical forms and in the midst of folk-blues revivalism, Cooder was embroiled in a turbulent political setting. It was a backdrop which would permeate his first concept album some decades later.

On *Chávez Ravine* Cooder (2005) presents his musical account of the contentious disappearance of a 1950s Mexican American neighbourhood in East Los Angeles, an album where he is very outspoken about the "red scare"¹². *Chávez Ravine* was the subject of a redevelopment plan shrouded in controversy as campaigns to provide improved housing for its residents never materialised. The area was subsequently demolished and a new baseball stadium was erected in its place following a deal with Brooklyn Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley¹³. Professional sports stadiums are renowned for providing "windfalls for host cities" (Baade et al. 2008, 795), hence the proposition for an economically redundant *Chávez Ravine*. In "The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism" Dana Cuff's general statements about urban development suitably describe the situation at Chávez Ravine: "The dominant places are sited upon others that have somehow lost their value in the city. And the new inhabitation comes into being convulsively, sometimes violently, leaving little trace of what it evicted" (Cuff 2000, 5). Importantly, Cuff's viewpoint illustrates a crumbling of ethics in conceding to persuasive business and political interests, a key feature of gentrification which supports Tom Slater's (2011) interpretation

referred to earlier. In the case of Chávez Ravine, it signifies decimation of the habits, customs and beliefs of an ethnic group. Situated within a region of Elysian Park it was not, however, the first time this part of Los Angeles had been represented in song. “Preserven el Parque Elysian” by M. Kelian had been recorded by Pete Seeger (greatly admired by Cooder) on his 1966 album “God Bless the Grass”. Cooder’s recent political narratives¹⁴ are however more outspoken than the approaches taken by Seeger. From the outset, we sense that this is a personal project for Cooder manifested through the confluence of socio-political and musical excursions past and present. *Chávez Ravine* is essentially Cooder’s retrospective musical response to the scale of injustice served here and a gestalt entity which steeps the listener in the former neighbourhood. He substantiates the moral dualism at play where on the one hand seemingly philanthropic activities are juxtaposed with misappropriation elsewhere. In advance of hearing the songs, political tensions are contextualised by way of the formidable cover art, portraying a narcissistic skeletal figure bulldozing the neighbourhood while overlooked by a UFO. The cigar-smoking¹⁵ skeleton, crowned with a baseball cap, is symbolic of endemic societal oppression, further compounding Hackworth’s definition of gentrification as the “production of space for more affluent users” (2002, 815). Its striking red background provides the stage set from which to listen to, assimilate and explore the songs.

PROTEST SONGS OF CHÁVEZ RAVINE

Sonically Chávez Ravine generates lasting visuals inspired by the photography of Don Normark who began chronicling the community as a student in 1948. The title of the opening track on the album is directly linked to the images captured by Normark, who on recalling the project decades afterwards remarked “I began to think I had found a poor man’s Shangri-la” (Normark 1999, 11). In “Poor Man’s Shangri-La”, Cooder welcomes the listener to the neighbourhood in a whispering Mississippi John Hurt like voice, introducing one of its residents simply as a “friend”. Cooder’s firsthand utterances (Bakhtin 1986, 91) are intimate, adopting a hushed tone as if he is recounting the story around the campfire or from his back porch. The “friend” here is as much about the lost neighbourhood, as it is about its inhabitants. He imagines how *Chávez Ravine* would have appeared to a young visitor from outer space at the time. Cooder’s space *vato* (short for *chivato*¹⁶) is a *dude* or *cool guy* hovering overhead in a UFO¹⁷ curiously drawn to the area after picking up a Julian Herrera¹⁸ song on his radio. It is a satirical yet pointed reference to the frequently reported UFO sightings of the 1950s (Geppert 2012; Vizzini 2008), suggesting that aliens were in fact messengers, forewarning residents of impending political

corruption. The protest song advances that aliens, (also synonymous with "outsider" and a dual reference to the "negative" connotations of "undocumented immigrants") (Chávez 2012, 26) are more trustworthy than civil representatives. Cooder employs the objective space *vato* to query the significance of the "red cloud" overhead, as he descends to socialise with the people of Chávez Ravine. Employing Bakhtin's "expressive intonation" Cooder adopts the voice of a casual passerby to highlight what many are choosing to disregard. It is a technique for "stitching together the said, in the speech of the speaker and the unsaid in the context of the situation" (Clark and Holoquist 1984, 208). Cooder's approach is in effect, "double voiced". Firstly, acting as the narrator, he verbalises the setting at *Chávez Ravine* and subsequently he interrogates the situation on behalf of the space *vato* as his time traveller. In doing so he establishes "dialogic communication" (Bakhtin 1979; 1984) between the space *vato* and the listener in trying to understand why this was identified as a Communist area and why it was necessary to destroy such a pleasant community. Aesthetically, this is closely aligned with Ry Cooder's earlier blues-based recordings which by their very nature rely on *call and response* mechanisms. Furthermore, the efficacy of this message resounds whereby two languages adopt a harmonious relationship with many voices. Cooder's rhythmic use of English and Spanish enhances such kinship thereby developing a rapport with the listener. The resulting multivocality or polyphony enhances both the musicality and dynamics of the lyrical component. As proclaimed by DeNora (2000, 73–74), music is a material people use to "fill out and fill in to themselves modes of aesthetic agency and, with it subjective stances and identities". Here Cooder demonstrates both a fondness for and solidarity with the people of Chávez Ravine, thereby affirming fundamental characteristics of his own identity. Cognizant of the power of protest songs he orchestrates a combative force, aggregated through musical collaborators from the epoch. In "Poor Man's Shangri-La" Cooder adopts a celebratory approach to the past, grateful for the existence of *Chávez Ravine*, but in doing so cautions against the risk of complacency. Depicting the neighbourhood as inoffensive and convivial he feels nonetheless compelled to voice his anger at its destruction:

Occasionally there would be photographs in the paper of some poor Mexican family from the ravine watching some bulldozer tear up their little house while being harassed by the LAPD or lectured to by some city politician. I didn't understand any of this until later, long after the deal had gone down. In those days, they called such thing progress (Cooder 2005a, 3).

Evidently, the case of *Chávez Ravine* was already embroiled in a neoliberal construct of "competitive progress" (Slater 2006, 744) a key factor upon which gentrification is founded.

Cooder re-establishes the link with the space *vato* later in the album on the track “El UFO Cayó” (A UFO fell) where on a “mission of prophecy” (Cooder 2005a, *Ibid.*) he speaks to the inhabitants of Chávez Ravine using the Los Angeles based Mexican-American slang, Caló. This slang, a product of Pachuco¹⁹ culture voiced by Don Tosti²⁰ adds accurate “human tones” and “personality” to the recording (Frith 1996, *Ibid.*). Employing a continual drone suggestive of the hovering UFO and the musicality of Hispanic and Latino American subculture, Cooder is unequivocally trying to get back to the “molten lava of events as they happen” (Bakhtin cited in Holoquist 1993, 10). A native of El Paso, Texas, Tosti is as authentic a *voice* as Cooder could have wished for in urging the inhabitants to be vigilant as they face eviction. Tosti’s rich spoken word further prompts the listener to scrutinise the politicised response to the housing crisis. Voicing the space *vato*’s revelation Tosti holds the “gabachos” (Anglos) accountable for the displacement of their community, supporting the gentrification discourse of Atkinson and Bridge (2013). Ultimately, it is Tosti’s smouldering timbre and poise, which negotiate one of the album’s more effectual declarations of protest. Cooder bolsters Tosti’s message by responding with discernible traces of the guitar motif from “Tequila”²¹ (1958), suggestive that the neighbourhood’s revelry is coming to an end. The realisation becomes pronounced as the signature melody fragments, fades and disappears. Co-written with musicians Juliette Commagere (vocals), Jared Smith (keyboards) and his son Joachim, in this protest song Cooder is irritated perhaps most of all by the false hopes of the inhabitants. Discounting the space *vato*’s message, Commagere responds on behalf of the community of Chávez Ravine, voicing the agonising repercussions of “rising anglo hegemony” (Starrs 2007, 405). Lyrically, it emphasises that landowners’ entitlements (including one’s place of birth) are meaningless.

As evident from the lyrical content, Cooder is firmly polarised in his stance, supporting a view articulated by George and Tollefsen, (2011, 125) that human rights are categorically determined by “some other group of individuals”. In conversation with Nic Harcourt on Santa Monica based radio station KCRW Cooder insists that plans for *Chávez Ravine* consisted of a “front room” where there was an interest in creating affordable housing but also a “back room” which wanted to privatise the area and remove what was considered a slum (Cooder 2005b). As “music...brings man closer to man and always gives us some idea about our own kind” (Rousseau 1997, 292), Cooder strongly opposes the passivity of his fellow citizens who he holds accountable for disturbing the ecology of an entire locality.

The heightened political repression of McCarthyism,²² and the fear state which Cooder attributes to J. Edgar Hoover²³ and Nixon²⁴ in particular, was pinpointing where the fear would surface next. In this case, Cooder cites the

"red scare" or effective branding of the "self-sustaining" diaspora of Chávez Ravine as communist (Cooder 2005b). Elysian Park Heights, a progressive suburban area managed by housing official Frank Wilkinson (1914–2006) was proposed to replace Chávez Ravine and internationally renowned architect Richard Neutra was hired to lead its design. Conservatives were of the opinion that public housing was "creeping socialism" (Kaufman 2008, 624), which led to surveillance of Wilkinson by the FBI (under Hoover's command). Dossiers supplied by Los Angeles police chief William Parker subsequently prompted accusations of Communist involvement. Failing cross examination²⁵ by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)²⁶, Wilkinson was sentenced to trial, condemned and finally imprisoned: "It's absolutely the tragedy of my life. I was responsible for uprooting hundreds of people from their own little valley and having the whole thing destroyed" (Wilkinson cited in Goldberg 2010).

Don't call me Red, the musical account of Frank Wilkinson's predicament, is presented in the style of a James Ellroy crime story (Cooder 2005c), promptly situating the listener by way of a vintage radio signal. Cooder's effective use of short staccato sentences (characteristic of Ellroy) creates a sense of anxiety in Wilkinson's voice further heightened by the quiver in Cooder's vocalisations (non-verbal devices) and reciprocating guitar tremolo: "Don't call me red, don't turn me down, I've got a plan. Richard Neutra is my friend, and he's the man". For the purposes of this analysis "non-verbal devices" signify communicative measures exercised through para-language such as "emphases, sighs, hesitations and changes on tone" (Frith 1988, 120). While altering the mood of the piece it facilitates an elaborate transition to heighten Wilkinson's quandary. Cooder's salient vocal montage with 1950s actor Jack Webb interrogating Wilkinson invigorates this trajectory over a sound bed of crime jazz, typical of detective television series of the period. With Webb reinterpreting his role as a police sergeant from "Dragnet"²⁷ the investigation continues to the sound of Cooder's thumping repetitive guitar riff over hypnotic Miles Davis influenced modal trumpet. Such guitar repetition is effectual in transmitting a feeling of injustice and hopelessness, a prevailing characteristic of the blues aesthetic. Juxtaposed with the charge of the dissonant jazz trumpet this polyphonic sequence resonates like a siren indicating that plans for Elysian Park Heights have spiralled into chaos. Intermittently, Cooder employs the lingering chant of "Red Cloud, over Chávez Ravine" by Juliette and Carla Commagere to starkly reiterate the directive of his entire album, that its inhabitants were stigmatised and unjustifiably banished through a premeditated acrimonious intervention. Where Platoff (2005, 248) argues that music is frequently "ignored or, at best, treated as a separate entity" from the words, for the realisation of expressive communication, music must of course be considered at one with the words.

Adopting a story, he learned from speaking to the Father of Chicano²⁸ music Eduardo “Lalo” Guerrero, Cooder crafted the persuasive “Corrido de Boxeo”. Guerrero was very familiar with the destruction of *Chávez Ravine* and after sharing his memories of two of its boxers (Carlos and Fabela Chávez), Cooder saw an opportunity to incorporate their story into his soundscape (Pollie 2008). Essentially, Cooder takes the athletes as representatives of the injustices often served in competing honourably. The protest song advances that fighting against gentrification is futile as even the most resilient of opponents are eventually overcome. Delivered in a classic Mexican story format this song opens with the distinctive accordion sound of Leonardo “Flaco” Jiménez with Ry Cooder on bajo sexto (a 12-string Spanish/Mexican guitar) and guitar. The key lyrical message emerges in the ironic “if you fight clean, you’ll always win, never lose”. Sung in Spanish by Guerrero, this song represents the true embodiment of injustice served at Chávez Ravine.

Cooder’s packaged utterances clearly emerge as “universals of music” (Nettl 2010, 30), forming the “building blocks” which extend beyond the context of the enclave. This becomes most evident in the inclusion of Guerrero’s personal story, substantiated through “Barrio Viejo” (old neighbourhood), a song which mourns the destruction of his former residency in Tucson, Arizona. Mirroring Chávez Ravine, Barrio Viejo was also a Mexican American commune. It is the only song on the recording where Cooder detaches himself as musical contributor, thus heralding Guerrero as authentic carrier of its message. Through Guerrero, Cooder is determined to present an interpretation closer to the truth than one mediated through political discourse. Recounting the equivalent of his “Poor man’s Shangri-La” Guerrero asks how “in the name of progress” the walls framing their livelihood were reduced to debris, thus continuing the wider gentrification narrative. It is a poignant moment in the song, articulating solidarity with the universally oppressed, of whom Guerrero himself is a former member. Upon hearing Guerrero’s “expressive intonation” and gravelly “non-verbals”, it is evident that those deprived of a voice are finally getting an opportunity to speak through the former labour activist. For Guerrero however, he was merely continuing his support of the Hispanic cause as previously acknowledged by former civil rights activist Cesar Chávez (Areyan 2010, 20). Again, in a Bakhtinian sense polyphonic voices are employed to stimulate listener participation. The interplay between Guerrero’s voice and the accordion of Jiménez within a conjunto ensemble not only constitutes a portal to musical heritage but also to the wider experience of what Kun (2000) calls “the aural border”. Guerrero’s heartfelt delivery and uncluttered instrumentation enhance the song’s politicisation as there is nowhere to conceal the utterance.

Just as *Chávez Ravine* was inspired by the photography of Normark, Cooder chose to reciprocate, leaving his parting utterance in visual form. To

conserve the project, incorporating his enthusiasm for automobiles, Cooder commissioned artist Vincent Valdarez to commemorate *Chávez Ravine* in a series of murals on a 1953 Chevrolet lowrider truck (Lopez 2008, 18-20). The meticulously crafted bodywork awakens a time machine thereby becoming the perfect travel companion for the protest songs of the album. It is an indelible reminder of the events which continue to haunt Dodgers Stadium and is preserved aesthetically for generations. One of its most striking images is the eviction of resident Aurora Aréchiga by law enforcement, which at the time "seared the fate into the minds of Los Angeles residents" (Lopez 2009, 456). It was the subject of a large media presence becoming a focal point of the Great Wall mural in Los Angeles much later in 1983. The concept of a mobile mural in the form of a period vehicle is perhaps more persuasive however in publicising a monumental injustice of this scale. It was as Cooder explains a "vehicle for keeping the story alive" and a vivid way not to forget (George, 2007). So as to avoid embellishment of the story this was his way to "set the record straight" as "El Chávez Ravine" went on display to the public in 2007²⁹. Furthermore, "El Chávez Ravine" served as a key reminder of Latino gentrification and a physical counterpart for Cooder's protest songs.

Becoming acquainted with *Chávez Ravine* allows absolute immersion in a lost world, one which we are grateful for having had the privilege to visit, "it's clearly the traveller who gets captured by what he finds, swallowed by the landscape and remade by it" (Smith 2005, 144). "El Chávez Ravine" fuses the sounds of Cooder's songs of social protest with contemporary artistic practice. His evolution as a musical collaborator and citizen of Los Angeles is what informs his ability to undertake an album as aesthetically complex as *Chávez Ravine*. He is therefore a persuasive interlocutor apropos its wider narrative.

CONCLUSION

Ry Cooder's creative response to the controversial gentrification of the Mexican American enclave at Chávez Ravine has led to powerful protest songs rich in emotion, temporal dynamics and broader contemporary symbolism. On examination of Cooder the protest singer, his compositions are all the more persuasive as they reside at the intersection between his personal narrative and the lived experience of his collaborators. While he has proved a master musician, collaborator and producer in various musical styles there is much evidence to suggest that his early influences have become important vehicles to convey utterances of protest. Adopting traditional musical forms whose origins lie within the marginalised communities he represents, Cooder's socio-political revolt is most effective when mediated through "sonic vocabulary".

Grounded in the “dialogic communication” techniques of Bakhtin and the “non-verbal devices” of Simon Frith, such a framework for *Chávez Ravine* realises a unique vantage point for the listener. Content analysis reveals that this is largely achieved through vocalisations, polyphony and characterizations which speak to the listener at an emotionally engaging level. Cooder’s real and imagined narratives negotiate a cultivated assault on supremacy and gentrification with a momentum often subdued within the musical genres he so devotedly endorses. As acknowledged by Dugan and Strong (2001, 329–64), “music makes a world present” and Cooder invites us to “listen to the music for the memory of what you can no longer see” (Kun 2006, 512–14). It is evident that Cooder’s political receptivity and musical repercussions are inseparable, thus forming the fulcrum of his retrospective work.

Former Cooder collaborator and film maker, Wim Wenders, (2001, 333) affirms “the most political decision you make is where you direct people’s eyes”, using clever narrative techniques Cooder the protest singer has become a master at directing people’s ears, allowing them to create powerful visuals through the architecture of his music. Although stylistically he has journeyed quite some distance from his early days in “Rising Sons”, his determination to rise musically in the name of justice and his counter-hegemonic stance is unremitting. “Encouraged” (Sturges 2005) by the ethnic groups whose *voice* he represents, Cooder’s approach to protest songs has proved effectual in bringing the political quandary of *Chávez Ravine* to a wider audience. While *Chávez Ravine* represents a persuasive artefact and symbol of protest against the oppression of Mexican-American citizens embroiled in Cold War politics, the extended state of political tension often referred to as “the new cold war” (Buzan 2006; Chomsky 1982) calls for what Cooder later referred to as “a different kind of protest song” (George 2011). It is therefore no surprise that Cooder’s consequential song narratives are both fierce and unapologetic on subsequent releases³⁰, thus continuing his efficacy as protest singer, a journey which begins on *Chávez Ravine*.

NOTES

1. The first and most compelling in a series of three studio albums widely referred to as the *California Trilogy* along with *My Name Is Buddy* (2007) and *I, Flathead* (2008).

2. Comprised of three small villages La Loma, Palo Verde and Bishop Canyon and named after Julian A. Chávez (1808–1879, former landowner and member of Los Angeles City Council).

3. On establishing himself as a solo artist Cooder reinterpreted Woody Guthrie’s “Do-Re-Mi” on his self-titled debut recording (Cooder 1970), which addressed the reception of Dustbowl migrants in Cooder’s native California. The album also

featured "How can a poor man stand such times and live" by Blind Alfred Reed. A protest singer in his own right, Reed recorded the track in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash (1929). Cooder later featured Guthrie's "Vigilante Man" on "Into the Purple Valley" (1972).

4. Born in Orel, Russia (1895–1975).

5. Professor of Human Geography Loreta Lees identifies four waves of gentrification since the 1960s (see bibliography Lees 2008).

6. Jamie Peck describes neoliberalism as "a potent signifier for the kind of free-market thinking that has dominated politics for the past three decades" (since the era of Reagan and Thatcher) in his book *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (2010).

7. On later albums including *Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down* (2011) and *Election Special* (2012) Ry Cooder's uncompromising antipathy toward American politics is most apparent.

8. The album (2005) features both traditional and original songs; my analysis is directed toward newly composed works on that album, namely; "Poor Man's Shangri-La", "El UFO Cayó", "Don't call me Red", "Corrido de Boxeo" and "Barrio Viejo".

9. A performance venue located at 8162 Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, founded in 1958 by Ed Pearl.

10. "Scenius stands for the intelligence and the intuition of a whole cultural scene. It is the communal form of the concept of the genius" from Brian Eno's *Another Green World* (Dayal 2009, xix).

11. COINTELPRO is a portmanteau for COunter INTELLIGENCE PROgram which began in 1956 as conducted by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

12. A strategy of fear which according to Jonathan Michaels was brought about "to smear those who were not communists but rather socialists or liberals" in *McCarthyism: The Realities, Delusions and Politics Behind the 1950s Red Scare* (2017, 20).

13. Bronx born O'Malley (1903–1979) was manager of the Brooklyn/Los Angeles Major League Baseball team from 1950-1979.

14. In *Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down* (2011) and *Election Special* (2012).

15. Walter O'Malley was often photographed with a cigar.

16. Directly translated from Spanish *chivato* means *informer*.

17. *Chávez Ravine* was not Cooder's first reference to a UFO in song form. In fact, he used the image of a UFO locating terrestrial radio previously on "UFO has landed in the Ghetto", a blues-funk crossover song recorded for his album *The Slide Area* released in 1982.

18. Lead vocalist of 1950s Doo-Wop Group "Little Julian Herrera and the Tigers".

19. A Mexican-American subculture with origins in El Paso, Texas.

20. Edmundo Martinez Tostado, born in El Paso, Texas (1923–2004) and best known for the song "Pachuco Boogie", recorded in 1948.

21. Latin style rock and roll instrumental originally recorded by The Champs. The track perhaps best remembered for the recording by jazz guitarist Wes Montgomery on his 1966 album of the same name.

22. "Any form of persecutory investigation likened to that conducted by (Senator Joseph) McCarthy" (Oxford English Dictionary 2017). Originally coined by editorial cartoonist Herbert Block in *The Washington Post*, March 29, 1950 during the period known as the Second Red Scare.

23. Hoover was the longest serving director of the FBI from 1935–1972.
24. Richard Nixon was a HUAC member from 1947-1950 until elected to the US Senate in 1950.
25. On grounds of the First Amendment (to the United States Constitution).
26. Brenda Murphy describes HUAC as “The Congressional body that is most closely associated with McCarthyism”, in *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television* (2003).
27. A Los Angeles based television and radio series first broadcast in 1951.
28. Melissa M. Hidalgo describes chicano as “a US specific term that came into popular usage during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s”, a “(leftist, progressive) politicized Mexican American” but also a “person of Mexican descent born in the United States” in *Mozlandia, Morrissey fans in the Borderlands* (2016).
29. At the Petersen Automobile Museum in Los Angeles.
30. *Pull Up Some Dust and Sit Down* (Cooder 2011); *Election Special* (Cooder 2012).

Chapter 27

Mariem Hassan, Nubenegra Records and the Western Saharawi Struggle

Luis Gimenez Amoros

Since 2004, I have conducted extensive research on Western Saharawi music in the refugee camps of the Hamada desert, Algeria, and on the music of Western Saharawi transnational communities in Spain (Gimenez Amoros 2006; 2012; 2015). As part of the study of Western Saharawi music, I have also analyzed the eleven albums of Western Saharawi music released by the Spanish record label, Nubenegra. In 2011, during one of my interviews with Nubenegra's director, Manuel Dominguez, he proposed that I compose an album with the Western Saharawi musician Mariem Hassan, fusing Western Saharawi music with other musics such as blues, jazz and African musical styles. As a participant in Hassan's music, as a composer and fellow performer on her album, *El Aaiun Egdad* (2012), in this chapter I examine the effectiveness of Western Saharawi protest songs during Hassan's musical performances with her international band in 2012 and 2013. In essence, I utilize Meintjes' (2003) concept of mediation to analyse the process of musical and social negotiation between Hassan, Nubenegra and her international band for the construction of live performances.

CONTEXTUALISATION OF HASSAN'S MUSIC IN THE WESTERN SAHARAWI REFUGEE CAMPS IN ALGERIA

Western Sahara has been a contested region for the past forty-two years. It was a Spanish colony from 1884 to 1975 but was annexed by Morocco at the end of 1975, and the conflict between the different actors remains unresolved. Possible resolutions of the Western Sahara conflict are either for it to become a Moroccan province or an independent state. The independence of Western Sahara is supported by Algeria, the African Union (AU), the European Union

(EU) and the United Nations (UN). In the international arena, Western Sahara is the only nation on the African continent still in the process of decolonisation (Benabdallah 2009, 419).¹

Between 1963 and 1975, Spain was invited by the United Nations (UN) to initiate the process of decolonization in Western Sahara. In accordance with the UN principle of national self-determination, an agreement to recognize the Western Saharawi people's independence and right to self-determination was formulated in May 1975. This was after UN-led research in the region concluded that the Western Saharawi people were represented by the Polisario Front, a conglomerate of Western Saharawi political parties, and that the majority of the Western Saharawi people desired independence.²

However, in November 1975, Morocco invaded Western Sahara in a historical event known as "the Green March".³ As a result of the brutal invasion, more than half of the Western Saharawi population, including Mariem Hassan, were forced to leave their homeland to seek refuge in Algeria. The Algerian government supplied caravans, convoys and shelter for Western Saharawi civilians in the Algerian Hamada desert. According to Hassan (2011), her music was mainly a means of expressing the incessant suffering of the Western Saharawi's in exile and the annexation of her homeland by Morocco.⁴

In 1976 Hassan started to sing with *El Ualy*,⁵ who composed nationalist songs in support of the Western Saharawi Republic and performed them in the camps and internationally. Within this context, according to Baba Jouly (a representative of the Western Saharawi Ministry of Culture) "the Ministry has always defined Western Saharawi music as the 'voice of the people'; thus, the musicians participating in the creation of this music were not only popular for their individual musical skills, but also for their musical representation of the Western Saharawi Republic" (interview with Jouly, 23 June 2012). For Hassan, El Ualy attempted to create a new national sound based on nationalist lyrics and a pre-colonial musical style known as the *Haul* modal system, which originated in a geographical region called *Trab el Bidan*, covering Mauritania, Western Sahara, southeastern Algeria, southern Morocco and northwestern Mali. The main nexus of the people from *Trab el Bidan* is the Hassanya language, which is a different Arabic dialect from those spoken in Morocco, Tunisia or Algeria.

The *Haul* modal system consists of eight modes and is mostly improvisatory. Each mode contains multiple rhyming verses either in *gaaf* (ABAB) or *talaa* (AAAB) form. As Hassan affirmed (2011), the relationship between the *Haul* modal system and poetry was inseparable for the evolution of this musical style in *Trab el Bidan*. In particular, the poets Bachir Ali and Beibuh instructed Hassan in different ways of singing their poems according to the *Haul* modal system (Gimenez Amoros, 2015, 87) in the Algerian refugee camps.

NUBENEGRA AND HASSAN: A STORY OF POLITICAL SUPPORT THROUGH WESTERN SAHARAWI PROTEST SONGS

Nubenegra is a *World Music* record label located in Madrid. Since 1994, Nubenegra has recorded more than seventy albums of music from the Hispanic speaking world mainly in America, and from Africa (Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea).

According to Manuel Dominguez (2011), Nubenegra's director, the record label's approach to Hispanic music promotes a vast linguistic and cultural hub that needed promotion in the *World Music* industry in the 1990s. As part of Nubenegra's interest in recording such music, Dominguez developed his relationship with Western Saharawi music based on Nubenegra's commercial interest in recording this music, and his political support for the independence of Western Sahara.

The first encounter between Dominguez and Western Saharawi music was when he worked as a music publisher with *Compañía Fonográfica Española* (CFE, Spanish Phonographic Company), prior to the foundation of Nubenegra in 1982. From 1978 to 1984, Manuel Dominguez worked as the coordinator of a "folk and blues music series" called *Guimbarda* by the CFE. As part of this music series, Dominguez edited the album *El Ualy: Polisario Vencera* (produced by Mohamed Tammy) through *Guimbarda* in 1982. This album was recorded live in Barcelona and was offered directly by the PF, the cultural representative of the music in the refugee camps, to Dominguez, as a member of the CFE. In 1997, Dominguez was invited by the Polisario Front to the sixth edition of the music festival of the *wilayas* (camp provinces). During this trip, Dominguez had his first direct experience of Western Saharawi music in its refugee-transnational context. For Dominguez, this trip to the camps was an attempt to promote Western Saharawi music in the *World Music* scene and to regain contact with his political support for the independence of Western Sahara. During his time at the music festival he proposed to the Western Saharawi Minister of Culture, Sidahmed Batal, the possibility of bringing a portable studio to the camps, in order to conduct a commercial anthology of Western Saharawi music. As a result of the agreement between the record label and Batal, Nubenegra published the triple album, *Sahraui* (1998; Saharawi in German) trilogy (Dominguez 2012).

After releasing that album Nubenegra also contracted musicians from the camps with a view to them performing in Europe. A Western Saharawi band (Leyoad) was formed by Nubenegra, and it included Mariem Hassan. According to Nubenegra, during the bands performances in Europe, Hassan started to stand out because of her voice and charismatic image on stage. As a result of Nubenegra's interest in her musical skills and her representation

of the Western Saharawi struggle, the record label subsequently released four of her albums: *Mariem Hassan and Leyoad* (2002), *Deseos* (2005), *Shouka* (2010) and *El Aaiun Egdad* (2012). When talking about her experience as a Western Saharawi artist contracted by Nubenegra from 1998 to 2015, Hassan stated: “I bring the musical and political message of my people with my music everywhere” (2011). In that context her music offers different forms of mediating and innovating Western Saharawi *Haul* and its political representation of the struggle. In her first albums, Hassan performed and recorded with Western Saharawi artists such as Boika Hassan, Baba Salama, Fatta and Vadya. In 2012 the first album recorded by Hassan and international artists was *El Aaiun Egdad*. I took part in the recording process and the tracks were later arranged by Hugo Westerdahl and Gabriel Flores, who had been heavily involved in Western Saharawi musical culture⁶. On this album, the representation of Western Saharawi via nationalist lyrics and the use of *Haul* modes is combined with new musical styles suggested by members of her international band and by Nubenegra. Thus I argue that the effectiveness of Hassan’s protest songs through her cross-cultural band became a new form of mediating Western Saharawi musical culture from the camps.

THE STUDY OF CROSS-CULTURAL MUSIC AND PROTEST SONGS

The internal process of composing cross-cultural music and its impact in the music industry has been largely analysed in ethnomusicological studies (Erlmann 1994; Turino 2000; Meintjes 1990; Feld 2012; Bilby 1999; Regev 2007; Silverman 1995). Many of these scholars examine the socio-political aspects of performing cross-cultural music and how the music industry commercialise such musical projects. As an example, Meintjes (1990) examines the collaboration of South African musicians in Paul Simon’s album, *Graceland*, and how the music industry does not address any form of social criticism towards the apartheid regime in South Africa in the 1980s.

During the launch of Hassan’s *El Aaiun egdat*, many *World Music* magazines also tended to soften the political message of Hassan’s music regarding the Western Saharawi struggle for independence by emphasising her new cross-cultural album or by describing Hassan’s music as part of the exotic notion of “desert blues” (Deneslow 2012; Miller 2012). The deliberate intention to dismiss the political message of *El Aaiun egdat* by intentional exotic narratives exposes narrow views on the possibility of analysing the socio-political context of cross-cultural performances by *World Music* fans.

It is also evident that many scholars concentrate on the ways in which the music industry promotes exotic discourses in the categorisation of *World Music* (Taylor 2007; Bolhman 2002), however, these scholars only expose a critical approach towards the *World Music* industry without considering the internal mediation of the construction of cross-cultural performances by musicians and the effectiveness of protest songs outside the music industry's narratives. In an attempt to gain insight into the socio-political analysis of cross-cultural music, Feld (2012) and Turino (2000) use the notion of cosmopolitanism to address internationally performed musical styles such as jazz, and how cosmopolitan music influenced certain types of African music. As an example, Turino (2000) analyses how American jazz influenced Zimbabwean music during colonial times in Bulawayo. Similarly, Feld (2012) portrays Ghanaian jazz as being powerfully influenced by American jazz. It is important to note that the notion of cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitan jazz transpires under ways in which certain musical styles became internationally popular. However, as an example, the influence of Cuban music in many musical styles in the African francophone world is not observed as cosmopolitan. Therefore, I argue that the concept of cosmopolitanism is influenced by the music industry and its pretentious political ambiguity.

Given that many studies on cross-cultural performances and cosmopolitan music are largely influenced by exotic discourses of non-Western music, this chapter finds it appropriate to use the notion of mediation in order to analyse the effectiveness of Hassan's protest songs through the collaboration of her cross-cultural band and her record label, *Nubenegra*. The notion of mediation focuses on the internal construction of Hassan's musical performances with her band rather than on analysing the external exposure of cross-cultural music. The notion of mediation thus helps to consider how Hassan's protest songs are powerfully negotiated between Hassan and non-Western Saharawi agents during the construction of musical performances.

MEDIATION AS A WAY OF ANALYSING THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MUSICIANS FOR THE PREPARATION OF MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

The concept of mediation is used by the ethnomusicologist Louise Meintjes (2003) to examine the interaction between Zulu artists, and sound engineers and producers in a recording studio in South Africa. Meintjes refers to mediation as the musical negotiation by the agents involved in a musical production in the studio (Meintjes 2003, 60). She defines mediation as follows:

Mediation embeds layers and layers of experience in the expressive commodity form, and it opens up multiple possibilities for interpretation of those embedded

experiences in arenas like commodity production, social practice, and political struggle in different communicative modes. (Meintjes 2003, 261)

In contrast to Meintjes' application of the concept of mediation in a studio, I argue that mediation can be also used to analyse the social and musical negotiation involved in the process of preparing live performances between musicians with different musical backgrounds. The notion of mediation is appropriate for the analysis of cross-cultural performances of Hassan's music because it considers the musical and social negotiation between local and international agents directly involved in the process of composing and arranging Hassan's music either in the studio or for the preparation of musical performances representing Western Saharawi protest music. In this chapter I focus on the internal mediation between Hassan and the agents involved in the preparation of her live performances without addressing the music industry or other global agents.⁷

The chapter analyses three types of mediation during the preparation of Hassan's musical performances: collective communication during rehearsals in order to use the *Haul* modal system and other non-Western Saharawi musical forms; individual communication with Hassan's music, using the musicians' musical knowledge to innovate Hassan's music; and educational concerts in Senegal informing audiences about Hassan's music and the Western Saharawi struggle as a third mediated form of communication.

In order to analyse the notion of mediation for the preparation of Hassan's live performances and, from a musicological point of view, I include both the collective decisions of the agents involved in Hassan's music during rehearsals, and the individual musical arrangements composed by each musician. I emphasise the importance of individual adaptations of the sound recorded in studio for live performances by the musicians, and the collective decisions for the final arrangements of the songs to be performed on stage. The musical arrangements for her live performances are negotiated between western musicians (Westerdahl, Flores and myself), Western Saharawi artists (Hassan and El Hanevi) and Nubenegra Records. Further, the internal mediation compares the different musical negotiation between the process of composing and recording the album *El Aaiun Egdat* and the social mediation of the music through performances.

In this chapter, the concept of mediation also focuses on various aspects of individual musical taste, musical aesthetics and musical experience that the Saharawi artist wanted to experiment with in her music. This point resonates with Meintjes' notion of mediation, that "processes of meditation ... become analytically inseparable from conceptions of ... musical experience" (2003, 220). In this case, Hassan, her international band and Nubenegra choose to create a new musical experience of Western Saharawi music in *El Aaiun*

Egdat, offering an experimental album recorded by Hassan with non-Western Saharawi musicians. During the construction of musical performances, Hassan tended to agree with the musical changes made by the musicians and encouraged them to explore new ways of fusing their styles with her music and the *Haul* modal system.

The mediation between different non-Saharawi agents and Hassan's music also resonates with Meintjes' idea on the mediation between agents from different "socio-political positioning[s]": "While formal musical elements define a style, that style derives its meaning and affective power primarily through its association with the socio-political positioning and social values of music participants" (2003, 9). Regarding the socio-political elements that condition the interaction between Hassan and her band members for the preparation of international performances, this article also analyzes the representation of the Western Saharawi struggle for independence through Hassan's *El Aaiun Egdat* and how it obtains an intra-musical dimension by the participation of international artists during live performances.

The re-invention of Hassan's representation of Western Saharawi music lies on the use of new musical structures and the use of the *Haul* modal system with an international band in contrast to her previous albums in which the representation of Western Saharawi music from the camps by local musicians is evident.

COLLECTIVE COMMUNICATION AS A FORM OF MEDIATION: MUSICAL CONSTRUCTION IN HASSAN'S PERFORMANCE OF *EL AAIUN EGDAT*

There was a dichotomy between Western Saharawi and non-Western Saharawi musicians regarding the structure of Hassan's songs for musical performances. International musicians, Westerdahl (bass) and Flores (saxophone and other wind instruments), proposed cyclical structures of songs in order to have a reference point during live performances. I refer to "cyclical structures of songs" which is consistent with the western popular strophic form of eight or sixteen beats cycle "verse-chorus-verse" (ABA) or only "verse" (A-A).⁸ On the other hand, Hassan and El Hanevi suggested learning to improvise within the *Haul* modes (see figures below) because Western Saharawi musicians generally compose songs by following the melodic line of the voice based on the *Haul* modes.⁹ As a result of a constant negotiation regarding structure and improvisation, the combination of cyclical structure of songs suggested by international musicians and the use of the *Haul* modes in Hassan's music demonstrates that musical practices are "conventionalized but they are also unpredictable and improvised" (Meintjes 2003, 259), in this case, by the intra-musical context of Hassan's band during rehearsals.

Nubenegra, had to provide the final approval of the musical arrangements of Hassan's songs for musical performances and their decisions included views on: the importance of incorporating an appropriate musical accompaniment to Hassan's voice by using the *Haul* modes and other non-Western Saharawi musical structures; and the regular duration of songs considering song structures from which cyclical structures of songs were approved by the record label. Nubenegra's approval of song structures is also related to what Meintjes defines as the "power structures" shaped by record labels over musicians' agency (2003, 11). Regarding Nubenegra's approval of the new musical arrangements for the live performances, the record label attempted to find a relative accuracy of sound with the timbre and song structure (beginnings, interludes and finales) of each song on the album. The beginnings, interludes and finales were not primarily conceived by Western Saharawi musicians because the *Haul* modal system is improvisatory and non-structured in different musical parts. In such circumstances, there were regular misunderstandings between the western musicians (in the search of structure within the songs rather than following the voice as is characteristic of *Haul* music) and Western Saharawi musicians. In order to achieve a fluid musical interaction as a band in Hassan's musical performances, Nubenegra suggested that the interaction between international musicians, Hassan and El Hanevi was firstly based on the attempt to re-enact the sound and song's structure of the tracks recorded in *El Aaiun Egdad*. Hassan's live performances of *El Aaiun Egdad* offered a new form of revealing her musical heritage based on the *Haul* modal system within cyclical structures suggested by her non-Western Saharawi band members, therefore, a musical change of direction from traditional ways of improvising within the *Haul* modal system to new forms of understanding *Haul* music was suggested by her non-Western Saharawi band members the international musicians. As Meintjes (2003, 9) notes, the mediation of musical "aesthetic and exchange value" is reflected in the audio recordings and, in this case, the new musical aesthetics and exchange value is suggested by Nubenegra's idea of re-enacting Hassan's album, *El Aaiun Egdad*.

As part of the musical exchange of values and aesthetics among musicians, Ali J. Racy's view on performance notes that it "depends on three interrelated factors: compositional devices shared by participants; the artist's musical skills; and the listener's musical disposition and sensitivity communicated through direct emotional-musical input" (1998, 103). Considering Racy's view on the various aspects of communication among musicians that condition the final outcomes of the performance, in practice, during the first concerts presenting *El Aaiun Egdad*, there were musical parts that were dependent on the *Haul* modes and musical improvisations; rather than on a clear structure of the songs. For instance, depending

on the concert, performances of the “blues cadence song I-IV-V-I” Ana Saharawia lasted from five to eight minutes. Thus, there were regular problems performing Ana Saharawia with a cyclical structure as suggested by Hassan’s international band. With the performance of this song, rather than “compositional devices shared by participants”, there was a conflict between structuring songs and improvising them using the *Haul* modal system. The artist’s “musical skills” were not valid in the structuring of Ana Saharawia; thus, the western musicians tended to play simple accompaniments which followed Hassan’s voice rather than following a fixed structure for the song.

MAIN MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS PRODUCED BY EACH MUSICIAN FOR LIVE PERFORMANCES AND WHICH DIFFERED FROM THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN THE ALBUM *EL AAIUN EGDAT*

In the analysis of new musical structures through mediation among actors involved in a musical project, I am drawn to Meintjes’ observations on musical timbre. She describes timbre as, “the carrier of much more of the affective, generic and social significance imputed to musical expression” (2003, 12). Further, I analyse the musical contribution of each member of her band and how their individual interaction with her music may evoke a different musical timbre for musical performances.

In reference to the interaction between musicians, I compare the musical changes from the recorded album *El Aaiun Egdad* to the new musical textures and timbre of live performances by each musician as follows: the simplification of the guitar for live performances: the wind section as a new timbre in Hassan’s music; and the use of bass which is not common in Western Saharawi music; the *tbal* and backing vocals as part of the traditional timbres of Western Saharawi music; and Mariem Hassan as the lead vocalist.

In the album, *El Aaiun Egdad*, there were three guitars on most of the tracks, yet during live performances there was only one guitar. I had to adapt musical arrangements recorded in the album with three guitar tracks, to one guitar during live musical performances. I composed different solos, which combined arpeggios to complete the general sound of the band; and to approximate the timbre of *El Aaiun Egdad*. Musical arrangements on the guitar were essential to maintaining good musical dynamics with Hassan’s band during live performances.

As an example, during a concert in Helsinki (May 25, 2012), in Arrabi al Arabe,¹⁰ I tended to play long solos because the songs’ structures were based on improvisatory skills rather than cyclical structures. However, five months

later, in a concert in *Espacio Ronda* in Madrid (October 5, 2012)¹¹, the guitar in Arrabi al Arabe sounded more discreet and tended to merely accompany Hassan's voice with cyclical structures. Thus, the mediation of the guitar timbre was negotiated between the band, Nubenegra and the author in order to satisfy the final sound of the guitar, based on a discreet use of *Haul* and cyclical structures. However, the use of the *Haul* modes was always combined with other musical styles. For example, the song Arfa uses the Wassoulou pentatonic major sound (or *lyen*) inspired by a song called Bamanaya; Adumua is inspired by Tuareg cyclical songs that use the *entamas* mode; Arrabi al Arabe is in the *entamas* mode combined with *chimurenga* guitar riffs from Zimbabwe; Yalli Mashi Anni is inspired by Ali Farka Toure's guitar timbre combined with the *lyen* scale, and Ana Saharawia is a minor blues in *entamas* with bluesy chords on the guitar (Gimenez Amoros 2015).

In the mediation of live performances presenting *El Aaiun Egdad*, Flores was responsible for the wind section (saxophone, *ney*, and jaw's harp) and percussion (tambourine and shakers). With regard to the wind section, Flores offered a good understanding of the *Haul* modes and how they can be combined with modal jazz and pentatonic scales. The possibility of using a wind section in Hassan's music offered a new timbre and melodic arrangements, as: in Eftat Almayal, where Flores combines the *leboer* mode with pentatonic scales, which provides a combination between funk and *Haul*. In Rahy El Aaiun Egdad, Flores adds a Dorian-pentatonic sound to the *seinicar* mode and, as a result, it gives a new sound to the *Haul* modes. Flores offers various musical resources to Hassan's band, not only in the wind sections, but in the percussive sounds which reinforce the *tbal* sound in songs such as Adumua¹². Due to the absence of a drum kit, Flores also played the tambourine, tapping it on his right foot, in songs such as Ana Saharawia.¹³

In addition to Flores' involvement in combining the *Haul* modal system with other styles, he travels regularly to the Western Saharawi refugee camps where he is the director and founder of the music school *Enamus*. His dynamic relationship with Western Saharawi music does not only reside in Hassan's live performances. He has existed with Western Saharawi people in another transnational context in the camps, which is different to the musical experience he had with Mariem Hassan in Spain. Flores is a perfect example of what Trimillos describes regarding the interaction of a foreign performer with a non-Western musical style: "Cultural credibility can be achieved by studying and establishing a performance career within the host society" (2004, 45).

For live performances, Westerdahl, the bass player, had to change the bass lines from the recordings because they were not satisfactory to Nubenegra. Dominguez (Nubenegra's director) wanted to approximate the bass sound to the offbeat bass lines encountered in Algerian *rai* or Malian blues (interview

with Dominguez, 17 Dec 2012). Nubenegra's concern to find original bass lines in Hassan's music was because Western Saharawi music had not developed any bass-guitar style since the formation of El Ualy's band of the same name in 1976. In this musical negotiation between a record label and a musician, Westerdahl's musical perception of Western Saharawi music played an important role in the search for a bass sound for it. Westerdahl's knowledge of blues and modal jazz was essential to compose bass lines for Hassan's music. As a result, the bass line provided a different timbre and texture to Hassan's music, which was not based on the use of the *Haul* modal system but in the intuitive use of notes fitting the music. His musical proposal for live performances of *El Aaiun Egdat* was to imitate musical arrangements used in the album but with certain off-beats inspired by the sound of Algerian *rai*.

With regard to the rhythm in Hassan's band, the Western Saharawi artist, El Hanevi was responsible for the rhythmic structure, with the *tbal*. In addition, El Hanevi danced in Ragsat Naama (Ostrich Dance) and Baile del Tambor (Dance of the Drum)¹⁴. She maintained a lively sense of rhythm and also sang backing vocals while playing *tbal*. El Hanevi did not add a new musical value to the live performances but maintained that of the previous recordings of the songs. In their interview with Racy, Marcus and Solis relate his attempt to maintain a musical tradition when playing with other international musicians: "I have been playing with jazz and flamenco groups, and have composed in various experimental styles. However, I want to make the traditional sound a viable option" (Marcus and Solis 2004, 164).

Hassan received criticism from Nubenegra regarding the long spaces between the vocal parts, which were usually shorter in the songs recorded on *El Aaiun Egdat*. According to Dominguez, the problem of "timing and structure" within the songs in live performances was a permanent feature of the band Leyoad and of the other Western Saharawi bands promoted by Nubenegra since 1998. I argue that the different interpretations of musical and cultural aesthetics between Hassan and Nubenegra were used to negotiate her transcultural capital during live performances.

Regarding Hassan's agency on stage, the Western Saharawi artist offers different movements to point out what is occurring during the performance. For instance, she dances towards her musicians while they play solo parts. She received criticism from Nubenegra about the way she was moving and wearing her *melfa* (traditional Western Saharawi clothes for women) yet the artist refused to wear her traditional dress in any way other than how she regularly wore it. For Hassan (2011), the way the *melfa* is worn cannot be judged by an outsider. Further, her image in live performances is designed to represent the Western Saharawi nation (among other possible representations). Hassan's artistic agency thus coheres with Joseph's view on Arab women's representation in live performances; that "agency is relational,

a social performance, thus, creativity is a relational achievement” (Joseph 2012, 9), and not entirely a personal one.

The different arguments from each musician regarding the structure of each song completed the final musical arrangements for Hassan’s performances. In some cases, a misunderstanding between the record label and musicians regarding musical arrangements led to fierce arguments during the planning of musical performances. Nevertheless, there was always a productive debate between the musicians and Nubenegra (Dominguez and Schubert-Wurr) that led us to discuss musical arrangements after every performance. This included watching our concerts on video in order to improve the next musical performance. The possibility of having an opinion from every musician on the musical construction of Hassan’s performances created a participatory atmosphere. However, the last word was always reserved for Nubenegra as producers, managers, and distributors of the album *El Aaiun Egdad*. In sum, the process of constructing Hassan’s live performances as a World Music ensemble coheres with Perman’s view that musical performances are not only about the representation of music, rather it is the product of the musical construction of live performances among individuals and group decisions (2007, 27). In this context the first reference to elaborate the musical performance was the attempt to capture the sound of the album during rehearsals. Second, the agents involved (Hassan, Leyoad and Nubenegra) had to negotiate new musical arrangements to be played during performances. Finally, the overall sound of Leyoad represents a new timbre in Nubenegra’s recordings of Hassan’s music.

ANOTHER FORM OF COLLECTIVE COMMUNICATION: INTERACTIVE LIVE PERFORMANCES AS A TRIO AT *FESTIVAL DU SAHEL* (SENEGAL)

In November 2012, Dominguez decided to offer another type of educational concert, which would be different from the live performances of the album *El Aaiun Egdad*. In that same month, at the *Festival du Sahel* in the desert of Loumpoul (Senegal), Nubenegra organized a concert in one of the *jaimas* (tents), performed by El Hanevi, Hassan and the author. This repertoire was accompanied by visual images shown while we performed. The songs for this concert were divided into three representative categories of Hassan’s music: traditional songs (lullabies, wedding songs, childrens’ and traditional songs); religious songs (*medej*); and political songs related to the Western Sahara conflict.

In this performance, El Hanevi and the author accompanied the vocal parts and occasionally played short solos between the verses of each song. This

Table 27.1 Hassan’s repertoire for a concert in Senegal. Constructed by author.

<i>Traditional Songs</i>	<i>Religious Songs</i>	<i>Political Songs</i>
Arfa (children’s song)	YaArabi	Sbar
Terwah (wedding song)	Sid el Bashar	Magatmilkitnadulaa
Tirka (lullaby)		GdeimIzik
Syantlaydad (song about the ancestors)		Adumua
		YasarGeidu

performance was easier to prepare for than performances of the *El Aaiun Egdat* album because the participants understood the *Haul* musical codes (based on improvisation of the modes and following the singer’s voice). Oloo defines this type of musical interaction as the “structural patterns of sound” (2007, 178) which represent a musical tradition such as Western Saharawi *Haul*.

The musical interaction with the *Haul* modes created a type of social performance as a medium for informing the Senegalese audience about Western Saharawi musical culture. Therefore, the use of *Haul* modes was not only because it was how Hassan is most comfortable singing, it also helped her to re-enact the musical culture of the camps. Yet Hassan’s trio proposed a new musical challenge for the author, as a non-Western Saharawi guitarist, performing Western Saharawi songs recorded by Western Saharawi guitarists such as Baba Salama, Boika, or Nayim Alal. Given that an appreciation of using the *Haul* modes is based on the musician’s improvisatory skills, this repertoire helped me discover that, in the *Haul* guitar, one has to find one’s own *falsetas* (musical variations in each mode). My *falsetas* were based on a mixture of the *Haul* modes and other styles. As Trimillos states, “the term authenticity applied to World Music ensembles is problematic (2004, 28)”. In this case, authenticity can also mean the way in which I improvise traditional songs and do not try to imitate other Western Saharawi guitarists. As such the use of the *Haul* musical system by a non-Western Saharawi may offer another type of authenticity provided by an outsider musician in the representation of Hassan’s transcultural capital.

Hassan’s repertoire improved gradually, since the musical communication and improvisatory skills developed into a better understanding of the *Haul* modal system between Hassan, El Hanevi, and the author. The only structure of the songs was based on the *mawals* (introduction without rhythm and guitar responding to the solo vocal part) and the rhythm. In relation to the guitar’s role during educational performances, the author had to perform in the mode in which the song was written, using different *falsetas*.

Hassan and El Hanevi had a fluid musical interaction with the *tbal* and vocal parts, which was achieved through six years of playing together

internationally. The three of us sometimes discussed how improvising and knowing the musical system of *Haul* music helped us to construct a rapid and efficient repertoire. In contrast, we also discussed the difficult task of structuring songs with the quintet presenting *El Aaiun Egdad*.

In sum, this process contributed to the creation of a new band to represent Hassan's music, with concerts attempting to re-enact how Western Saharawi music is performed in the camps. As a result, the musical interaction involved in this musical performance was based on the musical language of the Western Saharawis without using western harmony on the guitar. This point is consistent with Oloo's understanding, when stating that a musical system is like "most forms of narrative language", it "is not merely descriptive" (2007, 179), rather it is representative.

REPRESENTING HASSAN'S MUSIC AND HER POLITICAL CAUSE: STAGE TALK TO PRESENT SONGS DURING MUSICAL PERFORMANCES

After discussing the musical changes for live performances with each member of Leyoad, another essential factor in the planning of live performances was the introduction of the songs by the author (in English or Spanish, depending on the place of the performance). In order to structure the social and political messages of Hassan's songs, Dominguez prepared different anecdotes and explanations of Hassan's songs for the author to narrate during 'stage talk' which is a way of informing people about songs, in a language that the public can understand. Thus, the audience obtains a better idea of what message the songs are conveying or they are introduced to relevant themes, which Mariem Hassan was singing about. Stage talk was usually assigned to the author as a fluent English and Spanish speaker. However, when we performed in Spain, sometimes, there were more Western Saharawis than Spanish people at the concerts, and in these cases, Hassan also introduced her songs in Hassanya after the author's explanation in Spanish.¹⁵

In most of the introductory narratives for each song, Dominguez emphasized the political involvement with the Western Saharawi cause in Hassan's music. The author, as a non-Western Saharawi person introducing these songs of protest offered a new type of intra-cultural communication representing Hassan's musical and social identity during performances. As Bealle affirms, "the construction of identity in stage talk is important and involves the socio-cultural construction of the band" (1993, 65). Therefore, the stage talk by the author represented both social support to the Western Saharawi cause through Hassan's music and highlighted political or social issues regarding the decolonization of Western Sahara. By way of example,

in Arfa (a children's song where children ask older people for sweets during *Eid el kebir* (the Lamb's Feast), Dominguez suggested that the author say: "Western Saharawi children, as well as Western Saharawi adults, are fed-up with tales and are asking for things that are more concrete" (referring to the resolution of the Western Sahara political conflict). This song thus serves to inform the public about the ongoing situation where more than half of the Western Saharawi population remain in camps waiting for the independence of their country.

Introducing Gdeim Izik,¹⁶ the author said: "Spain behaved ridiculously by turning a blind eye to Moroccan repression of Western Sahara since November 1975". In relation to the lack of support by the Spanish government to the Western Saharawis, in November 2012, one fond memory of the author occurred during the performance of Gdeim Izik at a Western Saharawi protest against the process of Spanish decolonization outside the Spanish Ministry of Affairs in Madrid. During the performance of this song, thousands of Western Saharawis and Spanish people waved Western Saharawi flags in favour of a Western Saharawi referendum for self-determination.

Other songs also related the Western Saharawi struggle for independence to international events such as Arrabi al Arabe (the Arab Spring). The introduction to Arrabi al Arabe was: "This is a salute to all the Arab people who are fighting to be liberated from neo-colonialism and neo-liberal policies in their countries". This song also speaks to the experience of other Arab people such as Tunisians or Egyptians during the social unrest in 2011 and 2012. As a case in point, when the author performed this song during a concert in Helsinki at the *World Village Festival*, many North Africans began to wave their respective flags. Through the explanation of Arrabi al Arabe, Western Saharawis and other Arab people find a common social struggle against the neoliberal policies being pursued in North African countries.¹⁷ For Biddle and Knights, the Arab Spring is a concept that could be based on "the politics of location formed by distributed networks" (2007, 2) across the Arab world and especially in North Africa. In this case, when the song Arrabi al Arabe is performed on stage, a certain sector of the Arab world responds to the "stage talk" not only by waving their nation's flag but also by affirming their political and social convictions to an international movement against neo-colonial ties in North African countries.

Manuel Dominguez believed that the 'explanations of the songs' should be favourable to a Western Saharawi Republic and our "stage talk" should therefore represent the Western Saharawi point of view (Dominguez 2011). This process thus meant that Hassan's concerts became an opportunity to introduce this music culture, replete with its social and political context (and her support for an independent Western Sahara), to global audiences. Yet

this socio-cultural invocation of the Western Saharawi cause by the band led the author to experience different forms of harassment and insults to Hassan by many Moroccan citizens on many occasions. As a case in point, in one concert in Hamm (Germany), there was a Moroccan man in the audience who started insulting Hassan and El Hanevi after the concert. The author had to ask the venue's security guards to tell the person to leave due to his personal intimidation. Indeed, one of the songs from *El Aaiun Egdat* entitled *Almalhfa* narrates the physical assault of Hassan and El Hanevi by Moroccan audience members in Madrid in 2010. On the other hand, there have also been supportive responses by some Moroccan citizens to the Western Saharawi cause during some concerts, such as our performances in Gelsenkirchen (Germany) or in Goteborg (Sweden).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that Meintjes (2003) concept of mediation can be used to analyse the musical negotiation between different agents, either during the recording process of an album, or for the construction of musical performances. By using the concept of mediation, this chapter has emphasized the musical interaction and social representation of Hassan's protest music. The concept of mediation proved useful to analyse new forms of musical experience in which the agents involved in the process were able to negotiate different musical structures and musical styles for performances, and yet represent Hassan's cause—the independence of Western Sahara—through these intra-musical interactions. Thus, I argue that the concept of mediation can be useful in analysing individual and collective interactions in cross-cultural performances that focuses on protest songs.

An important contribution to the analysis of Hassan's construction of live performances has been the notion of timbre in relation to identifying Saharawi and non-Saharawi sounds as conditioned by the Saharawi cultural understanding of Hassan's music. In particular, as observed previously, the sounds of the saxophone and bass guitar as new elements in Hassan's music was contested and questioned by Nubenegra. With regard to the study of timbre in Hassan's musical performances, it was important to note the notions of "authenticity" and "falsity" in relation to the use of the *Haul* modal system fused with other musical styles.

In conclusion, the notion of mediation considers not only the incorporation of musicological aspects in the study of cross-cultural performances, but also reflects on the socio-political condition of the musician and how this may condition decision-making in the studio or during musical performances in order to maximise the effectiveness of protest songs.

NOTES

1. Some of the information about the transnational context given in this section is based on my MMus of 2012.

2. United Nations Security Council resolution 379, November 2, 1975.

3. On November 6, 1975, the “Green March” of 350 000 Moroccan civil volunteers invaded the Western Sahara. On November 14, a secret three-page agreement was signed by Madrid ceding Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania, and lacking any basis with respect to international law. The main factor that postpones the independence of Western Sahara resides in the official letter that the Spanish government signed to cede Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania in November 1975.

4. Hassan had vivid memories of the dramatic exile when they arrived in the refugee camps of Algeria and found thousands of Western Saharawis wounded or seriously ill. For example, two of her brothers were killed at the beginning of the war between the Polisario Front and Morocco (1976–1991).

5. El Ualy refers to the Saharawi icon and representative of the Polisario Front. He died in 1976 and before his death was leader of the Saharawi band named after him representing the views of the PF.

6. Wester Dahl has recorded eleven albums of Western Saharawi music for Nubenegra in his recording studio, Axis. Gabriel Flores has been involved in humanitarian aid and the organisation of cultural events in the Western Saharawi refugee camps of Algeria since 2009.

7. Hassan’s international musicians also recorded *El Aaiun egdat*.

8. The musicians involved in Hassan’s band also referred to cyclical structures as the ABA or AA song’s structures.

9. The *Haul* modal system is composed of eight modes with different melodic intervals. The modes are: *entamas*, *seinicar*, *fagu*, *sgaller*, *leboer*, *lyen*, *letbeit* and *chawada*. For more information about the *Haul* modal system and the musical interaction between singers, guitarists and percussionist, see Gimenez Amoros (2012; 2015).

10. Footage accessed December 5, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3U0NnKf5K0>.

11. Footage accessed December 15, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otqbh9pC7nk>.

12. Footage accessed December 15, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbeW3hRLM1k>.

13. Footage accessed December 18, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmDGKB-VF4s>.

14. Footage accessed December 18, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xYTExOJuNg>.

15. Hassanya is the language spoken in a geographical area *Trab el Bidan*, covering Western Sahara, Mauritania and other areas of northern Africa.

16. In November 2010, more than 20 000 Saharawis residing in Western Sahara camped in tents outside El Aaiun as a sign of protest against the Moroccan invasion of their homeland.

17. Arrabi al Arabe type of song that does not relate directly to the conflict of Western Sahara but to a social movement originated in the Maghreb countries.

Part IX

**CRITIQUING CAPITALISM
AND THE NEOLIBERAL TIDE**

Chapter 28

Against the Grain

Counter-Hegemonic Representations of Pre and Post “Celtic-Tiger” Ireland in the ‘Protest’ Songs of Damien Dempsey

Aileen Dillane, Martin J. Power,
Eoin Devereux and Amanda Haynes

A renowned Irish journalist said that the heady rise and abrupt fall of Ireland’s “Celtic Tiger”¹ economy, made “Icarus look surprisingly boring” (O’Toole 2010, 10). In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, the Irish State effectively socialised the astronomical debts of private banks (McDonough and Loughrey 2009), which required a ‘bailout’ programme from the so-called *Troika*—consisting of the European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund and European Commission—to be put in place.² From that point, the Irish public was exposed to extensive, austerity-driven policies and a repetitive mantra from politicians and mainstream media that the protracted austerity programme pursued was vital if Ireland was to satisfy ‘the markets’, ‘reduce the deficit’ and ‘regain economic competitiveness’. Moreover, vulnerable groups were scapegoated as parasitic on a system that, they argued, could no longer afford them or support their requirements in terms of housing, healthcare, education, pension provision and social security. Yet as Allen (2009) points out, it was dominant class interests that turned Ireland’s ‘economic miracle’ into a catastrophe for a substantial portion of the Irish population.

In this context, we ruminate on how certain (protest) songs can tell us something important about (in this case) Irish society and the political sphere. While some critics argue that the political meaning of music cannot be located in a song text (Negus 1996) we argue that in many cases it is the critical place from where to start, especially where the views of the artist are clearly expressed. To this end, we place a focus on specific song lyrics (albeit

in their musical matrix) that act as counter narratives by critically examining the hegemonic neoliberal view of contemporary social and political issues, thereby making a case for recognizing the potential of song lyrics as a social intervention, and not just a social commentary or social record.

The songs that form the basis of this chapter were written and performed by popular Irish recording artist Damien Dempsey, whom we have interviewed for this chapter.³ In the early 1990s, as a young singer-songwriter from a Northside Dublin, working-class background, Dempsey began adapting Irish ballads, infusing these forms with influences from other protest genres, and seeking to draw attention to inequality in Ireland, even as the country was apparently experiencing an economic ‘boom’. Growing in stature over the next two decades, Damien Dempsey has never stopped writing or singing songs to counter inequality or injustice, championing a particular post-colonial inflected, cosmopolitan ‘Irishness’ that places community, love and social engagement at its heart. To place Dempsey at the centre of a narrative of artist as a subversive, critical citizen, offers a way of understanding the power of a working-class, Irish voice to sensuously and uncompromisingly perform and embody protest. Dempsey has forged what we term ‘a new Irish cosmopolitanism’, which on one hand moves him beyond insular nationalist and regional, post-colonial Irish concerns, while on the other deeply and unashamedly acknowledges and situates Dempsey within his own local, working-class Irish experiences, thereby allowing his protestation to work at both a local and trans-local level.

Our discussion here focuses specifically on two of Dempsey’s songs (“Celtic Tiger” and “Community”), and illustrates how counter-hegemonic discourses concerning economic boom periods and the ‘age of austerity’ are inscribed by means of a semiotic, musical and contextual reading of these tracks. Of particular importance is the “grain of the (working class) voice” (Barthes 1977); a codified style, with particular techniques and local accents which are in the service of communication, representation and expression. These ideas are interpolated into Denisoff’s (1968) categorisation of protest song as ‘magnetic’ or ‘rhetorical’. We conclude Dempsey’s protest songs operate as both, for he is a persistent, consistent authentic voice for the working class and his lyrics and performances persuade through the use of a series of well worn yet effective rhetorical devices which rely, in part, upon his local Dublin accent, hybridised with transnational rap forms. Song structure, style and historical allusions all play their part in our analysis. But first we provide some social, economic and political context to this period in Irish history focussing, in particular, on the rise of neoliberalism and on the ‘place’ of class in Irish society.

IRELAND A MIDDLE-CLASS NATION?

Irish society is often self-imagined as a classless society and class-based discourses have historically been frowned on in the public arena. There is a shared acceptance of neoliberal principles and those ideological differences that do exist between the two main center-right political parties (Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael) are framed as competing versions of post-civil war Nationalist ideologies rather than as class-based allegiances (Coakley 1999). Indeed, all mainstream Irish political parties practice a *clientelist* politics (Gallagher and Komito 1999), which individualizes problems rather than seeing them in class terms, in the process stunting “the political development and consciousness of the economically dominated classes” (Hazelkorn 1986, 339 cited in Gallagher and Komito 1999, 227).

Despite the prevalence of common-sense understandings of a classless society, class inequality has been and remains a significant element of Irish Society (Share, Tovey, and Corcoran 2007, 171). The myth of a classless Ireland was perpetuated most strongly during the “Celtic Tiger” economic boom. Populist economic commentators such as David McWilliams (2005, 15) argued that the nation is blurring and the most significant aspect of this is in class: “Ireland is becoming the most middle-class, suburban nation in Europe and the most startling development... has been the rapid social mobility the country is experiencing... We are now a middle-class nation”.

It is true that since the 1970s, Ireland’s occupational structure upgraded to one based on industry and service provision — a transformation that allowed considerable mobility for the professional and managerial classes. However, there is strong evidence that the relative advantages enjoyed by more affluent socioeconomic groups were largely maintained in spite of the social mobility to which McWilliams (2005) alluded. Indeed, Whelan and Layte (2007) found that while absolute mobility increased during the 1990s and early 2000s, relative mobility and equality of opportunity stayed stable over time. Tellingly, they reported that disparities in opportunities between those at either end of the socioeconomic ladder were “greater in Ireland than in other European countries” (Share, Tovey, and Corcoran 2007, 171).

Allen (cited in Tovey et al. 2007, 171) argues that inequality in Ireland “... is ideologically articulated by key opinion forming groups as a feature of life that only applies to the socially excluded.” In essence, blame for social and economic exclusion is placed squarely at the feet of those that experience it. Allen (1999, 39) quite correctly argues that such an understanding maintains the existing class structure and is the preserve of “a contented majority versus a socially excluded minority”, in that it fails to recognize the relationship between middle-class advantage and the social exclusion of

others in our society. Ireland still has a “high degree of economic inequality” and significant sections of the Irish population continue to “experience deprivation and exclusion as a result of inadequate financial resources” (Tovey et al. 2007, 178–80). Such evidence unravels the myth of a classless Ireland, even at the height of the economic boom. In reality, the Irish class structure⁴ is much the same as that in other countries in which neoliberal policies have come to dominate.

BOOM & BUST IN IRELAND—HEGEMONIC DISCOURSES

During the period of the “Celtic Tiger” boom Irish banks progressively availed of cheap money, loaned by European banks, to increasingly fund property speculation (Allen 2009, 48), with the resulting construction boom creating a huge economic dividend for many.

The illusion of Ireland’s economic miracle (see Share and Corcoran, 2010) was brutally exposed however, when global finance capitalism crashed in 2008 (O’Flynn et al. 2014). A programme of austerity that followed saw cuts to services and a number of new levies and taxes being introduced. The government of the day (and the subsequent government) “justified its actions in terms of ‘tough choices’ made in the ‘national interest’” (O’Flynn et al. 2013, 164). In 2010, Ireland, faced with a sovereign debt crisis, entered into a ‘programme’ and received funding from the ‘Troika’, in the process becoming the most (bank) debt burdened country in the EU. (Taft, 2013a cited in O’Flynn et al. 2014, 924). Interestingly, government ministers denied that this was happening even after the IMF representative Ajay Chopra had arrived in Dublin. The dominant commentary was that the Irish population submissively accepted all of the ‘mature sacrifices’ that our government expected of its people. Indeed, the then Finance Minister, Brian Lenihan, declared in April 2009 that “the steps taken had impressed our partners in Europe, who are amazed at our capacity to take pain. In France you would have riots if you tried this” (*Irish Times* 2009).

Both the austerity policies and the decision to pay the socialised private banking debt are rooted in Neoliberal ideology, which seeks to “frame and shape individuals’ perceptions and preferences so as to pre-empt challenges to the status quo” (Glasberg 2011, 48). In the early stages of the economic crash it was difficult for those who were ultimately responsible to deflect blame away from themselves, though this was not the case for long. In September 2008, Minister Lenihan, stated “we decided as a people, collectively, to have this property boom’, or to put it another way, ‘we all partied’” (cited in Kerrigan 2012). McCullagh (2010, 45) argues that this “discursive

fight back” found favour with the business sector almost immediately and gradually became the “common-sense” understanding of what had happened. Multi-billion Euro bank debts suddenly became our debts—an obligation that had to be honoured as a matter of national pride and reputation (McCarthy 2012). In 2012 the leader of the government *Taoiseach* Enda Kenny,⁵ departed from the script when telling the citizens of Ireland during a televised ‘state of the nation’ address that they were not to blame for the economic crisis. Yet, soon afterwards, while addressing an international business and political audience at Davos, Kenny again democratised blame by stating that the Irish people “all went a bit mad with borrowing” (*Independent* 2012 cited in O’Flynn et al. 2014, 926).⁶ This discourse of democratising blame (alongside the denigration of other scapegoats such as public-sector workers) was also utilised in order to rationalise calls for the state to tackle ‘waste’ and excessive social spending on the welfare state (McCullagh 2010, 50), at a time when the people of Ireland were no longer the masters of their economic destiny. The implementation of successive austerity budgets in conjunction with the repayment of banking debt produced massive social consequences for (in particular the most vulnerable) people in this country, which are likely to continue as long as this unsustainable debt remains.⁷

COUNTER HEGEMONIC DISCOURSES

In the mid-2000s, when the “Celtic Tiger” economy was roaring, there were very few voices sounding warnings about where this would all end, and if and when these dissenters tried to raise the issue, there was a tendency to silence them again very quickly. In 2006, an economist, Morgan Kelly, predicted that the Irish property market was about to crash spectacularly with all that this would entail for the wider economy.

In July 2007, the then *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern criticized those who he saw as “talking down the economy”. He insisted that “sitting on the sidelines, cribbing and moaning is a lost opportunity” and continued “I don’t know how people who engage in that don’t commit suicide”.⁸ Similarly, there was a huge negative reaction to an RTE⁹ television programme *Future Shock: Property Crash*, in which the deputy editor of the *Sunday Business Post* newspaper, Richard Curran, assessed the role of banks and other institutions in predicting a potential collapse of the Irish property market.

In contrast to the situation during the boom, the government’s response to the financial crisis gave rise to a number of initiatives which, explicitly intended to expedite the development of a political consciousness and militancy, which were required for the development of mass resistance (see O’Flynn et al. 2013 for an excellent overview of these initiatives) to

the imposition of austerity. Moreover, widespread discontent amongst the population, found savage expression in the 2011 general election, when the Fianna Fáil-led government was annihilated at the ballot box. A new coalition government, comprising Fine Gael and Labour, was elected and immediately reneged on election promises such as ‘burning bank bond holders’. Accordingly, we are in agreement with O’Flynn et al. (2014, 923) who argue that

the Irish government is administering a neoliberal (class) project of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2005), where ‘savings’ (cuts to social welfare, incomes and basic public services) are accompanied by increases in levies and taxation that were previously deemed ‘obscene’ by these very same politicians when in opposition. (see Kerrigan 2012)

Against this backdrop, the 2014 local elections were a major setback for Fine Gael and the Labour Party. In comparison with the 2009 local election results Fine Gaels’ share of first preference votes dropped by 10.7% resulting in the loss of 105 seats, while the Labour Party saw their share of first preference votes decline by 7% with 81 seats being lost. Were those bearing the brunt of austerity beginning to develop a political consciousness?

DAMIEN DEMPSEY—A CLASS WARRIOR?

Born into a working-class background (his father was a panel-beater and his mother held a number of different jobs), Damien Dempsey grew up in the working-class Northside Dublin suburb of Donaghmede. His repertoire has consistently championed working-class values and spoken out on the issues that affect the vulnerable in society. Dempsey has on numerous occasions spoken of his youth as being characterised by feelings of isolation and marginalisation (see for example Dara McCluskey’s documentary ‘*It’s All Good: The Damien Dempsey Story*’, 2003). Accordingly, we would argue that his life experiences and upbringing in Donaghmede have ultimately instilled in him a desire to question / protest against (through his artistic endeavour) what he considers to be an unequal social and political order.

Many recording artists are acutely aware of the barriers which make it increasingly difficult to take a counter hegemonic stance on many social issues. Morrissey, for example, has stated that to be a “successful’ artist means blindly conforming to hegemonic discourses and ideologies and certainly not questioning the validity of the status quo” (Edwards 2006). Yet some artists are prepared to sacrifice potential commercial success for what they believe to be the right thing to do and / or say. In that context, Dempsey claimed in a *Sunday Times* (2012) interview that Sinéad O’Connor had given

him the strength to say what he thinks is wrong with the world. Dempsey clarified why he had made this claim in an interview which we conducted with him in 2013.

To the detriment of her career at the time she spoke up, tore up the picture of the pope. Christy (Moore) as well, he couldn't get played on the radio or the TV for years because of his stance on what was happening in the H-Blocks [prisons] and all you know. They are proper soul singers for me. They would have sacrificed their careers, their money-making abilities to say what they want to say. To speak out against what they felt was wrong. (Dempsey 2013)

Dublin is deeply implicated in his music, as his connection to place and local identity is profoundly felt and reproduced in his songs (Stokes 1997). Dempsey has always been generous in paying tribute to his musical influences. An inheritor of a rich urban Irish ballad tradition, Dempsey's webpage proclaims his primary influences to be Luke Kelly and Ronnie Drew of *The Dubliners* fame. Irish protest singer Christy Moore is also listed, as is the traditional musician and collector Andy Irvine. These mens 'kin outside of Ireland' are cited as shaping Dempsey's sound and include 'Springsteen and Guthrie, Dylan and Marley'.¹⁰ It is clear from this list that vernacular folk song is a defining influence for Dempsey but the inclusion of Bob Marley¹¹ at the end hints at the huge creative and political influence of the reggae artist on the young Dempsey.

In the year 2000 Dempsey released his first full-length album, the title of which would signal the kinds of thematic concerns that would preoccupy him throughout his career. *They Don't Teach This Shit in School* contained a track entitled 'Dublin Town' but also spoke to broader concerns, including emigration (in 'NYC Paddy') and post-colonial concerns (in the powerful song 'Colony', an impassioned ballad that speaks to the common bonds between all colonized peoples—see Power et al. 2017). In 2003, Dempsey's second full-length album *Seize the Day* was released and it is this album that captures a particular critical moment in Dempsey's output, evidencing his collaboration with Sinéad O'Connor, who features on the album and on the song we analyse in the following section, "Celtic Tiger".¹²

As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, Dempsey has produced songs and lyrics (in particular) which strive to create an alternative cultural text, and these acts of rebellion (no matter how small), which re-imagine people and places, serve to challenge the dominant discourse of the impact of a hegemonic neoliberal political ideology on Irish society. In essence his work should be seen as "the expression of a ... political sensibility... that is appalled at living in a society that venerates the few while seeking to humiliate the many" (Coulter 2010, 168). He might not make much difference in

practical terms but “if people can discover literature though pop music then why not politics? Sometimes a seed needs only to be sown” (Pye 1984).

RE-IMAGINING “CELTIC TIGER” IRELAND

In examining the two protest songs which this chapter focuses upon we are especially interested in the play between structure and meaning (Brackett 2000; Negus 1996), how the music and lyrics complement or contradict each other, and how this relates to the wider socio-cultural positioning of the song (Clayton et al. 2003; Cook 1998).

“Celtic Tiger”, written by Dempsey, was released in 2003 as a response to what he saw as the societal challenges brought about by the rise of the so-called “Celtic Tiger” economic phenomenon.¹³ The album on which it appeared reached number five in the Irish charts on its release and has since achieved multiple platinum status. As such, the song offers a very powerful counter (cultural) message to the dominant discourse concerning the boom. In order to reveal the complex layers at work and embodied in the performance, we focus on the recorded track, performing a reading of its structure, style and content. Ultimately, the position established by Dempsey in his performance of this song, and the ‘tone’ employed in his delivery (through direct and accessible lyrics, largely performed in a rap style underpinned by reggae micro-rhythms, yet still with a strong Dublin/Irish accent), is probed in order to demonstrate Dempsey’s powerful critique and exposure of what he saw as rising inequality during the boom.

This song is a hybrid form—a cross between rap and ballad—a contemporary urban folk song. The lyrics are for the most part ‘spoken’ in four-square rhyme with all the musical interest in the chord structures and the iconic sound of the mandolin, Irish tin whistle, flute, etc. The only real melody is found in the ‘chorus’ line which is the reiteration of ‘so greedy, greedy, greedy, greedy’ which follows a downward melodic curve—echoing Ireland’s slippage into a state of corruption and greed.

Rap format is an ideal way to offer critique and protest as it emerged from the urban disenfranchised—originally from African American ghettos where poverty and structural inequality abound and which generates its own poetics out of the conditions of everyday life and social engagement (Krims 2000; Turino 2008), but now speaking as much from class positions as racialized ones (though Dempsey has referenced north-side Dubliners as the Blacks of Dublin—an idea borrowed from *The Commitments* writer Roddy Doyle). In taking on this style of singing and making it his own, Dempsey is making a strong connection with black subculture while at the same time pointing out the universality of poverty that may be racially

informed in some cases, but is more critically informed by class and social inequality.¹⁴

The song is delivered in a strong Northside Dublin accent¹⁵ but the words are clear and the pulsing rhythm makes the delivery all the more potent. Crucially, it is the structural and intertextual references to Irish ballad and songs that make this a distinctly local form. This is born out, in particular, in Dempsey's Hiberno-English turn of phrase throughout and in his use of potent tropes from older narrative songs of and about Ireland. The song opens up with a four-chord guitar riff that operates as the main underpinning harmonic structure (even ostinato figure) for the whole song. Beginning with the syncopated, falling, minor melodic line "so greedy, greedy, greedy, greedy, greedy", sung by Dempsey in a full and wholesome baritone, this repetitive, chant-like figuration insists the "Celtic Tiger" has been about one thing—greed. It is a refrain which almost bookends the song, preceding the final chorus which gradually peters out into an 'ah' vocal that is treated to a decidedly sean-nós ornamental flavouring, connecting Dempsey to his indigenous traditions.¹⁶

Dempsey sings "It's the tale of the two cities on the shamrock shore ... 'Cos if you are poor you'll be eaten for sure". In his 2003 book, *Far From the Shamrock Shore*' music scholar Mick Moloney traces representations (in song form) of Ireland and Irish migration to the United States. The evocation of the 'Shamrock Shore', a familiar figuration from Irish balladry operates in two ways here. It links this song with other ballad genres, demonstrating Dempsey's keen awareness of where he sees his song belonging (in spite of it essentially being a rap)—within a genre that has for hundreds of years been a locus for recording and commentating upon / protesting about historical events.¹⁷ But 'Shamrock Shore' is also used with a sense of perversion here. It is a kind of mirage; for just as emigrants were forced to leave Ireland's green shore for a better life during and after the famine years of 1845–1847, now Ireland has become a place that one might need to escape, but only if one has the means to do so. The 'Tale of two cities' speaks to two classes—the wealthy and the poor, evoking the classic Dickens' novel of the same title that saw the poor rise up against the ruling class.¹⁸ If there was any doubt about this reference, the next line clarifies it: "please sir, can I have some more?"¹⁹

The chorus is based around the chanted refrain "Hear the Celtic Tiger roar—I want more" which is repeated but is also framed and interpolated by a series of biblically inspired lines²⁰ sung by the often controversial singer-songwriter Sinéad O'Connor, a huge champion of Dempsey and another Dublin-based performer, who has unabashedly spoken out against a number of societal challenges in Ireland. As Dempsey speaks of the insatiable appetite of the Celtic Tiger which roars "I want more", O'Connor initially sweetly and smoothly sings, in a repeated, downward, stepwise melodic line that hints

of simple plainchant: “I am your God you see/ And you shall not have any/ Other god but me/ Any other god but me”²¹ Her delivery gets stronger and more insistent after each iteration, as the song progresses. Dempsey’s and O’Connor’s styles of delivery contrast, while simultaneously complementing each other, illustrating how differences can combine into a powerful force. The song constitutes a wholesale protest against the negative impacts of this greed, particularly in terms of how it has created a two-tiered society in Ireland. Dempsey’s critique is very much focussed on the government’s fiscal policy of the time. Reference is made to Ireland having the “fastest growing inflation rate in the world” and the rising cost of living in the country (“this isn’t any age for a low income wage”) during this economic boom. The most interesting aspect of the song is its protest against the housing policies which were being pursued at this point in time. He sings: “The cost of a run-down house is absurd ... A couple with kids can’t afford a place to live/ Even if they have a good job ...” It seems that even if you are a good neoliberal citizen (i.e. in full-time employment and earning a taxable wage), you are still unable to buy yourself a home. “What are we gonna do?” Dempsey asks us all, on behalf of all the people that cannot afford to make ends meet? “We’ll have to move in with the woman in the shoe” he concludes, now clearly and deliberately aligning himself with people that can’t afford to live in Ireland, with the people that have borne the brunt of austerity who understand the pointlessness of believing in the fairytale. “They’re driving us onto the streets”, he intones. These lyrics have proved prophetic with Ireland currently experiencing a housing crisis and record numbers of people becoming homeless.

Finally, the lyrics identify who Dempsey feels is responsible, “we’re being robbed by the builders and the fat cat government”, yet crucially they also identify a perceived unequal justice system where white-collar crime is almost never punished (“while the fat cat in government cheats/ And always gets away with his crime/ A kid steals a jacket and does time.”

Around the time this song was released, certain government members decried the low level but nonetheless insistent rumbles about the un-sustainability of this level of economic growth. In response, such critics were castigated for being unpatriotic and doomsday citizens (see the example of Morgan Kelly provided earlier). In this context O’Connor’s first-commandment-inspired chorus lyrics “I am your God...” take on ominous meaning, Money is the new God. What the government says must be obeyed.

Yet what may at first glance appear to be only a subversive and anti-government protest is, we would argue, actually an exercise in critical citizenship. This is Dempsey’s beloved Dublin town. He clearly does not believe that this “Celtic Tiger” is good for everyone, quite the opposite, in fact. The economy (not society) is fuelled by greed and it is creating a city of haves and ‘have-nots’. From a stylistic perspective, then, it makes sense that Dempsey,

who is known more for his rich balladry, would draw upon the lyrical presentational style of rap.

This song makes a huge cultural contribution to our understanding of the boom and bust economic cycle experienced in Ireland as it for example contradicts the narrative of two former *Taoisigh*,²² Brian Cowen and Bertie Ahern who have essentially argued retrospectively that “no one told us what was really happening” with regards to the impact of their governments economic policy. Yet here we had a popular Irish recording artist protesting about these issues on his 2003 album ‘Seize the Day’, which was right at the height of the Irish economic boom.

OLD MATERIALS, NEW CONTEXTS, IRISH COSMOPOLITANISM

If “Celtic Tiger” has illustrated anything about Dempsey’s use of the ballad form it is that he manages to find new and interesting ways to use older materials. Whether rapping in a ballad structure, or using sean-nós ornamentation and nasal vocal production (Williams and Ó Laoire 2011), Dempsey’s use of traditional structures and sounds may have less to do with the argument that historically, Irish traditional music was co-opted to represent the nation and this has persisted (White 1998, 10–12), and more to do with the sensuousness and groove of the sound produced, though these things are not easily separated. Dempsey has therefore ploughed his native repertoire for its rich songs of social commentary and has reconfigured the protest politics of colonisation for twenty-first century concerns. This relationship between music and politics (Qureshi 2002) is evident in a number of his songs²³ since “Celtic Tiger”. In particular, “Community”, from the album *Almighty Love* (2012) which we examine next, similarly challenges the hegemony of economy over community; deploying many comparable compositional strategies, but crucially, also forging new creative pathways.

‘COMMUNITY’—CHALLENGING THE HEGEMONY OF ‘ECONOMY’

While it was important for Dempsey to protest against the inequality he saw throughout the Celtic Tiger era, he also recognised that his audiences needed more than just critique and that protest could also have a healing dimension if a way out was indicated. He points out:

I realised I needed to write something that I felt strongly about, that moved me, that I cared about I was writing lots of songs about the banks and the

Government But people are being bombarded with this negative news about banks and government corruption every day... The people won't want a parallel running commentary on how they were being scammed. They'll want a solution... (Dempsey 2012).

“Community”, track nine on *Almighty Love* is a protest song which appeals to us to come to our senses, recognise what has been lost by society as a result of greed and how that can be redressed through a renewed focus on community. If “Celtic Tiger” is a protest song in the vein of hard and trenchant criticism of the way things are (or have become), then this song is its natural partner, further outlining the destructive impact of economic policy on the population but also, crucially, with its call for solidarity, offering a pathway away from these impacts. In essence the song underscores the importance of a good community and looking after your family and neighbours as a panacea for, and more importantly, structural correction to, the devastation wrought by government boom and bust policies that, on one hand, had supported individual ‘greed’ and on the other, had left the most vulnerable to bear the brunt of the fall out (Dempsey 2012). It is a Dylanesque repost; where the answer is not to be found ‘blowing in the wind’ but rather in what people (particularly in Ireland) already have experience of, and can still get back – ‘community’.

Sung with a gentler, almost pleading intonation, with his north-side Dublin working class accent clearly audible, it is easy to dismiss this song as more of a nostalgic longing for a sense of community that Dempsey feels Ireland has lost, and to see it as part of his own personal narrative as opposed to having broader relevance. Such ‘laments’ for bygone times have structural precedents in the Irish music repertoire, particularly in relation to the loss of the old Gaelic order under colonial incursions, song themes with which Dempsey would be intimately familiar, given his passion for Irish balladry (as evidenced in his repertoire). Indeed, the narrative song form of verse and chorus found in “Community” owes much to the indigenous tradition, even if the melodic line of the verses has a contemporary, rock-blues edge to it. That said, the modal quality throughout also takes on a distinctly Irish flavour in the repetitive fiddle riff which sounds like a fragment of a reel, all of which happens against a slowed down, ska-inflected back beat. Ultimately, this is a hybrid song for hybrid times, looking back but also forging ahead. The key point is that as a song form, an older, ‘better’ Ireland in the style of celebrated Irish song composer Thomas Moore,²⁴ is not something lost in the mists of time but rather something that can be recuperated, re-imagined and re-animated, using the experience and materials of there, here and now. A musical analysis at a deeper, metric level underscores this point, and creates a critical matrix for the potent lyrics.

The song opens with the striking of a metal object (connoting labour, perhaps) in an apparent four square pattern. On the entry of the guitar riff, which itself is quite circular and circuitous, that metal sound is displaced, or rather resituated into beat two of a four-beat cycle. At the same time, there is a distinct, rapid 6/8 feel in the groove of the song, pitting a three against four feel, which creates a distinctive pattern that is actually the fusion of all of these competing sounds. In musical form, Dempsey's sonic texture evidences how when all the different parts come together, something stronger, more meaningful is rendered and that this new sound is of its time, finding ways to make all the older parts and the newer parts fit. The ensemble celebrates, rather than struggles with contrasts, embracing metric dissonances and making these 'grooves', these 'participatory discrepancies' (Keil and Feld 1994), generate new meaning.

If the song structure—with its evocation of past, and forward looking present, in sonic, generic and metric qualities—sends a clear message about the materials with which one can metaphorically and literally build a better life for people now, then the lyrics underscores this in no uncertain terms. Presented in a structure replete with internal rhymes it too is a hybrid language, a Hiberno-inflected melodic rap that through its gestures, structures and meanings creates a contemporary voice informed by past iterations from within Irish traditions, as well as more recent performative elements from genres that are aligned with the working class and urban disenfranchised in the form of rap (Krimms 2000).

The song is sung from the narrative position of a young man who hopes for love, even though he is not rich, "ain't got no job or plan" and who asks—would you help me? The 'ain't' is not the vernacular of Ireland but rather references linguist approaches found in North American vernacular, folk and rap song forms. He sings about the loss of feeling and empathy and the loss of a moral code, which for many Irish was previously found in religion: "All these people, they don't feel a thing/ They don't care about their fellow man/ Don't care about their sins". These lyrics take on additional resonance when considered in the context of the following statement from Dempsey.

Where I come from, people couldn't afford to live up there anymore. People who wanted to buy their first house there couldn't afford to. So they had to move out to Cavan and Meath²⁵ and the community was getting torn apart. As well as that, people got the big loans of money. It turned into competition. Who had the most houses, who had the biggest holiday home abroad, or who had the biggest SUV and all. People started competing against each other. Other people who couldn't afford to live here went down the country, these new estates, people didn't know each other or their neighbours. (cited in Barry 2012)

In contrast to these boom times, as we documented earlier people in austerity hit Ireland faced significant difficulties in their day to day lives. In this song Dempsey offers an insight into what he felt was needed in those austere times.

Well we need community
Through the hard times, us it sees
When we don't have much money
We rely on peoples deeds

The chorus is an appeal for reason and recognition and a plea to people to recognise that they already have what is needed in community structure:

Our strength will be our unity
If we have unity within a tight-knit community in times of need
We can face down anything thrown at us by the soulless faceless parasitic
men of greed... Can you finally see, how much we need community?
We'll ignore economies, and become a family

And in an echo of “Celtic Tiger”, the idea of greed as something that can never be satiated is reiterated: “Greed is not deceased. Greed is never pleased”. In protesting against greed and harsh judgements of people who are down and out, we argue that Dempsey sees the utopian potential in the return to community and appeals for it. This is utopia as method, not as fanciful dream (Levitas 2013). It is Dempsey drawing on all his resources—material, moral and musical—to imagine a better Ireland that can be rendered through cooperation, solidarity, and action. In combining an unapologetic and historically informed native perspective with a rallying cry that addresses the struggles of disenfranchised people everywhere, Dempsey’s call represents a new Irish Cosmopolitanism that is not ashamed of its nationalistic past and does not see these ideals as being in opposition to global citizenship.

CONCLUSION

In presenting Dempsey’s work in this chapter, we have demonstrated how one singer employs protest song as both a vehicle for social critique and as a prescription for a better way of doing things. We have attempted to probe, through a musical/lyrical, performative and contextual analysis of two of his songs, how counter-hegemonic discourses concerning economic boom periods and the ‘age of austerity’ are circulated. We argue that it is the grain of Dempsey’s strongly accented, working-class voice, and his commitment to his north-side suburban home of Donaghmede—where, amid rampant unemployment, “a generation lies idle in a community struggling to re-establish its

identity and sense of self” (www.damiendempsey.com)—which contribute to ‘authenticating’ his position as “raconteur of the marginalized” (Power 2011, 100).

Damien Dempsey presents as a complex figure that performs and embodies pride in who he is and where he comes from. To be cosmopolitan is to be a citizen of the world and not to be limited to just one place, weighed down by local concerns, provincial values and perspectives. In this respect, it might initially seem oxymoronic to speak of a ‘cosmopolitan Irishness’ in relation to Damien Dempsey, with his locally hewn, North Dublin accent and a gaze looking back to an Irish ballad tradition and to a rebel Ireland. Yet his songs speak to a vision of uniting people at the most basic human level, through care, community, solidarity and equality.²⁶ If the “Celtic Tiger” taught one kind of greedy, *ersatz* cosmopolitanism, we argue that Dempsey seeks to replace that with one grounded in the local but with a gaze fixed on the global.

With his working-class background and strong sense of craftsmanship, when it comes to creating songs, it might be easy to call Dempsey an artisan rather than view him as an artist. The artist is often seen as the production of things of beauty, of aesthetic value, of ‘works’ in and of themselves that have intrinsic value (Burnham 2000). The artisan’s work is seen as more utilitarian, though he or she is also concerned with structure and form, with revealing the beauty of the grain. However, for the artisan, the function of a piece is of paramount importance. In this respect, Dempsey is arguably more an artisan, and craftsman, not because of his working-class roots but because of the work that his music does. Protest songs are one mechanism to deal with the “hidden injuries of class” that characterise contemporary society (Coulter 2005, 6) and this is something which Dempsey’s works seeks to expose. But Dempsey’s songs are also *Art* and like all good art, it is political in its invitation to think and critically reflect (Adorno 2001). A song like “Celtic Tiger” captures a counter-hegemonic stand at a given moment in time but it also, as Jacques Attali has pointed out (1985), does not merely reflect society but potentially predicts it. In conclusion, we reiterate that embracing the artistic endeavours of contemporary singer-songwriters like Dempsey is about recognising the potential of music as a social intervention, as a political game changer, and not just as an individual artistic endeavour and expression, as worthy at that is.

NOTES

1. The “Celtic Tiger” boom refers to a period from 1994 to 2008 when the Irish economy underwent a period of unprecedented and rapid economic growth. The ensuing rise in employment and prosperity caused many to reflect that Ireland had become completely capitalist in outlook. During this time period the level of employment rose

from 51.7% in 1993 to 68.1% in 2006. Simultaneously, unemployment fell from 15.6% to 4.3% (CSO 2006a, cited in Kirby 2008, 13).

2. Also see the chapter in this volume from Hajimichael for a discussion on a similar ‘bailout’ of Greece.

3. Damien Dempsey is an award-winning artist, who has won several prestigious Irish Meteor Music Awards. His albums have topped the charts and gone Platinum. He has been lauded by performers including Brian Eno, Sinéad O’Connor, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, and Morrissey and by the prestigious publications *Rolling Stone Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *Billboard*, *MOJO* and *The Sunday Times* amongst others. In Dempsey’s working-class neighbourhood of Donaghmede “a generation lies idle in a community struggling to re-establish its identity and sense of self”. In that context his connection with and recognition of the downtrodden is steadfast and his work has continually shone a “spotlight on aspects of modern society that are uncomfortable for many to face” (<http://www.damiendempsey.com/biog.aspx>).

4. Ireland has a small elite upper class and a relatively large middle class, though this is likely to be considerably smaller as a result of the economic crisis, which saw for example huge increases in unemployment and negative equity in relation to property. The remainder of the population is working class with a dominant discourse constructing sections of the working class as a distinct ‘underclass’.

5. This is the native Irish language term used for the Irish Prime Minister.

6. Such U-turns were not peculiar to Ireland. For example, while still in office, former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy (cited in Allen 2011, 171), argued that ‘the idea of the absolute power of the markets that should not be constrained by any rule, by any political intervention, was a mad idea. The idea that the markets were always right was a mad idea’. Yet within a few months of such statements the move to resurrect the systems which had caused the global financial crash was under way in earnest throughout the EU.

7. The Irish state acquired massive debts by ‘socialising’ the liabilities of private banks, particularly those of Anglo Irish Bank, which is now known as the IBRC. The total cost of these banking losses has been calculated to be approximately “€5 billion or 22% of Ireland’s nominal GDP in 2011”. Without this cost, Ireland’s debt-GDP ratio in 2011 could have been more or less the Eurozone average (Whelan 2012). In addition, between 2007–2008 and 2011 €0bn (12% of GDP) was taken out of the economy in austerity budgets. While the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council championed such an approach, Taft (2011) clearly demonstrates that the austerity policies achieved a negligible reduction in the deficit, despite the huge sums taken out of the domestic economy. For example, using the quintile share ratio, the EU’s measure of income inequality, Ireland scored well above the average for EU-15 countries at this time, with the “biggest single-year increase in inequality of any EU country since this measurement began in the late 1990s” being recorded in Ireland in 2010 (Taft 2012; see Bissett 2012 for a discussion of the consequences of this rise).

8. The comments can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfjGSfuSQpA>.

9. RTE is the Irish public service broadcaster.

10. See <http://www.damiendempsey.com/biog.aspx>. Accessed September 19, 2015.
11. Bob Marley (1945–1981) is celebrated as much for his unique singing style as he is for his Rastafarianism and the spirituality that inspires his songs. In the latter part of his career in particular, Marley produced a number of politically charged songs seeking change for the plight of Africans. His protest songs inspired Dempsey not just in terms of message but also in terms of style and form. For further reading on Marley see Farley (2007).
12. Producer John Reynolds also proved vital to the sound of the recorded version.
13. For an understanding of social and economic life in 2003–2004, when the song was released, see Corcoran and Peillon (2006).
14. For historical examples of how the Irish were viewed as black in the United States, see Ignatiev (1995).
15. Accent or linguistic capital is a form of embodied cultural capital and remains a factor in how people judge others in Ireland. A strong Northside Dublin accent is a devalued form of linguistic capital because it is seen as a cultural manifestation of working class identity.
16. For a discussion of *sean-nós* style ornamentation, see Williams and Ó Laoire (2011) and for a broader discussion of narrative singing in Ireland, see Shields (1995).
17. See Mick Moloney's *Far From a Shamrock Shore* (2002) for a discussion of this song.
18. Charles Dickens published the novel in serial form during 1859. Dickens was an astute observer of class difference and many of his novels give great insight into the living conditions of working and poorer class of the time, particularly in industrial London. In this brief allusion, Dempsey manages to draw upon the cultural capital of Dickens' social critique, evoking an equally divided city in the shape of contemporary Dublin.
19. This line is from Charles Dickens' novel *Oliver Twist*, which is about an orphan boy in a poor house who has little to eat.
20. This is from the first commandment, see *Exodus* 20:3.
21. Sources from http://www.sineadoconnor.com/full_discography/songs/celtic_tiger.php. Accessed September 10, 2015.
22. This is the native Irish language term used for Irish Prime Ministers (plural).
23. For example 'Colony' and 'Choctaw Nation' (2005); 'To Hell or Barbados' (2007); 'Born without Hate' and 'Moneyman' (2012); 'Simple Faith' and 'Sam Jenkins' (2017).
24. Thomas Moore was a poet, writer and lyricist whose lyrical creations for melodies collected from the old Irish Harpers in Belfast in 1792 by Edward Bunting, resulted in the production of one of the most successful publications of Irish songs in history. Known collectively as *Moore's Melodies*, these songs spoke nostalgically of the loss of the ancient Gaelic aristocracy under waves of colonial incursions. The songs were enormously popular in the parlours of Dublin, London and across the United States where their 'soft nationalism' was never seen as an actual threat to the status quo.

25. These are counties outside the greater Dublin Metropolitan area which have become home to thousands of commuters to Dublin who are unable to afford houses within what might be understood as proper commuter distances.

26. *Almighty Love* (2012) is the most fulsome expression of this. The album deals with themes of injustice (it contains references to Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Marie Colvin and Tony Benn) but also themes of love, loss, hope, despair and adventure.

Chapter 29

Bail Out—From Now to Never— A Rhetorical Analysis of Two Songs About Economic Crisis

Mike Hajimichael

‘Who’s gonna need another Bail Out?’ Big Youth asks in the chorus of ‘Bail Out’ over a thunderous roots reggae bassline in a kind of call and response fashion. The pioneering Jamaican MC, one of the first people to popularize MC Culture, has been asking similar questions for decades about his own debt-ridden country, Jamaica¹. Reggae’s long tradition of being a music that speaks for the oppressed, downtrodden and powerless (Bradley 2001, xv) resonates in the current context of the European Union being in political and economic crisis, with specific reference to Greece. The crisis is explored in a different, yet similar, Roots Reggae way by Thessaloniki based Stefanatty of *One Drop Forward* who comments that the Greek debt crisis is ‘from now to never’. These two thematically connected, but otherwise unique, songs speak to contemporary similarities between Jamaica and Greece, as economies in an endless cycle of debt and dependency (Varoufakis 2017). They call to mind the works of Walter Rodney (1969; 1972) who regarded dependency in Africa and Asia as a deliberate program of colonial and capitalist expansionism.

This chapter explores these two contemporary reggae songs: ‘Bail Out’ by Big Youth (Tuff Scout 2012) and ‘Now to Never’ by One Drop Forward (One Drop Forward 2015). These songs were selected for their critical approach to austerity politics in Greece and in a general global context, as well as their vision for a different kind of history, culture and society. The tracks will be explored through rhetorical analysis of the songs and their lyrics—taking into account the Aristotelean concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos²—as well as their links to the works of the Caribbean Revolutionary Walter Rodney and to the Gramscian notion of the ‘organic intellectual’³. Through making such connections my intention is to develop a notion of protest music based on the idea of the ‘organic musician’ resisting through their work an established ‘order of things’. Music can link closely to politics and movements (Street

et al. 2008, 7) and protest music can move people/audiences in radically different ways than conventional rhetorical texts such as political speeches:

While protest music may not produce the cataclysmic results institutions and the public often fear, music does have a number of advantages over speeches, leaflets, editorials, and essays... songs give persuaders a poetic license to challenge, exaggerate, and pretend in ways that audiences would find unacceptable, unbelievable, or ridiculous if spoken or written in prose. (Stewart et al. 2008, 201)

The songs chosen for analysis provide us with alternative ways of seeing things in the context of the financial crisis in Greece and other European countries. Before elaborating on them however, I would like to share some general thoughts on reggae as a form of protest music.

REGGAE AS PROTEST MUSIC

The poet Linton Kwesi Johnson once said “Reggae music is by definition protest music. It is The Protest Music par excellence” (Kwesi Johnson 2017). While this assumption may appear profound, engaging in this music genre as a listener, creator and DJ for the last four decades, the anti-capitalist spirit of many reggae songs has for me always offered alternative calls for action. ‘Forward with the Orthodox’ by The Mystic, ‘War Inna Babylon’ by Max Romeo and ‘Money Worries’ by The Maytones express a series of views on the pressures of ‘capitalism’ (‘babylon’) and the trappings of consumerism. Of course there are different ways of seeing this (Adorno 2010; Storey 2015, 89; and Alleyne 1994, 225) and while a lot of these arguments may ring true, we do live in a globalised capitalist world and often makers of protest music (or any kind of music for that matter) are without any doubt bound by a set of rules and regulations which can be defined as capitalist. There is a certain pessimism however that concerns issues of identity, ideology and intention that often get misplaced when looking through the lens of hegemony. First of all not every reggae artist is linked to a major music corporation. Many reggae artists release their own material through independent labels while others have fallen victim to ruthless agreements from record companies (Bradley 2001, 275). They often find it hard to survive let alone make any kind of profit. It has also been argued that different forms of independent music offer a creative alternative to the hegemonic mainstream (Hesmondhalgh 1999, 37). What I am suggesting is the answer to what constitutes protest music in reggae is not as clear cut as an issue of paradox or contradiction because the artists who make the music, even within the context of a capitalist system, are clearly conscious of what they stand for, namely opposing and challenging

the system—they are counter-hegemonic. To explore this further I would like to refer back to notion of the ‘organic intellectual’ whereby ‘the mode of being of a new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence ... but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, “permanent persuader” and not just simple orator’ (Gramsci 1971, 10). Within such a framework protest music becomes ‘politically engaged’ (Sakolsy 2003, 44). Linton Kwesi Johnson, in my opinion, manifests this organic process through describing his relationship to politics and contexts of inequality and injustice:

I was motivated to write poetry because of politics, because for me poetry was the vehicle to articulate feelings, emotions and frustrations of my generation, Black people. A lot of the verse that I wrote was informed by activities that I was involved in and campaigns that I was involved in. For example the George Lindo campaign—I wrote a poem about that. The campaign to free our editor, Darcus Howe, from prison—I wrote a poem about that. The campaign around social change—the SUS law [SUS for “suspicion”]—Black youth of my generation were criminalized and there was a campaign against that to which I contributed a poem, “Sonny’s Letter.” I saw my verse as documenting and chronicling, if you like, some of these struggles that I was involved in. (People’s World 2016)

The power of words and sounds articulated through music in a rhetorical sense as alternative reasoning and how this relates to context is what the remainder of this chapter will focus on.

ARTISTS AND BACKGROUND

Big Youth aka Manley Augustus Buchanan was born 19 April 1949, in Trenchtown, Kingston, Jamaica. He is of paramount importance as an MC in reggae history and culture, who as a pioneer on the microphone paved the way for MCs in reggae and other genres such as Hip-Hop, Jungle, Grime and Drum ‘n’ bass. Big Youth once had five songs in the local Jamaican top ten charts in 1973 but his story in terms of credits, publishing and royalty payments is a familiar one for many Jamaican artists who attracted support and love but, in reality, were exploited by producers and labels⁴. Big Youth remains an important part of living reggae history and culture. He tours the world and features on many songs by next generation producers such as Twilight Circus, Tuff Scout and The Breadwinners who keep the flame of roots reggae and Dub burning.

One Drop Forward formed in 1991 in Thessaloniki, Greece. Few reggae bands existed in Greece at the time, and most of them that did, came from Athens. Since then One Drop Forward have released four albums, with ‘Bird on

the Fence' (on which 'Now To Never' is featured) being the most recent (2015). The band has a full on roots reggae sound, with three piece horns, drum, bass, guitar and vocals. Stefanatty is lead vocalist and songwriter with the band.

Exploring the rhetoric of reggae in Greece and the manner in which it might offer a challenge to austerity politics, led me unavoidably to reflect on Jamaica, an island economy in the Caribbean which has been undergoing various debt and austerity programs of its own since the 1970s, and to a set of ideas articulated by Walter Rodney from the 1960s, which I will refer to at length as they are very pertinent to the content of the two protest songs being analyzed in this chapter.

WALTER RODNEY AND INTERNATIONAL DEBT RELIEF AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN JAMAICA

Reggae has always been closely linked with a different form of political consciousness through Rastafarianism because it challenged the class system and stayed outside of conventionalism (Bradley 2001, 79). This form of consciousness took a radically different shape through the activist and scholar Walter Rodney who brought a 'more pragmatic philosophy to Rastafari' through "the idea of economic independence as being the cornerstone of every other kind of freedom" (Bradley 2001, 195). Rodney, a Guyanese scholar based at The University of The West Indies MONA Campus in Kingston, Jamaica, brought his radical words to the streets. During this short time in Jamaica as a teacher, Rodney engaged in a series of dialogues with Rastas which formed the basis of his book 'Groundings with my Brothers' (1969) where he outlines this intention quoted by West:

I sought them out where they lived, worked, worshipped, and had their recreation....In turn, they 'checked' me at work or at home, and together we 'probed' here and there, learning to recognize our common humanity....Some of my most profound experiences...have been the sessions of reasoning or 'grounding' with black brothers, squatting on an old car tire or a rusty five gallon can. (West 2005, 12–13)

Some Rastas 'had understood his message to the point that they themselves began to question the emphasis on repatriation and Haile Selassie⁵, and the more progressive were calling for a people's government in Jamaica and Ethiopia' (Campbell 1987, 131–32). In other words, Ethiopia was for Rodney an actual place and not a 'promised' or imaginary land (Bradley 2001, 196), and Africa was in general terms a continent that had been exploited deliberately by European capitalism (Rodney 1972, 14). Additionally the impact of Rodney stretches far beyond his life span (1942–1980). He had a significant

impact on many Ska and reggae artists in direct and indirect ways. Prince Buster, Louie Lepki, Linton Kwesi Johnson (who also knew him personally) and Corey Harris have all released songs about him⁶. Rodney also remains an important part of political culture in Jamaica in a vernacular sense, and is to this day an ‘unsung’ hero of liberation and freedom, epitomized so well in image form by the late Michael Thompson aka Freetsyle Roots (Papaefstathiou 2012).

Let us now turn more to the economic and political climate in Jamaica in the late 1970s a time dominated by politically fueled violence:

Political violence surrounding the 1976 election erupted with astounding force. While the 1972 campaign was remembered as “joyous” and “warm”, which is an exaggeration, the 1976 election brought with it the ugly reality of increasing sophistication of weapons and technique of the party gangs, ghetto youths and thugs. Nearly a hundred people were killed in the first five months of 1976. Rival gangs were at each other’s throats, ready to retaliate at any moment. Besides the violence that surrounded Kingston and other urban areas, there were other vicious acts that circulated throughout the political scene. Violence in Trench Town coincided with a Kingston meeting of International Monetary Fund official! (Kerr 2017)

The second Manley government turned to the IMF in 1976, not as fans of conservative neoliberalism (far from it, he was a democratic socialist) but because the Jamaican economy had for various reasons been brought to its knees. The description below, despite its official source—‘The Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress sponsored by the U.S. Department of the Army’—does sound in some parts like the recent ongoing narratives between successive Greek governments and the IMF, World Bank and European Central Bank (ECB), which is more vernacularly known as ‘The Troika’:

As the economy gradually deteriorated and international reserves had dwindled during Manley’s first term, the government had been forced to approach the IMF for assistance with balance-of-payments support. Strapped with an ailing economy, the Jamaican government agreed to an IMF stabilization program a few months before the 1976 election. The IMF agreed to make a loan to Jamaica if the government undertook a large currency devaluation, instituted a wage freeze, and made a greater effort to balance the budget. After the election, however, Manley rejected the IMF recommendations, citing the harsh measures demanded by the Fund in return for balance-of-payments support and arguing that the IMF conditions constituted interference in the internal affairs of the country. (Meditz and Hanratty 1989)

Eventually Manley became demonized in the lead up to the next election in 1980 through graffiti daubed on walls which simplified the crisis in Jamaica

in an everyday ‘talk’ on what IMF actually stood for—in other words—“Is Manley Fault” (DeYoung 1980). That election was the bloodiest in Jamaican history, with over 800 politically fueled sectarian killings between rival gangs supporting Manley’s People’s National Party (PNP) and Edward Seaga’s Jamaican Labour Party (JLP). Over four decades have passed since the first agreement signed by the Manley Government with the IMF in 1976–1977 and this time has been dominated by a disturbing cycle of dependency, austerity and recession:

Jamaica has repaid more money (\$19.8bn) than it has been lent (\$18.5bn), yet the government still “owes” \$7.8bn, as a result of huge interest payments. Government foreign debt payments (\$1.2bn) are double the amount spent on education and health combined (\$600m). (Dearden 2013)

Again the hopelessness of these debt programs, whereby countries borrow much more than they can pay back, is very similar to the situation in Greece today.

INTERNATIONAL DEBT RELIEF AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN GREECE

The last decade in Greece has been turbulent in a political and economic sense triggered initially by the world economic recession of 2008 and the EU Sovereign Debt Crisis that followed it. By 2009, Greece announced “it had been understating its deficit figures for years” which raised a great deal of concern about the country’s economic stability (*New York Times* 2016). By 2010 the country, on the verge of bankruptcy, turned to the ‘Troika’ European Commission (EC), the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an economic bailout which led to the implementation of austerity measures. Since then Greece has had three bailout programs totaling “€26bn in bailout loans since May 2010—the biggest rescue programme in global financial history” (Smith 2016).

Successive years of austerity and debt in Greece have produced the highest rate of unemployment in the EU, a decrease in the size of the economy by 25 percent, an alarming refugee crisis (Karayianopoulos 2016) and over half a million Greeks have emigrated (Chrysopoulos 2016). The debt burden exceeded 187 percent of GDP in 2016 (Smith 2016). IMF lenders recently hinted they might pull out from contributing to the Greek debt crisis, not because it was necessarily unjust but because the Greek government was not, according to their estimations, ‘going far enough’ in cutting pensions, and raising VAT and Income Tax (Copoll 2016). In 2017, the Greek Government

led by Alexis Tsipras surprised the ‘Troika’ even more by turning to The World Bank for a loan, becoming the first country in what is considered to be in the ‘developed world’ to turn to a lending institution which is usually associated with ‘the underdeveloped’ ‘Third World’ (Smith-Meyer 2017).

It follows then that situation in Jamaica from the 1970s and the current context in Greece share some similarities in terms of debt dependency and we can even talk, to borrow a journalistic headline, in terms of the ‘Jamaicanisation of the Eurozone’:

...the ECB has refused to use its powers to put an end to the sovereign debt crisis, preferring instead—hand-in-hand with the rest of the Troika—to exploit it in order to force unpopular political changes in Eurozone countries, especially the weaker ones. In so doing, they are condemning these countries to the long-term stagnation of high unemployment and slow growth that Jamaica has suffered for the past two decades. Although the human costs are much higher in a developing country such as Jamaica, this still entails a huge amount of unnecessary suffering on both sides of the ocean. (Weisbrot 2012)

Additionally, we can also talk about a lot of misleading assumptions and lies which have dominated discussions on Greece for the last decade as a state in ‘perpetual crisis’:

The problem with Greece is that everyone is lying. The European Commission and the European Central Bank are lying when they claim that the Greek “program” can work as long as Greece’s government does as it is told. Germany is lying when it insists that Greece can recover without substantial debt relief through more austerity and structural reforms. The current Syriza government is lying when it insists that it has never consented to impossible fiscal targets. And, last but not least, the IMF is lying when its functionaries pretend that they are not responsible for imposing those targets on Greece. (Varoufakis 2016)

Taking this significant background information about protest music, Walter Rodney, Jamaica and Greece into account, I would now like to turn to analysing some of these themes through reference to the rhetorical context of two songs chosen for their relevance to issues of contemporary political and financial crisis.

BIG YOUTH BAIL OUT

Big Youth’s credibility as reggae MC since the early 1970s is an important aspect of the ethos of the song under consideration mainly because he was the first MC to turn the art of MC’ing to more real issues. As he says himself:

Up until that point (*early 1970's*) deejaying was really just about nicing up the dance; none of it wasn't saying nothing—the whole thing was just a *baby baby...chick-a-bow...bend down low* situation. While people dem was *hungry...* That's where myself and the new generation of deejays, younger guys, came in, because we could really see where it should be coming from. And on the sound systems we are close to the people, much closer than how so many of the big record producers had become by then, so while the whole deejay ting was still *chick-a-bow* we could see that people need to be looking forward, instead of getting down. It was an urban, spiritual, cultural concept that we come with. We realise that the music we possess is a music of teaching. (Big Youth interviewed by Bradbury 2001, 290–91)

As a result of the shift towards a more Rastafari-oriented perspective he is often revered as a 'foundation' reggae artist, as someone who paved the way, making him an elder figure in the genre and a person people have a lot of respect for. Consequently when the song "Bail Out" was released at a time when Greece was constantly in the news, along with possible 'bail outs' for Spain, Ireland and Cyprus (which are all mentioned in the songs) people tuned in. The logic of the song focuses largely on a chanted line in the chorus which commences just after a short introduction in the song that defines the content with the repetition of the phrases 'Economical Crisis—Economical Crime'. This sets the pathos of the song immediately as a song of protest against the current status quo. In other words the crisis itself is a crime. We are then led straight to the point—straight into the chorus line "Who's gonna need another Bail Out?" asks the singer, which is contrasted with a call and response in a different tone of voice advocating to "give an helping hand" and "do it while you can", which are mixed differently in terms of frequencies and up sounding almost as if they are coming through a megaphone on a protest march. Lyrics alone convey a message but this should not be isolated from the sound of the song. How the lyrics come to life sound wise and the 'steppers' quality, dominated by a heavyweight bassline and drums that make the chanted lyrics syncopate as a totality of critical speculation are also crucial in the delivery. In other words, many factors convey meaning semiotically (Longhurst 1995, 158). The melody of the chant as a repetition and his unique timbre as an MC combine perfectly in a strong steppers format, with a defiant drum and bass line which work on a different level. The concept of steppers is important to the placement and overall emotion of the song. Steppers is difficult to define without actually hearing it. The music is usually at a faster pace and best appreciated on a reggae sound system where the sound rolls like thunder. It's not lighthearted music. The logic of the song and its appeal are one and the same thing. After the chorus the line of argument comes as a warning commentary on current events.

Said dem bail out Greece—so dem never mek it
 Now Spain—see dem never mek it
 Spain say it's not clearly a bail out (spoken)
 It's an unconditional deal⁷

This part of the song could even read like an article from a newspaper. To paraphrase it—they bailed out Greece—knowing they would never pay back the debt—so next came Spain—they would never make it—pay it back—So Spain said (speaks as Spain) “it’s clearly not a bail out, it’s an unconditional deal”—in other words Spain did not implement the same ‘bailout’ policy as Greece. In some ways by re-telling current affairs relating to bailouts and the EU, Big Youth utilizes the medium of music as a media platform for sharing the latest news. Spain did not in fact accept a bailout out—while Greece did (Cody 2012).

A different tone flows in the next part of the song. Big Youth calls out the name “Angela Merkel”—the German Chancellor, and a key player/figure of authority in the Greek Bail Out process whose name is rhymed with “seashell turtle”. This can be interpreted in different ways. It might have been the first thing that came into Big Youth’s head to say, after all what else rhymes with Merkel? But it’s not just humour, it also has a carnivalesque quality (Bakhtin 1984) because it questions hierarchy and the powers that be with a twist of satire. It reflects a complete disruption, a break in the song, which may make people sit up and listen, after all did he just call Angela Merkel a turtle. So it is humorous but in a zany and serious kind of way—much in the same way that U-Roy (another significant Jamaican MC) chanted on ‘Chalice In The Palace’ (referring to the Queen of England—again a figure of authority) with the rhyming couplet ‘gonna burn up the chalice inna Buckingham Palace.’⁸ Structurally the song then returns to a similar flow as the start of the song with the lines:

Economical system get flop
 Economical system get crash
 Ready to live and love and learn to love
 Live and love and learn to love
 We have to learn to share...⁹

The system has flopped and crashed, but the alternative route to survival, is “live and love and learn to love” learning to “share” as a critique and alternative way of living to greediness (see chapter on Damien Dempsey in this volume for similar themes). The song repeats the chorus and then goes into a line that has been used in many reggae songs:

War is not the answer only love can conquer
 War is not the answer only love can conquer hate¹⁰

This adds an anti-war quality to the song through a chiasmic approach—“only love can conquer hate”—and echoes of a famous line from Martin Luther King Jr.—notably “Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that” (BeliefNet 2017). It’s also a theme Big Youth has used on several tunes in the past¹¹. He then extends this further by a passionate (pathos) reference to wars in Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, which locates the ethos of the song as being against many wars raging around the world. The song repeats the chorus again and returns to earlier lyrics about how the system will crash and how war is not the answer. Such a logic implies through song as a form of protest that ‘economical’ problems are linked in terms of causality to the many pointless wars in the world. So the implicit logic suggests why spend money on wars when so many countries around the world are economically bankrupt¹².

A final quality of the song is the way Big Youth’s characteristic scream (a template of sorts for his MC style dating back to the 1973 LP release *Screaming Target*), comes in and out of the song¹³. This works as a semiotic signature of Big Youth; a way of knowing it is him, his sound and ethos. It is a warning sound, something which acts like a wake up or alarm call.

The overall rhetorical message of the song questions the value and terms of Bail Out without spelling out in depth the details. Who will need the next Bail Out with unconditional terms is the key question being raised and this is phrased in a normative manner. Walter Rodney’s insights on dependency, namely that countries are over exploited through the trap of international debts (IMF, World Bank) which they can never pay back, comes back into the frame here. Greece’s participation in the EU and the bail out is questioned by someone who is a historical figure in reggae which also adds to the ethos of the song. Hailing from Jamaica, Big Youth reflects on the IMF/bail out/ endless loans, which although it is not literally spelled out, resonates to his own experiences as a Jamaican who lived and toiled through that turbulent history of the late 1970s—early 1980s. Big Youth’s experiences question the past and reflect on the future by challenging the logic of “Bail Out” and that is the key theme of the song. By questioning this newly created state of dependency now manifesting itself in the European Union he challenges the status quo and hegemony of authoritative figures and decision makers. The next section of this chapter will explore One Drop Forward who do something similar, but rely on a different kind of method, which reflects on the past, more as a determinant of a pre-determined future.

NOW TO NEVER BY ONE DROP FORWARD

‘Now to Never’ is a big sounding production with live horns, drums, bass, guitar and different vocals. The title poses a heavy sense of ethos—as

something without an end—an infinite sense of fate. The intended audience for the song is most likely to be people on the receiving end of austerity in Greece. The writer of the song, Stefanatty, is living the situation firsthand as a resident of Thessaloniki. In some ways this is a contrast with the first song by Big Youth (as he was not living in an EU country going through a ‘bailout’) but in other ways, the two songs share an element of raising awareness and giving a warning about the future. In other words both songs are prophetic in quality. ‘Now to Never’ starts with a vocal by Stefanatty saying “Rise up” “Now hear me now” “a true”. This is mixed to sound like its coming from a megaphone (perhaps intended as a signal to mass mobilisation) or transistor radio. The same effect was noted previously on Big Youth’s “Bail Out” and this is viewed as an indication of a song of protest. Another intention could be to make it sound like a small speaker, as if coming from a radio perhaps reflecting an audience listening to the news on the radio. If so, it follows that these sounds, seldom played on radio, call for an alternative political stance (hence the term ‘rise up’). The song immediately sets the pace by proclaiming its ethos and pathos through a rhetorical logic on the inequities of society:

It’s a matter of justice inna this time
 Too many people pay for a few people crime
 Too many people living the worse condition
 Cos a few people making the wrong decision
 Too many people are helpless and poor (female harmony vocal)
 While a few people have them children future secure
 Too many worry about them daily bread (female harmony vocal)
 While a few people invest for century ahead
 These people sleep inna feather bed (female harmony vocal)
 While most people rest only when them dead (female harmony vocal last 4 words)¹⁴

The ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ is a common theme here. It depicts a society where the majority of people pay for the excesses of the few. This is substantiated through the logic that the impoverished conditions people live in are a result of ‘wrong decision’ by people who protect their greed and self-interest. Privileged people secure their children’s future for “centuries ahead” while the majority are “helpless and poor” and live hand to mouth on a daily basis. While some people have the luxury of a “feather bed” most people “only rest when them dead”. This is a class analysis of contemporary Greek society in crisis. The vocal is interesting in terms of the mix of solo and combination harmonies by the female vocalist Sistah Sofia, whose higher harmonies add colour and urgency to the feel of the words. The structure of the song is important to the development of its sense of pathos as it builds a story of protest through conversing on the injustice and hypocrisy of contemporary Greek

society. There is an intricately woven sense of progression between the introduction and first verse into the chorus with horns playing a key role blending in and out between the vocals. The horn break between the first verse and chorus being a good example of this. It gives the song room to breathe as a production. It's an exchange that lasts throughout the song with vocals being prominent then horns taking the leading role with vocals appearing less. For example, the horn break after the first verse plays a melodic line after which Stefanatty chants "times dread" which could be taken to mean times are hard, times are harsh. He repeats this again after the horns just before the chorus with the phrase "come see" as a way of saying leading into the chorus.¹⁵

The logic of the song's chorus is different from a standard pop song where a chorus is catchy and repetitive. This chorus is thought provoking and the phrase "now to never" is in there only as a sublime signifier—we are cautioned through the chorus:

they play with you mind til you say whatever
 But that's not a way to get through this my breddah
 Keep your faith unto Jah Jah forever
 Cos them lies last from now to never
 From now to never lies them promises
 But you still believe them and get distressed¹⁶

The first line warns us of the dominant ideology, based on a barrage of lies which we are bombarded with until we accept them. The alternative to this is then suggested. There is a notable common theme with the Big Youth tune 'Bail Out', which also posed the question who's next / what's the choice? The alternative is to believe in "Jah Jah forever"—in Rastafari as an alternative belief system—through the concept of 'livity', which is neither a religion nor a doctrine:

Signifying something more than a lifestyle but different from a belief system, 'livity' is a concept that motivates Rastafarians to adjust their behaviors and attitudes in pursuit of an ideal peace and harmony among humanity and all of creation. (B. Bean 2014, 4)

They, the powers that be, use mind games for us to believe, but that's not the way to survive this. Keep your faith in Jah forever because their lies will last from 'now to never'. This is the most powerful, potent part of the song, the belief in Rastafari, through an imagery of being enslaved, indebted from now to eternity. If you believe them, the system, you will get stressed out and your life will get messed up, it will be a "disaster". The power of this simple phrase is potent in the context of the contemporary Greek crisis, where people have been forced to pay higher direct and indirect taxes but are essentially

getting much less from the state in return. The song appeals to our emotions on many levels in the chorus through its criticism of the status quo as a con and an illusion. Bombarded by the lies of the system, the song leads us to question the tautological nature of economic crisis. Our lives, as the lyrics say, become a “mess”: if we follow like sheep, we get “distressed”. The last part of the chorus builds up into this theme in the following way:

Oh what a mess
What a disaster
You give much for less (female voice singing—you giving much for less)
You’ll never prosper
You make think you’re smart (female voice singing—you may think your smart)
But its not so clever
To follow the blind (female voice singing—follow follow follow)
From now to never¹⁷

The use of two voices in this part of the chorus creates a kind of call and response but it is more than that. The female voice is like a formidable echo of the lead voice’s lyrics through repeating them in a more stretched out, lamenting way. The emotion of the song is quite sad in this context through the imagery conveyed. The passion of the vocal delivery is supplemented by the music being stripped down to a drum beat, which almost sounds like a marching drum until the music builds up again on the line “oh what a mess” with the horns coming back in toward the end of the chorus. At the end of the chorus, the song breaks down to some lamenting lead lines from the horns which are then followed by a flow which is known as “stop and mix” in reggae coupled with an electric guitar soloing maniacally. ‘Stop and mix’ is something which made its way into music from the dancehall DJs who used to mix the music in a rhythmic way in line with the beat and bass line. Bands incorporated this into live shows adding a degree of dancehall flavour to their sound. I argue that this part of the song has a distinctly zebekiko beat, a folk dance from Asia Minor, with a 9/4 or 9/8 rhythm. This lasts just for a few bars and it acts in a way like a sonic alarm, reflecting, through the wailing guitar the chaos of contemporary times. The song then returns to the ‘megaphone voice’ which now broadens its scope with specific appeal on Africa, exploitation and slavery:

Come take a look now at Africa
What a devilous nation that’s done so far
Robbing and stealing
Diamond and gold
Now the African children were captured and sold¹⁸

Again, through the use of the megaphone reflective as a symbol of protest and disenchantment (Edwards 2011, 16) we understand that this is not the

kind of news that is on the radio. The lines echo the militancy of Walter Rodney's 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa' (1972). Indeed this theme continues in the second verse with an elaborate explanation of how slavery enabled specific 'economies' to develop through the exploitation of the natural resources and people through slavery and colonialism, to the point where multinational companies now control 'The World Bank'. As in the first verse there is a horn break then the verse makes a powerful connection between the past and the present, which is crucial to understanding the logic of 'Jamaicanisation' of the Greek debt crisis. Stefanatty says:

It's amazing how deep goes their hypocrisy now
 Them came to support a broken economy now
 Foreign debt how can you say that
 When for what's done how could you ever repair that
 See them building churches, temples, and mosques
 Hiding their face behind all kind of mask
 See them wearing crosses around their neck
 When it's your neck they try to so hard to break¹⁹

'How deep' is their 'hypocrisy', he questions? They came to support a 'broken' economy namely Greece, but knew full well that it could never be repaired. The remainder of the verse is a critique of organized religion in times of crisis, which people hide behind in vain, because the powers in control still try so hard to "break" your "neck". It's a powerful statement which leads into the final chorus stressing the line "You give more for less"—with the echoing female voice wailing—"you will never get out of this". In a way the male voice is the present and the female voice is a warning for the future. The title of the song is key to its message, and it's one that carries a powerful, emotive worldly message. If all the lenders knew the Greek loans would never be paid back, why did they sanction them in the first place?

It follows then, by implication from the song 'Now to Never' that the process of Greek debt is a case of 'lenders', namely 'The Troika', deliberately under-developing Greece, a member of the European Union, through an endless cycle of debt. The outcome is a new state of dependency that resonates historically with the position of Jamaica, as a case of cyclical dependency on IMF loans in return for austerity programs.

CONCLUSION

The messages in the songs analysed pose alternative questions regarding the current realities of crisis in debt-ridden European countries such as Greece. They offer a logic which links back to ideas and critiques by Walter Rodney's

key argument on how dependency is manufactured through debts and the cycle of international loans. These songs have a different kind of sensibility that is negotiated on the dance floor and through a variety of more underground reggae radio shows, reflecting alternative visions and lifestyles. In these tunes we are not just spectators to a crisis, we are actively reasoning on its causes and where it may lead to in terms of dependency and future generations being in constant debt. They lead me to conclude that Greece is becoming like Jamaica in terms of the politics of austerity and debt, “from now to never” as Stefannatty says. Although both songs do not refer directly to Walter Rodney, they both took me back to his works and thoughts, which (in my opinion) have been largely marginalized outside of the Caribbean. As protest songs, clearly articulated through their rhetoric and acoustic stylings, they represent callings for different forms of critique, questioning and mobilization, as reflected by way of introduction on Linton Kwesi-Johnson and to Gramsci’s notions of the “organic intellectual” and “culture” as counter-hegemonic. What I am suggesting by way of conclusion is the need to place protest music by definition in this ‘organic’ Gramscian way. The “organic intellectual” as a musician engaged in alternative forms of pedagogy can draw from a range of sources. Additionally empowerment has to do with what’s going on now and the effects of the policies and practices of neoliberalism and austerity. The fact that the government of Greece, considered a ‘developed’ country, can turn for a desperate loan to the World Bank in 2017 is just another sign of the banality of these inequalities and injustices. Protest music in its reggae form gives a voice to these realities by playing a crucial role in the formation of alternative political consciousness. The issue is to find a way of telling things, which protest music does, time and time again.

NOTES

1. MC’ing as a culture originated from Jamaica with pioneering figures such as Count Makuchi on sound systems as far back as the 1950s, and later with King Stitch and Sir Lord Comic who recorded the first MC records in the mid-1960s. This first generation of MCs were more entertainers talking over tracks through rhythmic snippets of chatting. This changed radically with U-Roy and Big Youth, who infused MC’ing with Rasta reasoning and questioning the economic and political status quo from the late 1960s making MCs ever more popular (Bradley 2001, 288–307).

2. Although Aristotle referred to ‘rhetoric’ in terms of persuasive speech acts, I believe his arguments are pertinent to songs as texts containing persuasive arguments and ideas which can be linked to more recent works from the 1970s onwards that explored the impact of music rhetorically such as Booth (1976), Bailey (2006) and Stewart et al. (2012).

3. Antonio Gramsci's concept of the 'organic intellectual' (1978) and Walter Rodney's thoughts and works (1969, 1972) inform this chapter in a dynamic way through the exploration of makers of protest music as 'organic musicians'.

4. Big Youth recalls those early times "Even with all of this, 5 songs in the chart, there was nothing much happening for me financially". Interview with Big Youth by reggae historian Steve Barrow https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPFCnrE_0sg.

5. Haile Selassie was Emperor of Ethiopia and regarded as God of the Black race by Rastafarians.

6. "Doctor Rodney Black Power' Fab" (Prince Buster and All Stars 1969); "Walter Rodney!" (Lepki 2007); "Reggae fi Rodni" (Johnson 1983); and "Walter Rodney" (Harris 2007).

7. "Bail Out" (Big Youth 2012).

8. "Chalice in The Palace" (U-Roy 1975).

9. "Bail Out" (Big Youth 2012).

10. "Bail Out" (Big Youth 2012).

11. Such as "World of Confusion" (Delita 1978), "Political Confusion" (Big Youth 1979) and "Traffic Jam" (Fraser 2012).

12. In 2015 the cost of wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan totaled a staggering \$14 trillion (Somper 2015).

13. *Screaming Target* (Big Youth 1973). This was also his debut LP.

14. "From Now to Never" (One Drop Forward 2015).

15. "From Now to Never" (One Drop Forward 2015).

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

Chapter 30

The Cacophony of Critique

New Model Army's Protest Against Neoliberal Critique

Tom Boland

Can songs protest against critique? Or must all protest be inherently critical? Would a song protesting a specific critique be necessarily a circular critique of critique? Social protest is diverse, challenging any settled academic distinctions about what counts as protest or protest songs, let alone complex questions of what motivates social movements, why certain cultural artifacts like songs, symbols or slogans become meaningful, and what impact or consequences such protests or their songs have. Just because a song is played at a protest doesn't make it a protest song, and a song may never be heard at a protest and yet protest something. Herein, the relationship of protest and critique will be explored, particularly through the case of veteran punk rockers New Model Army (hereafter NMA), whose songs protest against neoliberalism generally, but also specifically protest against the critique which neoliberalism deploys against solidarity and shared meanings, a sort of limitless critique which echoes endlessly in the pursuit of individualistic freedom. Unlike many protestors, artists and academics the band recognise critique as a double-edge sword, used by socialists, liberals and by each and every side of any political divide. Nobody sings from the same 'hymn-sheet' anymore and any 'chorus' would be essentially contested in the cacophony of critique.

Within academic, political and intellectual thought and more widely, a prominent opposition is that of power and critique (Baehr 2013). Generally, power is held to be dominant or at least hegemonic and supported by ideological coverings which mask its injustices and inequalities, even justifying violence. Positioned against this is critique in the public sphere and protest on the street, which will expose and unmask power by contesting ideology. Beyond this brief description, critique and power are constantly debated, from Critical Theory (Adorno and Horkheimer 1995) to the Sociology of

Critique (Boltanski 2011). Nonetheless, this conceptual opposition animates a great deal of discussion of protest songs, particularly punk, from classic interventions (Hebdige 2002) to detailed accounts of the intersections of punk and politics (Ensminger 2016). This assumption about politics, critique and punk has been noted within the literature: “The specific pleasures of snotty vocals, heavily distorted guitars, or rapid-fire, three-chord structures are simply streamlined into one-dimensional platitudes about ‘politics’, ‘resistance’ and ‘subversion’” (Phillipov 2006, 388). So, the assumption of much scholarship is that punk expresses working-class and marginalised experiences and articulates a left-wing critique of state power and capitalism, in favour of egalitarian, communal, autonomist politics, glossing over the diversity of punk, especially its apolitical and right-wing exponents (Jackson 2013).

What then is the relationship of critique and protest? Consider a minimal definition of a protest song: “Broadly speaking, the protest in protest songs means an opposition to a policy, an action against the people in power which is grounded in a sense of injustice” (Weinstein 2006, 3). This ‘sense of injustice’, is not exclusive to classic social movements like socialism, feminism, civil rights and so forth, but also claimed by far-right protestors, including the French Front National, the Tea-Party and Trump Movement in the USA, UKIP and the English Defence League in the UK and by their equivalents elsewhere. It is easy to dismiss these as ideological groupings, yet they fit the definition above, and beyond expressing their ‘sense of injustice’, new ‘Alt-Right’ groups proclaim that progressive democracy is the new ‘hegemonic’ political power which they valiantly and critically protest (Nagle 2017). Thus, what counts as ‘power’ or ‘hegemony’ or ‘domination’ is not uncontested, but elaborated through protest which articulates a ‘sense of injustice’. Critique is not the monopoly of any group, but increasingly a cacophony with diverse unintended consequences.

Since the distinction between power and protest, ideology and critique is not absolute but constructed by multiple actors, their various claims must be treated with caution rather than as simple reflections of reality. Rather than endorsing the critique offered by social protest songs, as academics, we must trace how these are articulated and received within highly contested political spaces—less a public sphere than a cacophony. Furthermore, rather than attending only to protests against domination or ideology or their ilk, the intention here is to trace a peculiar protest against critique, specifically the protest which *New Model Army* articulate against neoliberal critiques—which will be traced through an extensive analysis of their lyrics and music. Prior to this it is necessary to reconsider what is involved in both critique and protest. Firstly, however, some details on the band.

NEW MODEL ARMY: A TRADITION OF PROTEST

NMA were formed in 1980, releasing their first album *Vengeance* in 1984. Since then, they have released fourteen studio albums, four with *EMI*, and subsequently via their own record label *Attack Attack*. In interviews the band generally states that their music ‘defies definition’, and there are multiple elements; rock, folk, punk and goth. Over the four decades there have been over a dozen band members, with lead singer/lyricist and guitarist Justin Sullivan as the band’s one permanent fixture. The broad ethos of the band is ‘punk’; anti-establishment, working-class, do-it-yourself politics, while the music is broadly more melodic and varied than that label implies.

While the categorisation of the music is much debated, the lyrics clearly position the band as dissenters, protestors and critics (Britton 2011). During the early 1980s, they formed part of the left-wing reaction of punk and broader anti-establishment politics to ‘Thatcherism’—a byword for neoliberal policies in the UK, characterised by deregulation of industry, imposition of market competition, anti-union policies and the degradation of the welfare state (Springer 2016). These policies are associated eponymously with Margaret Thatcher, British prime minister from 1979 to 1990 but reflect a broader shift of the centre ground of UK politics since then. ‘Neoliberalism’ as a term is widely contested, variously considered as pernicious ideology, an empty insult or more rarely as a form of critique, as we shall see.

However, NMA were never part of the combination of protest songs and Labour Party electoral politics in Red Wedge (Frith and Street 1992). Clearly, NMA draw on a tradition of active protest, their name is taken from the revolutionary ‘New Model Army’ who fought under Oliver Cromwell and Thomas Fairfax on the anti-royalist side in the English Civil War 1641–1649. Numerous songs link the band with the historical ‘New Model Army’, known for their piety, dedication and political awareness. Symbolically this aligns them with radical militancy, but also with the historical memory of the betrayal of the revolution by the compromises made by its leaders. Furthermore, Justin Sullivan initially took the stage name ‘Slade the Leveller’, positioning him among the ‘Levellers’ who demanded democratic reform and the ‘levelling’ of distinctions of rank during the 1640s, often facing political repression (Smith 1997).

While most bands have their devotees, NMA reportedly attracted an extraordinarily loyal following, initially self-styled as the ‘militia’, then eventually as the ‘family’ (Reid 2014). Small groups of fans formed fan communities and travelled to almost all gigs in the 1980s and became recognisable through particular clothes, dances and behaviour, which is increasingly a feature of fan participation which gives expression to political resistance (Devereux and Hidalgo 2015). Of course, maintaining such dedication over

the long career of the band was challenging, and so the ‘family’ developed into a more diffuse communal warmth between dedicated fans who felt emotionally touched by the music. According to O’Reilly (2007) this ‘branding’ in terms of a real connection to the fan base has kept the band viable without a record deal with a major label. The band tours regularly and extensively in Europe and now the ‘family’ is thoroughly international.

Thus, when interpreting NMA lyrics, it is important to remember three things: Firstly, the band draws evocatively on a ‘tradition of protest’ from the English civil war, which ends in bitter compromise, if not utter defeat. Secondly, the band’s followers form a ‘critical community’, a sort of permanent and quite generalised dissent or protest, rather than a temporary alliance or coalition oriented towards a narrowly defined goal.¹ Thirdly, the band members themselves have combined alternative music, social protest and critique as a continuous ethos over several decades, as will be apparent from their lyrics, drawn from a corpus stretching from 1980 to the present. However, before making sense of these, it is necessary to reconsider protest and critique at some length.

PROTEST AND CRITIQUE

Protest and critique abound in a continuous cacophony in modernity. Discord, disharmony and a total absence of unison characterises contemporary politics, particularly in Western democracies with an institutionalised public sphere (Szokolczai 2013). Socialist critique was not uniform even during the hegemony of Marxism on the left, and since the post-war era, critique has proliferated, not just within renowned protest movements around civil rights or feminism, but within the backlash, anti-state populism and beyond. Neoliberalism is less an ideology than a critique: “it involves criticism of the governmentality actually exercised which is not just a political or juridical criticism; it is a market criticism, the cynicism of a market criticism opposed to the action of public authorities” (Foucault 2008, 246). Beyond the politics of the public sphere, critical dispositions are found among individuals who reject conformism *en masse* and express their contempt for the mainstream, even in consumption which is ‘hip’ or ‘authentic’ (Frank 1996). Critique is a cacophony not just because there is much disagreement over values, but because the only voices that count are those which claim to be different; iconoclastic, contrarian, eccentric, ironic, inspired or authentic.

Critique is practiced by almost all academics and intellectuals, not to mention artists, intellectuals and of course, protestors. The term ‘protest’ has shifted from its Latinate meaning of ‘giving forth a testimony’—implicitly in public. To ‘protest one’s faith’ or to ‘protest one’s innocence’ are clearly

distinct from social protest. As a noun ‘protest’ generally entails an oppositional stance, not merely a declaration but some form of resistance. Indeed, Kristiansen et al. (2010) define the underlying philosophy of punk as being an oppositional stance towards power. Similarly, punk, and other genres, are considered as critical, both internally within bands and subcultures, but also by academics: “Punk acted like a bullshit detector disturbing the status quo and scattering outdated so-called truths on all sides of the political spectrum as well as attacking the market-place’s value system” (Ensminger 2016, 18). So, there is considerable overlap between protest and critique, although they cannot be considered identical; much protest is also concerned with expressing solidarity, articulating values or proclaiming collective identity. Yet, an ‘uncritical’ protest song is almost unthinkable. At the very least, protest is one mode by which critiques are articulated.

Real-world culture is not easily defined or clarified by academic distinctions, and the aim here is not to offer stable categories of protest and critique, but to draw attention to the operation of critique within protest songs. How power is described critically, how ideology is theatrically unmasked, how injustice is represented and how emancipation is imagined is very varied within protest songs. Such songs partake of longer traditions of debunking, accusation and denunciation (Baehr 2013). However, neither academia nor protest has any monopoly over critique, and so it becomes increasingly necessary to recognise the deployment of critique in the service of liberalism, neoliberalism, anti-feminism and so forth. Typically, these are construed as the ‘powerful’ but this account is itself a critical depiction of the political scene, and our aim here is to trace how such claims are made at all, rather than weighing in on the debate to endorse particular claims—even though detachment from these politically charged issues is neither possible nor pretended here.

What counts as critique? Clearly, this chapter and this volume as a whole would count dissent, protest and rebellion, probably, irony, satire and parody, and much of transgression, subversion and deviance as critical practices. Yet, is all violence against authority critical? There is no simple way of defining critique and providing abstract taxonomies into which various real-world critiques can be categorised is probably pointless – and would indubitably itself be subject to critique. Instead, critique should be recognised as a ‘thing of this world’; it is multiple, hybrid, proliferating and localised; conceived and deployed variously in concrete contexts by different groups and individuals.

Discussing the contemporary problem of critique is generally difficult, because it forms part of our intellectual practice and identity. There are two main responses: firstly, the temptation to declare that ‘other’ versions of critique are problematic, but that some preferred version of critique is ideal; a sort of intellectual identity work and critical purification. Here, only certain

sorts of ‘critique’ really count as such, so that other ‘so-called’ critiques are ‘really’ ideology. Secondly, there is the impulse towards ‘critiquing critique’ wherein critique is always a discourse or language-game, which potentially leads towards endless regress. This involves relativising one’s own statements even as they are articulated, or assuming a position outside the debate from which one declares ‘critique’ to be something other than what it represents itself to be. Similarly, commentators may declare protests which do not align with their politics as merely ‘ideological’, or imply that some protests are political stunts, staged by manipulative powers; again, whether the protest is critical or not is crucial.

The pragmatic sociology of critique tackled the tendency of sociology to position critique as an elite activity monopolised by intellectuals, academics and sociologists. Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) explored how critique is deployed by ‘ordinary’ people in disputes and disagreements, protesting against the existing state of affairs, and, sometimes, critically switching the criteria for legitimacy which gives the impression of revelation. Furthermore, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) analysed how ‘aesthetic’ critiques of capitalist work as conformist, selfish and boring were co-opted to create new justifications of inequality in terms of individualistic ‘project’ work, thereby derailing ‘social’ critiques of exploitation as exemplified by the May 1968 protests. Effectively, critique was co-opted to the purposes of dominating powers. Similarly, ‘counter-cultural’ values were adopted by advertisers to boost consumption (Frank 1996).² In his 1979 lectures Foucault analysed economic ordo-liberal discourses not as ideologies but as critiques against state limitations on market freedom; “a permanent political criticism of political and governmental action” (2008, 246). Thus, critique is deployed for liberal or capitalist purposes, often against state regulation rather than continuous resistance to capitalist domination. However, after positioning critique sociologically as embedded in disputes, Boltanski made strong distinctions between ‘genuine’ and ‘merely transgressive’ or ‘routine’ critiques (2011), a typical but unconvincing response to the complexity of critique by attempting to present a purified or correct version of critique.

Critique is constitutive of modernity for Latour (1993), animating impulses towards unmasking the other and making ruptures with the past. Arguing that critique has “run out of steam” (2004), Latour analyses two main variants; the ‘fact’ critique which declares that all apparent phenomena are constituted by underlying ‘real’ causes, and the ‘fairy’ critique which declares that nothing is real only socially constructed. When these two are united, nothing remains but the truism “everything is real and constructed”, so these critiques have explained nothing. However, the articulation of critique does create symbolic schisms between the real and the apparent which are symbolically and politically important.

Broadly taking critique as ‘unmasking’, Sloterdijk (1988) proposes that it produces cynicism, or ‘enlightened false-consciousness’. Having unmasked religion, metaphysics, tradition, identity, selfhood, reason and whatever else, the modern critic is left with a cynical distrust of everything. Nothing is real, but since it is ‘real in its consequences’, because others believe in it, one may as well proceed as though everything were real, or despair of enlightenment. “Mythology itself sets off the unending process of enlightenment in which ever and again, with the inevitability of necessity, every specific view succumbs to the destructive criticism that it is only a belief” (Adorno and Horkheimer 1995, 11). Empirical correlation of this shift can be seen in the contemporary trend towards negativity, critique and even conspiracy theory in the contemporary media (Patterson 2013), which is amplified in social media practices of critique which proliferate beyond mere ‘trolling’ (Philips 2015).

Invoking ‘cynicism’, originally an ancient Greek philosophy brings us to Foucauldian genealogy, the attempt to historicise critique by connecting it to multiple discourses and moments of emergence. History is not invoked here as an authority which defines what critique ‘really’ is, but to demonstrate the contingent qualities of what is termed ‘critique’ today, destabilising a fixed category into a fragmentary, hybrid amalgam. Paradoxically, such an endeavour might itself appear quite critical, and ‘historicising’ is a favourite academic mode of critique (Felski 2015). Nonetheless, there are significant similarities between contemporary critique and ancient Greek ‘*parrhesia*’; frankly telling the whole truth to power despite personal danger (Foucault 2011). *Parrhesia* was first employed to describe courageous speakers in the Agora, protesting voices before monarchy or the demos. Secondly, it described Socratic dialogue and the use of reason in philosophy to tell people the truth about themselves. Thirdly, it described the cynics who developed an ethos of questioning, testing and rejecting all extant customs and traditions. Each of these is recognisable today, and Foucault explicitly analyses the ‘philosophical militancy’ of revolutionary social movements and avant-garde artists as inheritors of ‘cynical’ critique (Foucault 2011, 181–89). For genealogical approaches, critique is an inherited discourse, re-invented by different generations, ironically, something of a tradition, despite the tendency of critique towards iconoclasm and novelty. Minimally, the Greek inheritance of critique gives orientations towards risky public critique, the critical use of reason in argument and cynical opposition to convention or shared beliefs.

Similarly, critique is connected to religious thought, particularly millenarianism (Cohn 1971) and Gnosticism (Voegelin 1969), but most especially to Old Testament prophecy. Berkovich’s *American Jeremiad* analyses a tradition criticising the present on the basis of nostalgia for a purer past as the animating force of critique. From Elijah to Ezekiel, prophets castigated their

audience for impiety, idolatry, injustice and self-delusion and for following ‘false prophets’—the purveyors of ‘ideology’ in these harangues (Boland and Clogher 2017). These ‘liminal’ truth-tellers promised a utopian revelation of divine will, a coming revolution (Ní Shíocháin 2018). Ironically, critique reiterates religion, the very discourse which it so frequently purports to unmask.

Such a genealogy risks drifting from recognising critique as historical and diverse towards a recursive ‘critique of critique’: If ‘critique’ is merely positioned as a ‘discourse’ or a ‘language game’ in the sense of being an artificial mode of ‘producing truth’, then little has been achieved. Recalling Latour’s ‘fact’ and ‘fairy’ critiques, a thorough critique of critique simply reveals that it is ‘real and constructed—like everything else. Rather than dismissing critique by criticising it, the aim here is to recognise it as a broad cultural tradition, from intellectual critiques to street protests. Much scholarship has contextualised individualism as historically constituted—or critiqued it as ‘ideological’—but this has not prevented theorists from experiencing the world in a distinctly individualistic manner. Similarly, contextualising or critiquing critique does not stop us from being critics; indeed, these very discursive manoeuvres may reconstitute us as meta-critics. Getting outside of critique may be impossible, indeed ‘Critique inhabits us, and we become habituated to critique’ (Felski 2015, 21).

Felski (2015) specifically eschews the ‘critique of critique’ in favour of ‘post-critical reading’, modes of scholarly interpretation which practice critique but thereafter move on through hermeneutics and Actor Network Theory to analyse the meanings of texts and their social interconnections. For Felski, much contemporary interpretation is informed by the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’, which means that readers either ‘expose’ texts as ideological articulations of hegemonic power relations or interpret them as ‘critical’ texts which ironically subvert or explicitly confront the status quo. Within these two options, all other possible meanings of texts are obfuscated or muted by being co-opted for the typical critical narrative. Contemporary critique, in all its diversity, has five general characteristics (Felski 2015, 121–50); Firstly, it is secondary, responding to other texts, ironically dependent on other ideological texts. Secondly, it is negative, inverting ideals into ideology. Thirdly, critique is ‘special’, reflecting the insights of its privileged practitioners, which grates against its fourth characteristic, opposing power. Lastly, critique is intolerant of uncritical perspectives. These refer implicitly to literary or aesthetic criticism but are equally apposite regarding political or social critique.

Thus Felski’s work moves from a Foucauldian analysis of the ‘knowledge-production’ of literary criticism into hermeneutics. Therefore, it is possible to begin to analyse critique as a narrative, a way of making meaning out of the world. The stories that critics tell themselves about themselves are, of course, formative for their identity, partially constituting them as critical subjects.

Furthermore, it becomes possible, risking paradox, to speak of the ‘meaning of critique’ or the ‘tradition of critique’. Problematically, any account of critique as a narrative or tradition will surely provoke further critiques which will ‘expose’ it as ideological—mainstream, logocentric or bourgeois perhaps. However, being explicit about critique facilitates reflection, and perhaps the recognition that many others redeploy and adapt critique to other purposes.

Historically, critiques have accumulated, from *parrhesia* and prophecy to Renaissance critiques of scholastic rigidity or reformation zeal against older rituals and authority, unto early bourgeois critiques of state restrictions on the market or enlightenment critiques of tradition and a plethora of demands for freedom of speech, conscience and religion associated with liberalism. ‘Neoliberalism’ is the target of much contemporary critique, so that one source of critique now appears the nadir of ideology (Springer 2016). Certainly, liberalism has attained many of its original aims, such as equality before the law, levelling distinctions of ranks, access to markets and an open public sphere, to an extent. All of these can be reasonably assessed as institutions expressing ideals, which were hard fought against pre-existing domination. Yet, after its successes, liberal critique seems to live on through increasingly shrill criticisms of state tyranny, or ‘revealing’ social belonging as mindless conformity. Thus, rather than responding to actual experiences of power relations, critique becomes limitless, a story which feeds on itself. Critiques of neoliberalism are lost in the din of individualistic critiques,.

Here, the analysis intersects clearly with the songs of New Model Army.

NMA’S LYRICS

NMA are discursively positioned as critics and dissenters by academics, fans, commentators and their own self-description in interviews and on their website. They have been directly involved in protests around the miner’s strike, homelessness, war and the environment among other causes. They appear as iconoclastic opponents of power and ideology in modern society. Within their oeuvre, which extends to almost two hundred songs, almost every song can easily be interpreted as a critique, either by drawing attention to injustice or violence or by re-presenting common-place beliefs as ideologies. A few songs on each album are focused on personal experiences or are enigmatic, but even these convey a sense of critical opposition through the valorisation of ‘authenticity’. Many songs concern marginalised groups, from North Africa through Native Americans to the urban poor, and association with these subaltern groups also expresses a sort of critical opposition to processes of domination, for instance in songs like “Deadeye” and “Marrakesh”.

Among songs which are explicitly critical protests the most common targets are capitalism, (“Brave New World” 1985, “Master Race” 1986), individualism, (“Great Expectations” 1982, “R&R” 1999) consumerism (“Family” 1987, “DeadEye” 1991) and inequality, (“Get me out” 1989, “Vagabonds” 1987) environmental destruction (“Ballad” 1986, “White Coats” 1987) and political oppression *via* propaganda (“1984” 1984, “Western Dream” 1985) and contemporary imperialist violence (“Spirit of the Falklands” 1982, “Another Imperial Day” 2005). Other songs address pressing issues such as the ongoing refugee crisis (“Die Trying” 2016, “Part the Waters” 2016). Sometimes the commentary is explicit but usually it is narrated via apocalyptic imagery or intermixed with personal stories. There are many clear protest anthems, such as “51st State” (1985) against American imperialism, “I Love the World” (1989) about ecological apocalypse and “Green and Grey” (1989) against individualistic rejections of community. The number and prominence of these critical articulations far outweighs the number of songs or lyrics which protest against neoliberal critiques. Nonetheless, these rarer songs will be the focus for analysis here, because they complicate the default positioning of NMA as a typical ‘punk/goth/rock band’ who are critical opponents of the mainstream, and enable us to rethink critique in the context of protest songs.³ Musically, such songs are not distinct from their general oeuvre, delivered through high-octane rock, with folk notes, heavy drums and clearly articulated lyrics—which may indicate that for the band, protests against neoliberal critique are of a piece with more typical critiques of power.

Ambivalence around critique in NMA songs particularly emerges around the theme of the ‘small town’. This is experientially and symbolically important; the band is from Bradford, a centre of the industrial revolution in the North of England hit by unemployment and economic decline under neoliberalism, and occasionally imagine small towns as sites of home and authenticity by contrast to large cities. Several songs present these small towns as being afflicted by critique; the first of these is a rapid-fire, bass-heavy piece of punk rock “Small Town England” (1982) which describes a typical night out of mundane hedonistic pleasures for working class youths. These are presented as closed-minded, consumerist pleasures, but punctured by a chorus:

Is it a crime to want something else?
 Is it a crime to believe in something different?
 Is it a crime to want to make things happen?
 To spit in the faces of the cynical fools.⁴

Primarily, this is a typical socialist protest against depoliticised youth, with a cry for idealism. Yet, “to spit in the faces of the cynical fools” intriguingly

positions the singer against the cynics, probably small-town people but also, perhaps, their political manipulators in London. At the very least, cynicism becomes problematic rather than valorised.

In “Better than Them” (1984) this mundane nightlife is presented more wistfully, here emphasising the rivalry between sub-cultures within small towns: “We’ve got to be so important we’ll put the whole damn world down.../ When nowhere is safe and nowhere is home—just be cool”. Here, critique animates the life-world and ethos of the various factions within the small town, with each one taking up a ‘cool’ position of ironic detachment (Frank 1996). Such a position occurs against a backdrop of social disintegration—‘nowhere is home’—which implicitly is created by capitalism. Yet this liberalism is not generally resisted by the small-town groups but taken on as an individualistic self-satisfaction and the absence of solidarity with others who live under the same conditions. The line “we’ve got to be so important we’ll put the whole damn world down” succinctly expresses the self-positioning of many critics, including academics (Felski 2015). Neoliberalism appears here as an animating force; beyond destroying the social fabric it also forms the subjectivity of its victims.

Critique is further problematised in “Drag it down” (1984), which narrates the destruction of the statue of a local hero after revisionist historiography and the replacement of a church with a discotheque after God has been disproved:

Pull it down, drag it down
Till the hopes and dreams of all the ages
Past are shattered on the ground
We think we are so clever killing heroes, killing magic,
Until everything that’s sacred is brought down to our level. (NMA 1984)

Modernist impulses towards unveiling truth are here re-imagined as indiscriminate levelling which can destroy any ideals or shared values—even though these lyrics are sung by ‘Slade the Leveller’. Furthermore, the only elements that can survive this corrosive force are power and money, which effectively become the new idols. Here, NMA draw upon the long-standing critique of modernity as a revolution which runs out of control, so the ‘clever’ capacity to kill heroes or magic ultimately becomes a tragic loss of meaning (Yair 2008).

These songs are located within an oeuvre which undeniably protests neoliberalism, yet liberal critique appears as problematic. What does this make NMA? Conservatives? Anti-modernists? Romantics? For Latour (1993), modern critique is variously redeployed by the critics of modernity, yet not all critical discourse is identical, and generally critique is hybridised with other discourses—for instance, protest songs. Here NMA’s anti-liberal critique is

conjoined with ideals of respect and solidarity; perhaps this could be interpreted sceptically as nostalgia for an imaginary small-town ethos which was poorly realised or stifling in actuality; yet such critiques are already articulated within the songs. Beyond critique, there is ‘conservatism’ here, not anti-liberal ‘cultural conservatism’ or free market ‘economic conservatism’, but the impulse to conserve the values of historical heroes and religion. Elsewhere, however, NMA critique both ‘heroes’ and organised religion, so what precisely they are idealising or attempting to conserve is enigmatic.

Alongside this evocation of the contemporary small-town animated by liberal critiques, NMA frequently imagine contemporary politics in historical terms, often drawing on Old Testament figures like the prophet, less a prognosticator than a social critic (Boland and Clogher 2017). Such prophets can be false prophets, but even when they are genuine critics of the established order, they drift into fundamentalism and thereby, hubris or disaster:

The battle against corruption rages in each corner
 There must be something better, something pure,
 And the call it is answered from the caves to the cities
 Come the dealers of Salvation on Earth
 We’ve seen the restless children at the head of the columns
 Come to purify the future with the arrogance of youth. (NMA 1990, “Purity”)

Thus, political engagement and resistance can often lead to bitter results, revolutions gone astray. The ‘promised land’ ends up a dystopia, with military-style drumming.

Beyond such anthems of political disaster which take a distance from such ‘prophetic’ figures, NMA often personalise this figure inclined towards ‘prophecy’ or critique:

I was giving a sermon like the son of a preacher
 I was high on revolution and wild with belief...
 She said—you’re never going to save the world...
 If you can’t save me. (1996, “If You Can’t Save Me”)

Enthusiasm—literally being filled with spirit—is no guarantor of positive outcomes in politics, let alone personal relationships. In the foregoing songs, the narrative shifts from ambitions of salvation towards resignation or an ethos of endurance.

The historical recursion of the problematic character of critique, protest or rebellion is captured by reference to the English Civil War:

Everywhere there are prophets
 Everywhere there are words

All rumours and rapture
But I just long to go home, turn my face into the sun
And now I know Jerusalem. (NMA 2005, “Rumour and Rapture 1650”)

The promise of prophets or politics is eventually abandoned in favour of ‘home’; which may be the true Jerusalem, unless here the term Jerusalem refers to the bitter experience of betrayed revolution.

Occasionally, NMA songs directly position critique as problematic. For instance, ‘A Liberal Education’ (1981) is a lament in a minor key which presents liberalism as removing all possibility of meaning, leaving society as an atomised collection of individuals with no guide but their own desires:

Take away our history
Take away our heroes
Take away our values
And leave us here with nothing...
Then say “Be yourself, please yourself
Express yourself some more
It’s your right to do what you like
Because we can’t really be bothered with you at all.” (1981, “Liberal Education”)

The song clearly articulates an opposition—‘our’ history, heroes, values, against those who take them away. Interestingly, the ‘other’ voice here is the critic, while the singer represents the current generation, especially working class youth. Liberals stand outside this ‘everlasting chain’—a reference to the ‘great chain of being’ and a metaphor of solidarity. In the usual critical schema, it is the self, often the oppressed, who is critical. Of course, these liberals are presented in a highly critical manner, as neglectful, as promoting individualistic ideals and corroding shared values. More frequently, liberalism, capitalism and consumerism are represented by NMA as ideological, yet here liberals appear unmistakably as critics.

This theme recurs, as NMA protest against the ‘age of deconstruction’ which appears to lead to no particular political action:

I’m sick of the ironies piled up high
In this sneery culture with its knowing smile
I’m sick of the sermons from the Church of Unbelief
All fat, empty and anaesthetised. (1995, “Burning Season”)

Particularly notable here is the way in which metaphors like ‘sermon’, ‘church’ and ‘anaesthetised’, are now used to describe the contemporary age of deconstruction and irony. Paradoxically, NMA often deploy sermon-like sneers and disbelief in their songs, contributing to the cacophony of critique.

Yet, protesting neoliberal or positioning critique as a discourse or narrative does not mean that all critiques are the same, or that all are simply corrosive. Indeed, NMA even present the stance of critique as a self-defeating and nihilistic position:

According to you
There isn't anything left to believe in
Because you never could see
That there is everything that we are receiving. (2014, "According to You")

The 'everything' here refers to nature which is highly valorised within their oeuvre and solidarity and meaning more generally. The difficulty is distinguishing when critique is worthwhile. There is no explicit formula within NMA songs, but broadly it seems that critique is apposite for the purpose of displacing ideology and revealing the play of power, but where it breaks down solidarity or meaning it becomes problematic. However, the problems of the solidarity of oppressive political factions or how meaningful narratives justify the status quo remains, and these are frequently the targets of NMA songs.

Aside from direct critiques of critique, NMA also depict the conditions of living in a modern world which is animated both by power and critique:

We took all the holy books and we burned them
All those pages to ashes, every last one of them...
Everything under the sun shall be harnessed
Forced to push and pull and endure like unwilling horses
All for the ceaseless construction of Man's Great Purpose. (2007, "Into the wind").

Here we can identify both passive and active versions of Nietzsche's nihilism (1994); the desire to destroy the world and to create a substitute for the real world. Everything must be destroyed and everything must be recreated. Within the apocalyptic imagination of NMA this fate can only be endured, resisted in small ways perhaps, but not easily overcome by punk rock. Indeed, hope for sudden redemption is described as 'a false dawn that lasts forever' ("States Radio" 2009). Rather, all that remains is the tragic fruit of the liberal revolution: 'Bitter is the taste of freedom, more empty than the sky' (2014, "Guessing"). Thus, existence in the modern world entails either false faith in one's individual critical abilities or enduring the bitter consciousness of the empty promises of liberalism.

However, beyond the cacophony of critique there are some key values expressed by NMA songs, particularly solidarity, community and identity. These commonplace ideas are given a particular twist through 'anti-modern'

metaphors of the ‘tribe’ or the ‘family’—not based on blood-relations but on solidarity (O’Reilly 2007). Within NMA songs, the value of solidarity within the ‘tribe/family’ is given a critical inflection; the group is united not by its antipathy to others or marginal figures but by resistance to power and ideology. By extension, this is resistance against the corrosive, sceptical, relativising impulses of contemporary liberalism, as per ‘A Liberal Education’ or Adorno and Horkheimer’s dialectic of enlightenment (1995).

Thus, the point of preserving heroes, history and even religion is to defend against the corrosive critique and disintegrative individualism of liberalism. There is little hope against the contemporary configurations of power and ideology, no grand anthem of victory, rather an apocalyptic narrative of dogged perseverance, even when revolution has failed. This is most clearly expressed in “Modern Times” (1992):

We set out with our heads held high
So sure of our ground our righteousness,
The new Jerusalem to be built, with love and guts and truth.
But in the end we surrendered easily,
There’s no use pretending otherwise,
Most of us had a little something to lose, enough to break our nerve. (NMA 1992)

Probably this verse refers specifically to the miner’s strike and the political struggles against Thatcherism in the 1980s, and self-referentially to the frustration of the band’s ambitions.

Well, nothing you see out there is real,
It matters not what you believe,
It matters less what you say,
It only matters what you are. (NMA 1992)

The final verses depict the triumph of liberalism and the retreat of all opposition. In such a situation, politics becomes mired in confusion, contradictory values and a cacophony of critique. Furthermore, what does it mean for these reflections to be delivered by heavy rock augmented by a Spanish guitar solo? Nonetheless, there is a clear ethos of resistance; ‘It only matters what you are’. Exactly what kind of ethos is unclear, some NMA songs present a sort of nomadic searching for tribe as key, others personal experiences or small acts of resistance. Nonetheless, what is clear is that simply being a critic is not sufficient in itself, and furthermore, to sermonise in the ‘church of unbelief’ is to contribute to these tragic, apocalyptic, modern times.

CONCLUSION

Among their punk-rock protests against power, as embodied by imperialistic states, capitalism and ecocide, NMA also occasionally protest against neo-liberal critiques. Thus, critique is a double-edged sword which can be used by liberals and socialists alike, or any other antagonists, or indiscriminately within this 'sneery culture with its knowing smile'. This insight draws on a 'tradition' of critique and protest from the English Civil War where revolution leads eventually to intensified tyranny and any political opposition being reduced to isolated individuals. The consequences of critique are bittersweet; the utopian impulse leads to a deepening dystopia. Partially, these songs express the 'Faustian' anti-modern critique of progress as running out of control and destroying meaningful life (Yair 2008). More importantly, they confront the existential problem of living in 'Modern Times' which are at least partially created by liberal critiques, but rendered problematic by neoliberalism. Certainly, it is almost impossible to be uncritical, because domination, ideology, injustice and suffering exist, despite lack of collective agreement on concrete cases, their causes or any solutions. Yet, this is a 'post-critical' age—the age of enlightenment is long past, and there is a surfeit not a deficit of critique, with diverse consequences; liberation, individuation, cynicism, pluralism, hedonism, cosmopolitanism and social fragmentation. Of course, many of these consequences are of the 'unintended' variety and would be disowned or blamed on 'ideology' by many critics.

Against the heroic narrative of critique as the royal road to truth and justice beyond some ever disappearing horizon, NMA present critics as tragic heroes (Giesen 2004); their protagonists are defeated by domination and ideology and co-opted by liberalism and tragically contribute to modernity by undermining shared beliefs. This narrative importantly allows individuals to give meaning to their experiences, to understand their predicament in terms of historical precedent, where suffering is alleviated and injustice remedied slowly, rather than dramatically, if at all. Rather than constantly hoping for a sudden revolution, this 'post-critical' narrative espouses an ethos of persistent stoical resistance, cautious critique, respect for shared values and participation in a community which is only critical among other things. Whether within the band or the 'family', the values of solidarity and mutual respect persist, immune to the corrosive potential of critique, which, after all, is just one voice among many.

Such a cacophony resists any conclusion, yet there are lessons to be drawn: For several decades critique has been adopted by all political persuasions and fallen into crisis—and wishful thinking about reclaiming critique only exacerbates this fragmentation. Furthermore, even though the creation of 'critical identities' is one main outcome of many strands of social protest,

these may not actually be politically significant—indeed, eventually they may be repackaged for popular critical consumption (Frank 1996). Thus, both artists and academics, while they cannot forego critique, need to recover the possibilities for meaning, shared culture and social belonging, both within intellectual practices of critique, and within songs of social protest, especially since they are articulated in a corrosive cacophony of critique.

NOTES

1. A museum installation of fan memorabilia in 2004–2005 clearly exhibited a diversity of critical dispositions in written testimonies by fans (O'Reilly 2011), as does the retrospective documentary on the band *Between Dog and Wolf* (2014).

2. Frank points to how the values of counter-cultural resistance in rock music were adapted to advertising, for instance, the association of surfing and the music of the Beach Boys with Coca-Cola, or the use of psychedelic imagery in Coke ads of the 1970s. Most famously, hippy images are used in the “I’d like to buy the world a coke” advertisement of 1971. Subsequent decades similarly saw the deployment of values of ‘authenticity’ against the market, even within advertising (Frank 1996).

3. The analysis of these texts was largely written in reverse: the author heard and contemplated the lyrics before even entering into academia, and these lyrics were mainly composed before the emergence of the sociology of critique. The hermeneutic method employed follows Felski’s (2015) post-critical reading; firstly reading texts ‘suspiciously’ and recognising the critiques of society within these texts, but thereafter engaging in other forms of reading, affective and meaning making readings, including recognising the historicity within the songs.

4. All lyrics cited match the official band website <https://www.newmodelarmy.org/index.php/the-music/lyrics>.

Part X

IDEOLOGY AND THE PERFORMER

Chapter 31

“Aesthetics of Resistance”¹

Billy Bragg, Ideology and the Longevity of Song as Social Protest

Martin J. Power

What can a song text and its performance tell us about society, privilege and the political sphere? Following on from Cashell’s (2011) line of argument, I contend that British singer Billy Bragg (1957–) has employed his lyrics and activism to represent the struggles of the International working class and build a counter narrative to discourses which present the capitalist worldview as innate, ‘natural’ and inevitable. Centered on a deep textual reading of Bragg’s song(s) “Ideology” / “The Clashing of Ideologies” (1986; 2006),² the chapter is organized in five key sections. I begin by discussing the continuing importance of social protest and the use of song as a mechanism of protest. I then present a brief account of Billy Bragg—the artist and activist—to contextualize my analysis of his work. The third section of the chapter reflects on neoliberal understandings of meritocracy in order to situate “Ideology” / “The Clashing of Ideologies” (1986; 2006) as a sonic response to such understandings. The fourth section of the chapter offers a close contextual reading of these tracks. Finally, I conclude that “Ideology” continues to resonate more than thirty years after its initial release—perhaps even more so now. Ultimately, I argue that while the track may have been an attack on the ideological underpinnings of elite governance and ‘democracy’ in Thatcher’s Britain, the subject matter remains as relevant now as it was then. This, in turn, highlights that while certain protest songs are a product of their time, they also have the ability to transcend that historical moment and have a longer shelf-life in terms of their capacity to foment protest.

SOCIAL PROTEST

Social protest is a method of “political expression” that aims to achieve social change by “influencing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the public or the policies of an organization or institution” (McLeod 2011). Protests can manifest as public demonstrations and civil disobedience, or organising and signing petitions, engaging in boycotts or lobbying for particular outcomes. Contemporary protest groups focus on causes which may seem to some to be “politically contentious” and which range from “identity politics, to cultural, social, economic or political issues” (Cable 2016, 2). Essentially the “grievances” of the majority of protests find their roots in the “structural conflict of interests” (Klanderman 1986, 19, cited in Cable 2016, 3) that continue to exist in our societies.

Cottle (2008) argues that protest should be seen as a message; in that the purpose of protest is to convey the concerns of those protesting and their demands for a change in whatever situation that they are protesting about. Similarly, Cable (2016, 4) argues that in order to investigate the messages that protest groups are disseminating we are required to examine the “collective action frames contained in protestor communications”. Indeed communication is an essential component in any successful protest group as it expedites “information exchange, mobilization, coordination, integration, identity formation, and many other essential functions” (McLeod 2011). Following Power et al. (2016, 266) I understand protest as “a discursive intervention, designed to dramaturgically disrupt dominant discourse, to promote alternative frameworks of understanding and to demand their actualisation”. The arbitration process between protestors and the general public can mobilise public (and on occasion political) support (Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993), while in contrast a protest movement can haemorrhage support on the back of unfavourable coverage. “Representation”, together with the reach and reception of protest is therefore “... consequential for democracy” (Cottle 2008, 854), and as such it is imperative that social scientists pay close attention to how protest is enacted and spoken about in contemporary times.

Yet, it is important to acknowledge that while such alternative “frameworks of understanding” (Power et al. 2016, 266) and the demand for their actualisation are always evident, they are few in number, often occupy marginal positions and in general don’t tend to infiltrate popular discourse / consciousness to the same extent. In essence, a lack of access to the mechanisms of “symbolic production” has ensured that there have been very limited occurrences of *sustained* critiques of the ways in which our societies operate, and privilege and inequality are reproduced (Skeggs 2005, 975-76). Accordingly it is reassuring to note that in societies where the hegemonic discourse continues to be produced by the upper and middle classes, the capacity to

articulate a contradictory narrative to the marginalized can be aided by the 'reach' of popular music (Botta 2006, 123), a view which I examine next.

SONG AS A MECHANISM OF PROTEST

Billy Bragg has on numerous occasions argued that music is communal. For example in 2015 (xvi) he said that

Music has the ability to draw us out of isolation and connect us with a greater community where we feel that our troubles and concerns are recognised and shared ... if music has any real power, it lies in this moment, when we experience the solidarity of song, the cathartic realisation that you're not the only person who shares the sentiments that are being so forcefully expressed.

Against the backdrop of this statement I now want to discuss song as a mechanism of protest. While acknowledging that songs of social protest are "associated with opposition, contestation, revolt and resistance" (Piotrowska 2013, 280), it is also worth noting that popular social protest music is too diffuse to be pigeon-holed into any one genre, category, or period of history (Peddie 2006, xvii). Indeed, Ruth Sanz Sabido (2016, 61) argues that they "function as a site of protest at three different but interrelated levels: the content of the song, its public performance and the resistive nature of some music styles or genres". In essence, as a "reflection of a particular society at any given time" protest music becomes a "vehicle for the transmission of ideas that are socio-politically relevant and meaningful at specific moments" (Blanco 2004, cited in Sanz Sabido 2016, 59).

Denisoff (1968) was one of the first sociologists to critically investigate protest songs; concluding that they were a function of wider political movements (Friedman 2013, xvi), which, in turn he deemed to be a form of propaganda. He understood such songs as being either "magnetic" which were intended to bring people into the social movement and promote in-group solidarity and commitment to the particular cause, or "rhetorical", which he argued offered a direct political message with the purpose of changing an individual's political opinion on a specific issue. In essence such songs of protest are "inherently oppositional; ... vehicles for the expression of the oppressed or those opposing" whatever issue is being protested against. Accordingly we should conceive of protest songs as ways of "resisting or undermining power relations of various kinds, or as a pivotal element in shaping the expression of politically relevant identities" (Piotrowska 2013, 280).

Eyerman and Jamison (1998) see protest songs not just as propaganda (in the way that Denisoff [1968] does); they are simultaneously interested in how

they function as performance events. As such, the ‘actors’ involved in the performance ‘transaction’, i.e. “musicians undertaking various actions which could be labelled as resistance” and the audience, the consumer of the “coded message of contestation” (Piotrowska 2013, 283), who may or may not have the ability to decode the implied or explicit message contained within the lyrics, are the central areas of interest.³ We should never “understate the impact of performance” in this arrangement as it facilitates a “process of exchange—between artists and audiences, between the past and the present—where new societal formations emerge” (Friedman 2013, xv). The delivery by a perceived ‘authentic’ artist in these circumstances is key to the message of the protest song being taken on board by its target audience (see Peddie 2006; Power, Dillane and Devereux 2017).⁴

In addition, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) argued that (all) music needs to be understood through a far-reaching “framework” where tradition and ritual are understood as “encoded and embodied forms of collective meaning and memory”. Song is a “discursive practice” which is impacted upon by “complex intersections of culture, class, gender etc.” in peoples lived experience (Ballinger 1995, 13, cited in Peddie 2006, xvi). The “social, historical and political formations” by which we “filter cultural narratives” is a central cog in the process of negotiating our relationship with popular music in general and songs of social protest in particular. Moreover, as consumers (and scholars and critics) of such music we participate in “a lived social experience with music”, where the music turn out to be a “discursive element in our worlds” and “offers insight into our lives” (Peddie 2006, xxiv). Accordingly, methodologically when contemplating on the relationship between protest and song, many scholars have tended to focus on delivering a deep contextual analysis of the lyrics (“treating song words as manifestos contesting social conditions”) and their reception by the audience (Piotrowska 2013, 282).⁵ I pursue the same approach here, while all the while being cognisant of the fact that music is also central to the delivery and reception of the message.

BILLY BRAGG

“I don’t mind being called a political singer/songwriter, but I really object to being dismissed as a political singer/songwriter. I write about the way the world is” (Bragg, cited in Hutcheon 2004, 83). Billy Bragg is an anti-establishment figure who continues to provoke debate amongst critics and fans. But who exactly is he? Cashell (2011) posits that while Bragg is frequently seen as merely following in the footsteps of American singer-songwriters Guthrie and Dylan, he in fact radicalised the British folk tradition, opening up new avenues for musical activism. Following this line of

argument, in this chapter I contend that Bragg has employed his lyrics and activism to represent the struggles of the (international) working class and in the case of this particular song build a counter narrative to discourses which presents elite privilege (via the political system) as innate and 'natural'.

Billy Bragg was raised in the working-class East London suburb of Barking and is a passionate supporter of the political Left.⁶ He had a brief 'career' in the British army, having left formal education at 16, before committing exclusively to music. The short stint in the army however was an important factor in teaching Billy about class. "This was the first time he'd tangibly seen class ... In the army, class is an important, clearly defined issue. You can see it in operation, in living colour, within the ranks" (Collins 2002, 78-79). Crucially, Bragg developed his political consciousness at a time when the then British primeminister, Margaret Thatcher's policies were devastating working class communities across Britain.⁷ Her neoliberal programme amalgamated a free-market economy, privatisation of state-owned industries, lower direct taxation, and the retraction of the welfare state (Bhattacharyya 2002, 63). The destruction of traditional working-class industries in particular was a consequence of the Tory governments' economic policies which were "explicitly political and intended to destroy the capacity of the organised trade union movement in its citadels of power" (Byrne 1999, 65). By 1981 Thatcher's "radical market driven policies" saw unemployment rates hit 3 million (Rogan 1992, 133).

"In 1984 Bragg began to "hit his political stride" with the release of *Brewing Up with Billy Bragg* (Willhardt 2006, 40) and it was the Miners' Strike⁸ of that same year, which gave Bragg his "political education". "Having grown up in a household where politics was seldom if ever mentioned," playing gigs in support of the striking miners taught him to "think in an ideological way" and encouraged his inner activist (Bragg 2006, 3). When it was over he "considered himself totally politicised" (Collins 2002, 145). At one particular gig in Sunderland in September 1984, Bragg found himself having to justify his position ("where I was *vis-à-vis* the class struggle, where I was *vis-à-vis* Marx, the Labour Party...") to the miners and their supporters "in a more ideological way" (Collins 2002, 144). These gigs were also instrumental in broadening his "musical palette", via his encounters with "the more politically motivated folk musicians, activists in a field from which he'd taken so much indirect inspiration" (Collins 2002, 144).

Yet it should be noted that it was "the lessons he learnt from the mistakes of The Clash" (Bragg 2007, 198) which provided the template for his specific method of "organising the scatter bomb anarchism of punk into coherent 'aesthetics of resistance'" (Weiss 2005, cited in Cashell 2011, 6-7; see also Collins 2002) in order to "mobilize culture for social change" (Bragg 2007, 199). Bragg's lyrical content therefore, while conscious of his folk predecessors, is infused with the spirit of punk rock.

Punk rock injected my songwriting with urgency and attitude and helped me to find my voice... I began formulating a plan whereby I would utilise the vulnerability of the singer-songwriter and mix it with the angry attitude of punk rock. To do this, I needed a new kind of material; short, sharp songs delivered in a choppy, percussive style that ran contrary to the traditional image of the solo singer-songwriter strumming an acoustic guitar and playing ballads... As I became more confident, my early influences began to seep back into my songwriting. (Bragg 2015, xiii–xv)

Being a solo performer thus embodies Bragg's continued faithfulness to the "DIY ethos of punk culture" (Collins 2002, 137). Cashell (2011, 13-14) argues that social injustices and class politics⁹ form the "essence" of Bragg's compositions and subtly govern their "structure at a deep level". Bragg for example effortlessly captures the seemingly endless struggles of the working class in "Between the Wars" (1984), while "Waiting for the Great Leap Forwards" (1988) engages the "pop-and-politics-don't mix" argument head on (see Collins 2002, 193). Moreover, Cashell (2011, 13) argues that ultimately his earlier songs (in particular) significantly depart from the accepted standard for successful commercial songs¹⁰ in that "typically they are composed of two or three stanzas sometimes with a chorus, but more often a coda, concluding couplet, or last-line refrain". The latter is prominent in "Ideology" (1986), which I examine shortly.

While Bragg began his career "building social protest" (against the Thatcher administrations' attempts to smash the Miners) as a supplement to his "musical message" he has arrived at a place where he can now engage "the national press to profess his ideas" (Willhardt 2006, 46). Bragg's understanding of his evolving place in the British "political landscape" has allowed him use "music for one final authentication". For over two decades now he has written pieces for the English political magazine *The New Statesman*, in the process "making substantial political proposals". His music and political activism has given him regular access to "widely disseminated 'legitimate' magazines which other pop musicians simply do not have". As a consequence he has created "an authentic, political use for his art" (Willhardt 2006, 44).

Although Bragg has been governed by multi-national corporations in the distribution and marketing of his work, his catalogue "evidences how the counter-hegemonic can find space at the heart of the popular" and is the "ultimate critique" of "traditional, Frankfurt school approaches to the relevance of popular music" by "tying music to political concerns" (Power et al. 2012, 387).

IDEOLOGY

"Ideology is the most elusive concept in the whole of social science ... it asks about the bases and validity of our most fundamental ideas" (McLellan 1986,

1). "Until very recently 'ideology' was almost always used pejoratively. It was, as the philosophers used to put it, a 'boo word'" (Drucker 1972, 157). But our understanding of ideology has undergone many revisions and re-developments (see Wodak and Meyer 2016). While acknowledging that de Tracy (1801) was the first to define Ideology as the Science of Ideas, I am in agreement with Drucker (1972, 152–53) who argues that "the career of ideology begins with Marx" and is "of value precisely because it points to a complex relationship between phenomena not usually seen to be related at all". Moreover "Marx's partizanship towards the proletariat and his attempt to direct that class to the path of revolution...is central to his concept of ideology" (Drucker 1972, 158). Ideology according to Marx is essentially 'false consciousness', a mechanism utilised by the Bourgeoisie to prevent people from seeing the inherent injustice of the economic base and convince the working class that the current state of production is 'natural' and justified, in the process ensuring compliance. Following Marx, Antonio Gramsci developed his theory of 'cultural hegemony', whereby he saw the bourgeoisie using 'cultural institutions' to maintain power (Gramsci [1935] 1971). In this process the institutions that form 'the superstructure' utilise ideology to produce a hegemonic culture, which underpins and protects the status quo to the benefit of the ruling class (Harkins and Lugo Ocando 2017; see also Althusser 1969 for a discussion on ideology as a function of class power).

In the political sphere the existence of a dichotomous Left / Right cleavage (see Dukelow and Considine 2017) was evident globally right up until the beginning of the 1990s when the collapse of State Communism behind the 'Iron Curtain' occurred. Francis Fukayama's highly influential *End of History* was published in 1992 and argued that liberal democratic capitalism had 'won'. In essence these events (amongst others) heralded the beginning of the 'Post-Ideological society', and the promotion / acceptance of neoliberal 'Meritocracy'. The Rightward shift of many centre Left political parties during this period, which was also marked by intensifying economic integration, was significant in "facilitating the predominance of market neoliberalism" which has "become the major challenge of our times" (Dukelow and Considine 2017, 116). This particular period saw many academics (and politicians and commentators) arguing that ideology was a dated concept which served little use in contemporary debates (see for example Abercrombie and Turner 1978; Corner 2001; Hawkes 2003) and in turn saw critical Marxist ideas jettisoned wholesale in academia and elsewhere. Although this was not a universal viewpoint (see for example Gitlin 1980; Eagleton 1991), ideology as a concept was nonetheless severely criticised for being intangible and too ambiguous (Marron 2016, 31).

Yet I argue that the 'Post-Ideological' world is a myth, a fallacy of neoliberalism; which in fact works as an ideological strategy in itself. Thompson's

(1990, 8) understanding of ideology continues to resonate and is still particularly useful for my analysis in this chapter. He focuses on the interplay of meaning and power; examining how meaning serves to sustain “asymmetrical relations of domination”. In essence ideology is understood as the provision of “meaning in the service of power” (Marron 2016, 32). Thompson’s definition focuses on the “social contexts within which symbolic forms are used” and directs us to position the “study of meaning” and how it is utilised in maintaining the mechanisms of domination within the larger “social, cultural and historical framework” (Marron 2016, 32). Finally, by focusing in on dominant ideology Thompson is acknowledging that alternative / counter-hegemonic ideologies exist, which offer us the possibility of resistance to the dominant perspectives we are subjected to (see Van Dijk 1998 for a discussion on how dominated groups need ideologies as a foundation for resistance).

MERITOCRACY: A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY?

In our so-called Post-Ideological societies the neoliberal meritocracy has been consistently championed. In a meritocracy it is the individual alone who decides whether they are a success or failure (Drudy and Lynch 1993; Considine and Dukelow 2009). Yet meritocracy is itself an ideology which proffers that unlimited opportunities exist for each and every one of us to achieve social mobility—the world is essentially our oyster (see Considine and Dukelow 2009, 287–99), with innate talent, hard work, and having the right attitude and moral virtue seen as the only requirements for success, and a corresponding lack of same being the cause of failure (McNamee and Miller, 2004). Essentially in a meritocratic society “ability and effort count for more than privilege and inherited status” (Hurn 1993, 45). Proponents of this system argue that a meritocratic society is more just and productive and the impact of class, race and gender will weaken over time (McNamee and Miller 2004).

The promotion of the ‘meritocratic’ society has occurred at the same time as neoliberal governments have been introducing policies which have increased social and economic inequality (for an overview see Considine and Dukelow 2009; Dukelow and Considine 2017). I would argue that the rhetoric around our ‘meritocratic’ societies serves to ensure that the “existing unequal societal status quo seem ‘natural’” (Hill 2003, cited in Kennedy and Power 2010, 226). Consequently, the discourse of meritocracy ‘justifies’ the privileged societal position of the dominant classes exclusively on the basis of their innate “giftedness” (Bourdieu 1977), while simultaneously ensuring acceptance of this unequal system from the disadvantaged—essentially it is

part of the process that both Marx and Gramsci identified. In this context, it is significant that Michael Young, who coined the word 'meritocracy', conceived of it in profoundly negative terms. "If such individuals / groups believe, as they are encouraged to, that their success results entirely from their own ability, they will feel they fully deserve the fruits of their labour, while those who fail in such a system may well internalise that they are the cause of their own misfortune" (Young 2001).

"In such 'Post-Ideological' societies "where individualistic self-interest is the default position and any attempt at political discussion is likely to be met with cynicism, the potential for music to once again become a medium with a message is apparent... Music can act as the glue that binds us together in our struggles for a fairer society" (Bragg 2011, xi–xii).

IDEOLOGY: A READING

Against this contextual background I now examine Bragg's song(s) "Ideology",¹¹ which was released as track four on Bragg's album *Talking to the Taxman About Poetry* (1986)¹² and "The Clashing of Ideologies" (alternative version)¹³ which appeared on the *Talking to the Taxman about Poetry* reissue (2006). It is important to note that while the song(s) do(es) not only operate at a lyrical level, for the purpose of this chapter I am solely concentrating on providing a textual reading (see endnote 4 for further details).

Frith (1998, 103) argues that it is "possible to read back from lyrics to the social forces that produced them".¹⁴ The lyrics of "Ideology / The Clashing of Ideologies" (1986; 2006) critique a number of crucial political issues, including hegemonic ideology, political 'careers', corruption ("They must declare their interests but not their company cars / The offender faces jail or resignation"), elite privilege, the retraction of the welfare state, and ultimately, how democracy itself functions. The song begins with Bragg questioning the clarity of the path that our 'democratically elected' neoliberal ruling elite have set us on ("When one voice rules the nation, Just because they're on top of the pile, Doesn't mean their vision is the clearest"). This echoes the much later work of Ferrin and Kriesi (2014, 4) who posit that "even if there is agreement among political theorists and citizens that democracy is to be valued in and of itself, there is much less agreement on what democracy is or should be". By way of resolving this disagreement we can look to the European Social Survey (2014; ESS) which provides data on European's understandings and evaluations of democracy. What the ESS data clearly shows is that European citizens desire a social dimension, which sees the attainment of particular social outcomes like a decrease in social inequality, as being a central component of democracies. However, these same people are resolute in their belief

that their democracies “fall short of these expectations” (Ferrin and Kriesi 2014, 4–12).

Bragg seems to have his finger on the pulse when expressing the sense of disillusionment that ordinary citizens have with the political system and those that they have elected to serve them (“The voices of the people are falling on deaf ears”). The lyrics talk of what these “patient millions” long for; education, health care, etc.—essentially the existence of a properly functioning welfare state. This is a crucial point, “since the public both receive and ultimately finance welfare policies, their views about the extension and form of the welfare state are of paramount importance for the legitimacy of European polities” (Svallfors 2012, 3). The ESS data shows that participants from almost all countries are supportive of relatively “far-ranging government involvement in the well-being of its residents”, yet overall satisfaction with “what the welfare state actually achieves is not overwhelming anywhere in Europe” (Svallfors 2012, 5–6).

Bragg (2015, 120) has previously spoken of how his belief in parliamentary democracy was severely tested during the Red Wedge campaign. His views on this clearly influence the song(s) in question, and the lyrics discuss how politicians that we elect for “their high ideals” in reality just pay our democratic wishes “lip service” when they feel like it. He continues; “Far from being committed to radical change, elements of the Labour Party were just time-serving hacks who had little interest in engaging with a new generation of potential Labour voters (“Is there more to a seat in parliament than sitting on your arse”). Tellingly, Bragg identifies the impact that neoliberalism has had on the political system when he argues that “while they (Labour MPs) might make a great show of displaying differences with the Tories” in the House of Commons (“And the best of all this bad bunch are shouting to be heard above the sound of ideologies clashing”), underneath the bombastic rhetoric, “they were much the same”. This was especially the case when considering the electoral success of New Labour under the stewardship of Tony Blair. In 2006 Bragg (153–54) argued that while the

perceived wisdom is that Blair won (the General Election) by taking his party to the centre of British politics. In fact, Blair has governed from the right of centre, cosyng up to big business... and doing things that Thatcher never dared attempt, such as gifting the private sector vast swathes of education and health care... The notion of Blair as a centrist only makes sense when seen against the backdrop of the ideological divisions of the 1980s.

“The Clashing of Ideologies” (2006) takes aim at New Labour in this regard when the lyrics highlight that “another dose of welfare cuts is passed without a word, From those who claim to represent the centre of this nation”.

The song(s) conclude by returning to the "the crisis of democratic legitimacy" (Foa and Mounk 2016, 6) arguing that although the demands from citizens for the benefits of the 'social contract' that they are tied into is becoming more vocal ("And although our cries get louder") politicians continue to ignore them, as the ideological nature of the political system continues to dictate the policy responses which ultimately impact on people's lives ("Their laughter gets louder still / lost above the sound of ideology clashing / crashing").

In both tracks Bragg appears to lay a large part of the blame for this democratic deficit at the feet of politicians who are increasingly coming from the same socio-economic groups, attending the same small pool of elite schools etc. and ultimately becoming political careerists. Almost thirty years after the release of "Ideology" little has changed in that regard. Hunter and Holden's (2015) study showed that 1/3 of British parliamentary members (MPs) still went to fee paying private schools (the national average was approximately 7%),¹⁵ with the overwhelming majority of them also having a university education.¹⁶ Moreover, their study highlights the "professionalization of politics"¹⁷ with approximately 25% of MPs having politics as their occupational background, which was the largest percentage for any occupational group (Hunter and Holden 2015, 2). As educational credentials become increasingly devalued¹⁸ in our modern 'meritocracies', attending the more prestigious school or university becomes of greater importance (Collins 1979; Bourdieu 1984). In essence, this process increasingly results in those who have attended elite schools being able to 'credentialise' themselves as intellectually superior by virtue of having graduated from schools recognised as producing the 'brightest and best'. These elite credentials act as 'cultural markers' (and are underpinned by identifiers such as "the old school tie"), allowing those who possess it to be recognised as the 'right sort' (Kingston and Stanley Lewis 1990, xiii) and this has led to the charge that the system serves primarily as a "screening device, effectively operating as a gatekeeper to these positions" (Young 1990, 207).

Ultimately, Bragg's "Ideology" and "The Clashing of Ideologies" are persuasive enough for us to come to an understanding that millions of citizens have been sold out by their respective ideological 'democratic' political systems, which have undermined the 'Social Contract' (Rousseau 1762). But he does more than simply address "the crisis of democratic legitimacy" (Foa and Mounk 2016, 6); he speaks to possible futures as a consequence of the increasing democratic deficit. "The Western model of market democracy is losing its universal appeal and the West's own liberal-democratic regimes are facing an internal crisis" (Krastev 2016, 5). Of course, they are still democratic in that "voters can change governments" come election time, but given that Neoliberalism has gained such a hegemonic position globally, changing governments doesn't necessarily (and in many cases has not) result(ed) in a

change in policies, and as a consequence social inequalities have continued to increase in recent decades (Krastev 2016, 5–8). Over this period trust in political institutions has quickly deteriorated across what are established democracies, and citizens (particularly younger ones¹⁹) “have not only grown more critical of their political leaders, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives” (Foa and Mounk 2016, 6–7). This process has certainly had a significant role to play in the Brexit result (2016), the election of Donald J Trump as president of the United States²⁰ (2016) and the rise of the Right in Europe (such as Marine Le Pen in France) and elsewhere. The ever increasing democratic deficit may well see such “anti-establishment feeling” further increasing with “traditionally ideologically opposing cohorts” ending up on the “same side of key debates but for completely different reasons”. The extent to which it impacts on politics and how our ‘democracies’ function into the future can only be addressed by the “will and capacity of nation states to rebalance their policies in favour of their peoples” (Dukelow and Considine 2017, 117). In essence, I would argue that a move away from the hegemony of the Neoliberal model is required to achieve such an outcome.

In that regard, the UK general election of 2017 offers some interesting food for thought. Jeremy Corbyn, a self-styled democratic socialist committed to the reversing of austerity and the renationalisation of public services was elected as Leader of the UK Labour Party in 2015. In June 2016, following the resignation of the majority of his ‘Blairite’ Shadow Cabinet, Labour MPs passed a vote of no confidence in him by 172 votes to 40, yet he survived a leadership contest (which was voted on by the Party members) with an increased vote share. In the snap election called in 2017 “most of his MPs expected him to lead Labour to a shattering defeat; in the event, he has inspired an astonishing revival” (*New Statesman* 2017), with the Labour Party’s share of the vote nationally increasing by almost 10% from the 2015 election (BBC 2017). The public (particularly a re-energised youth vote) had spoken. They didn’t want a return to the politics of New Labour and had backed Corbyn’s policy commitments. “Labour’s performance in the general election seals the deal after at least 20 years of discussion. The question now is not whether but how to put democratic socialist ideas into practice” (Fletcher 2017). Does this now signal the return to a clear Left versus Right ideological divide in British Politics and a genuine challenge to the hegemonic position of neoliberalism?

CONCLUSIONS

It is refreshing to find that in spite of hegemonic discourses still being fashioned by elite sections of our societies, popular music²¹ continually provides

counter-hegemonic narratives (such as those offered in the tracks examined in this chapter and volume) which circumnavigate the globe. This chapter has argued that "Ideology" (1986) continues to resonate more than thirty years after its initial release—perhaps even more so now. While the track may have been an attack on the ideological underpinnings of elite 'democratic' governance and the maintenance of elite privilege in Thatcher's Britain, the subject matter remains as relevant now as it was then, and Bragg could just as easily be singing about the situation in contemporary Ireland, the US, or elsewhere.

Music can play a role in bringing about change but it doesn't really have agency... Only the audience has the agency and the ability to change the world and what we can do is by bringing people together around a particular event, around a particular song, to express solidarity, to express financial support like I did during the miners' strike but fundamentally I have believed for a long time that in this wonderful exchange of ideas it's only the audience that can change the world, not the artist. (Bragg 2017)

While I agree to a certain extent with Bragg's assertion here, I would argue that he does himself (and other singers of protest songs) a disservice in arriving at such a conclusion. The ideas presented in "Ideology / The Clashing of Ideologies" (1986; 2006) are interpolated into Dennisoff's (1968) categorisation of protest song as 'magnetic' or 'rhetorical' and I conclude that they operate as both. Both tracks offer a direct political message which may promote in-group solidarity and commitment to the particular cause, and / or change an individual's political opinion on this specific issue. Moreover, as discussed in detail earlier, the delivery by an artist who is perceived as 'authentic' (as Bragg is) proves to be vital for the target audience taking the message offered in these protest songs on board. Finally, the longevity of the message contained in "Ideology" (1986) is evidence that Bragg didn't merely offer a counter-hegemonic narrative on the operation of meritocratic political democracies; he also offers insight into how the system would continue to maintain itself into the future (see Attali 1985). To this end, I argue that song lyrics, rather than merely being social commentary at a given point in time, actually have potential as social intervention, with many tracks taking on a new life with a different set of social circumstances.

In conclusion, I concur with musician and author Dave Randall (whose own political awakening began when he heard the Special AKA's "Free Nelson Mandela"²² for the first time) who argues passionately that

...those of us who love music have a role to play... we need to take concrete steps towards securing music as a tool for social progress—one that contributes to the building of a mass movement capable of changing the world... Understanding culture and reclaiming music will help to reveal the bigger picture and inspire hope. (Randall 2017a, 196–97)

This chapter (and indeed this volume) hopefully provides a road map to show how this is both desirable, and entirely possible.

Over to you readers!

NOTES

1. Weiss (2005) cited in Cashell (2011, 6–7).

2. These are in effect versions of the same song. ‘Ideology’ words and music by Billy Bragg © 1986, reproduced by permission of Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Limited, London W1F 9LD. ‘The Clashing of Ideologies’ words and music by Billy Bragg © 1986, reproduced by permission of Sony/ATV Music Publishing (UK) Limited, London W1F 9LD.

3. Those who write / sing protest songs fall into three groups: those who take their involvement in protest / activism seriously (such as Billy Bragg), those who criticize power relations through their art alone (Piotrowska 2013, 284) and a third group who cynically exploit an opportunity to sell their work and make profit.

4. Songs of protest in particular need strong and charismatic figures to perform them (see Peddie 2006).

5. For the purposes of this chapter a deep contextual reading of the lyrics of this song makes an interesting case study in how a song of protest can be read. However, I acknowledge that “in focusing on lyrics, scholars all too often overlook the importance of music and the choice of musical devices”. I am not arguing that “music in protest song merely serves as a background for the lyrics” (Piotrowska 2013, 283), on the contrary, “the delivery of the message must be as profoundly satisfying musically as it is politically potent” (see Peddie 2006).

6. Bragg’s commitment to international socialism has remained steadfast throughout the numerous “disappointments of the recent past: from the defeat of the miners to the loss of the 1987 election, from the disintegration of Red Wedge to the fall of communism and the rise of far-right nationalism to the ultimate failure: New Labour’s capitulation to Thatcherite neoliberalism and its betrayal of the principles of democratic socialism” (Cashell 2011, 24).

7. Bragg (2006, 3) describes how during this time he “found a new dissenting faith, internationalist in spirit, collective in principle, committed to social justice, and determined to hold those in power to account”.

8. The 1984 UK Miners’ Strike was one of the most bitter industrial disputes in British history and was characterised by violent confrontations between strikers and the police. The strike arose from an attempt by the British coal industry and the Tory government to close collieries. The end result was a decisive victory for the Thatcher government (see Macintyre 2014 for a discussion on the lasting legacy of the strike).

9. Though of course his songs are not only concerned with issues of social class. “I was fortunate that my breakthrough in 1983–1984 coincided with a resurgence in the art of songwriting... These were politically charged times and my songwriting reflected the struggles that were going on, not only on the picket lines, but also in the

bedroom (Bragg 2015, xv–xvi). *Don't Try This At Home* (1991) for example opened with "Sexuality", a track which illustrates "a shift from a social politics figured around groups such as unions to a politics figured (literally) on the bodies of individuals" (Willhardt 2006, 42).

10. This is the "verse-chorus format" and usually the song will also include a "middle 8 section" (Cashell 2011, 13).

11. The lyrics to this song are available at http://www.lyricsfreak.com/b/billy+bragg/ideology_20018227.html.

12. Collins (2002, 179) contends that many think of this album as Bragg's finest work, describing it as an "'ideological cuddle,' to lift a phrase from "Greetings" [to the New Brunette]", which was the second single released from the *Talking to the Taxman about Poetry* album in 1986.

13. The first two verses of the song are the same but this version has two different verses to finish the track. The lyrics to this song are available at http://www.lyricsmania.com/the_clashing_of_ideologies_lyrics_billy_bragg.html.

14. In undertaking this process I was mindful of Creswell (1998) and Berger (1972) arguing that how we interpret things and understand the social world is affected by our prior beliefs and experiences as well as our social position at present. They further comment on the necessity of being reflective as our values and ideologies may replicate in our work. While I am currently an academic, I come from a strong working-class background. The town where I spent my formative years has a long history of coal mining and a strong connection to working-class political movements. My father in particular had an enormous influence on my political and social beliefs and from a relatively early age I was aware of the structural reasons why certain groups are pigeonholed by dominant groups who have their positions of power to protect.

15. Around 52% of Conservative MPs; 17% Lib Dems; and 12% Labour MPs went to fee paying schools (Hunter and Holden 2015, 2).

16. Nearly a quarter (23%) went to Oxford or Cambridge (similar to 2005 and 2010). Approximately 45% of Conservative MPs attended Oxbridge with the corresponding figure for Labour MPs being 14% (Hunter and Holden 2015, 2).

17. Hunter and Holden (2015, 2) report that "the occupational background of MPs continues to be ever more biased towards business and the 'metropolitan professions', particularly finance, law, public affairs, and politics" Again there are significant differences between the parties with only 4% of Labour MPs having worked in finance compared to almost ¼ of Tory MPs.

18. See Kennedy and Power (2010).

19. See for example Squires and Goldsmith (2017) on broken society, anti-social contracts and the failing State in the context of rethinking youth marginality.

20. The electoral system of the 'Greatest Democracy on Earth' came under greater scrutiny with the election of the Republican Party nominee, businessman and reality television personality Donald Trump. Trump won 304 Electoral College votes but lost the popular vote by just short of 3 million votes.

21. Some would argue that popular music is now dominated by an elite and while I would agree with this viewpoint to a certain extent I am of the view that no other

area of popular culture has consistently produced counter-hegemonic narratives in the manner that popular music has.

22. In 1984 British musician Jerry Dammers and the band The Special A.K.A released this song which protested against the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela by the apartheid South African government. “This was my introduction to Global Politics, to politics full stop ... I washed up to this festival and the DJ dropped this tune ... Now I had no idea who Nelson Mandela was at the time, I was only in my early teens, but I knew by the end of the first chorus that I wanted him to be free ... being surrounded by these festival goers hollering the hook I had a sense for the first time that maybe the future is unwritten and maybe ordinary people like me can have some sort of a say in what happens next (Randall 2017b).

Chapter 32

Straight to Hell

The Clash and the Politics of Left Melancholia¹

Colin Coulter

When considering the venerable tradition of songs of social protest, few recording artists spring to mind quite so readily as The Clash. Formed in 1976, the “year zero” (D’Ambrosio 2012, 17) of the nascent British punk scene, The Clash would, from the outset, rail against a social order riven with inequality and injustice. While their early songs focused principally on the sclerotic squalor of their native London, over time the band would broaden their horizons, delivering a sequence of “geopolitical broadsides” (Worley 2014, 85) that captured the iniquities of a world animated by the imperatives of profit and war. In the eyes of their followers—although not of course in those of their many detractors—the radical political stance adopted by The Clash was emblematic of an “authenticity” often inextricably bound up with the band’s legendary stage performances. Fans often recount seeing the group in concert as moments of personal epiphany, the point when the scales fell from their eyes and they began to see the world anew.² In the age of digital reproduction, there is an abundance of evidence to bear out these fervent firsthand testimonies (Worley 2014, 92). The online footage of The Clash live at the Elizabethan Ballroom, Belle Vue, Manchester in November 1977, for instance, captures the band at their early, incendiary best.³ Amid all the frenetic energy bounded by the venue’s low ceiling and tiny stage, the eye of the viewer is inexorably drawn to the possessed figure of Joe Strummer. The legendary front man delivers the words of the unnervingly predatory tale of urban psychosis “What’s My Name” (1977) as though his very life depends upon it. Wide eyed and bathed in sweat, Strummer declaims the unsettling lyrics to an enraptured audience and barks obscenities at the camera positioned stage right before stumbling over the microphone stand and careering backwards into the drum riser where he lies momentarily obscured from

view as the song comes to an abrupt end. Even four decades on—perhaps *especially* four decades on—the footage of The Clash performing the protest songs (D'Ambrosio 2012, xxiv) that comprise their debut album is utterly exhilarating. Watching the band in concert it is little wonder that so many would accord with Pat Gilbert (2009, 126) when he claims that “the word that summed up The Clash’s approach to their art better than any other” was “passion”.

This familiar representation of the band may well be true but it is at best only partially so. While the work of The Clash was certainly marked by a tangible *passion* it was also, and often at the same time, defined by an indelible *pathos*. Over the course of their career the band crafted a sequence of songs conceding that the multiple injustices of the world are likely to endure, that perhaps the future is written after all and will in all probability prove to be no better than what has come before. The songbook of The Clash gave voice, in other words, to a certain sensibility that, as we shall see later, is often termed “left melancholia.” This should not come as a surprise. After all, as Deena Weinstein (2006, 4) reminds us, the compositions of those who trade in protest songs often assume the form of “lamentations”. These works might be said to have an especially potent political charge, not in spite of their sense of melancholy but rather precisely because of it. That this is so becomes apparent when considering the “left melancholia” that embroiders the songs recorded by The Clash. In the discussion that follows, I explore this proposition by looking closely at what was arguably the last great track forged by the venerated partnership of Joe Strummer and Mick Jones before the acrimonious implosion of the band. “Straight to Hell” was and, crucially, remains a timeless elegy for a world on the verge of being turned upside down.

“SOMETHING ABOUT ENGLAND”

In his resonant text *Noise*, Jacques Attali advances a robust case for the importance of music in our understanding of the social world. Attali (1985, 5) contests that “change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society” and that music is, therefore, a “herald” that foretells our future. If we are interested in the likely course of social change, he suggests, we merely need to acknowledge the predictive power of music and “lend it an ear” (Attali 1985, 11). The logic at the heart of the seemingly quixotic thesis that Attali advances becomes readily apparent in considering the illustrious recording career of The Clash. Those songs that the group committed to vinyl in the late 1970s and early 1980s served, after all, to chronicle and, indeed, herald facets of a social transformation that would prove so profound that we are still living with its repercussions today.

In the three decades that followed World War II, Western societies came to experience unprecedented levels of political stability and economic prosperity. The growing living standards that defined the period were often attributed to the adoption of Keynesian strategies that saw the state intervene both to stimulate the economy and to guarantee the welfare of citizens. That this golden age of social democracy would come to a sudden and unanticipated end would owe much to the response of certain Arab states to the support that some Western countries lent to Israel during the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 (Harvey 2005, 27). In the year that followed the conflict, the principal oil producers in the Middle East raised the price of the commodity fourfold and accelerated an incipient global economic crisis. The impact was felt with especial gravity in a British context (Hall 1979, 176) and the United Kingdom would soon earn the unfortunate tag of “the sick man of Europe” (Tranmer 2014, 103). As oil prices rose steeply, many factories were required to operate a “three-day week” and the numbers out of work continued to grow. The escalating crisis in the British economy would find perhaps its starkest illustration in 1976 when the growing void in the public finances required the Labour government to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for an emergency loan of \$3.9 billion (Gamble 1994, 105). A country that was within living memory a major player on the world stage now found itself reduced to the humiliating status of mere ward of the institutions of global finance.

The economic crisis that overtook the United Kingdom in the mid 1970s was inevitably the occasion of widespread social and political upheaval. The decade was marked by levels of union militancy that governments of various shades would find impossible to tame. In 1974, the Conservative government of Edward Heath came to an end because of its inability to face down the most combative element within the labour movement, the National Union of Mine-workers (Gamble 1994, 86). The Labour administration that followed might have been expected to have had rather more cordial relations with the trade unions but the reality would prove otherwise. One of the terms of the IMF loan was the introduction of measures to restrict the growth of pay. The implementation of an “incomes policy” at a time of rampant inflation meant that workers were in real terms experiencing serious cuts in their wages (Harvey 2005, 57–58). The alienation that inevitably grew within the union movement came to a head in the “winter of discontent” in 1978–1979 when a series of strikes saw the disruption and suspension of essential services in British cities (Gamble 1994, 101–2). Images of refuse piled high in public places and tales of council workers refusing to bury the dead would become emblematic of a society that appeared to be in the process of unravelling. Among the potential beneficiaries of the political chaos of the time were the forces of the far right. In the mid 1970s, the National Front represented not only a menacing

presence on the streets of many British cities but also a potentially important electoral presence (Hall 1979, 173–74). While the prospect of fascists making a breakthrough at the ballot box never came to pass, the influence of the National Front on the politics of the period was important nonetheless, not least in shifting public debate on immigration even further to the right.

Among the various cultural texts that emerged to document the crisis of British social democracy in the mid 1970s, there are few that summon the period quite so vividly as the early songs of The Clash. Instructed by their charismatic but fractious manager to ditch the love songs and write about the world around them, Joe Strummer and Mick Jones set out to capture the violence and sclerosis of living in London at the time. The outcome was the collection of tracks that would feature on the band's eponymous debut album released in April 1977 (Gilbert 2009, 139). The songs that appeared on *The Clash* (1977) offer a deeply dystopian account of contemporary British society that was at the time widely hailed for its authenticity. In his review for the *New Musical Express*, for instance, Tony Parsons proclaimed that the album captured “what it's like to be young in the Stinking Seventies better than any other” (Gray 2001, 232). The classic social realism of *The Clash* depicts the band's home town of London as grey and desolate (Savage 1991, 330), a cityscape populated by empty tower blocks through which the wind blows in search of a home. The lengthening dole queues mean that there is little chance of advancement for young people in particular. From the jaundiced vantage point of *Career Opportunities*, the only jobs available are entirely menial—like making tea at the BBC—and designed purely to forestall juvenile delinquency, to “keep you out the dock”. While the working day offers little in terms of stimulation, leisure time provides equally meagre fare. In the songs compiled on *The Clash*, London is far removed from the glossy perpetual motion world city that appears to exist today. The public houses in the capital, the single “Remote Control” reminds us, are required to close at eleven o'clock at night. Those in search of further entertainment are left with the not entirely appetising alternatives of returning home to “face the new religion” of television—which of course closes down not long after the end of licensing hours—or driving aimlessly all night “up and down” the Westway, the elevated urban motorway central to the early iconography of The Clash that should perhaps offer the prospect of escape from the city but instead represents here one of its many snares.

The songs that appear on *The Clash* not only document the multiple ills of society in the throes of seemingly terminal crisis but also identify those who are deemed responsible for this nefarious state of affairs. Over the course of the album, the United Kingdom is depicted as falling far short of its democratic pretensions. Those in public office are held to exercise an autocratic form of “remote control” whether from the “civic hall” or the national

parliament. The real power within British society does not, however, lie with the “fat and old” filing into the Palace of Westminster but rather with those are “rich enough to buy it”.⁴ Given the vested interests of the politicians who appear to run the country and the kleptocrats who actually do so, there would seem little prospect of real change within the existing order of things. The cause of political progress will, therefore, demand a rather more revolutionary course of action.

The prospect of a form of political change that is radical—and in all probability violent—invites a response from The Clash that might be said to be characteristically ambivalent. This ambivalence is readily apparent in the songs twinned on the band’s debut single. The B-side of the record, *1977*, offers yet another bleak prognosis of a British society depicted as on the verge of widespread and perhaps indiscriminate violence. The future foretold here is one in which there will be “knives” in the racially diverse London postcode “West 11” and “sten guns” in the exclusive district of Knightsbridge. On first release, “1977” was widely heard as harbouring ambitions towards armed insurrection. In subsequent interviews, however, Joe Strummer was at pains to clarify that his lyrics were intended not as a call to arms but rather as a warning of the facility of regressive forces to advance their goals through violence (Gray 2001, 150). This premonition of the serpent’s egg hatching within the crisis of British social democracy would of course provide the theme for one of the standout tracks on the band’s second album *Give ‘Em Enough Rope* (1978). Released as a single a matter of weeks before the pivotal May 1979 general election, “English Civil War” forewarns of a violent future in which a fascist “new party army” has seized power.

The prospect of political violence seems to invite a rather less squeamish response on the lead track the graces the band’s debut single. Perhaps the best known among the early songs written by The Clash, “White Riot” (1977), like its equally incendiary B side, owes its origins to a key political event that would quickly become central to the radical iconography of the group. Among the many tensions simmering within British society in the mid 1970s was that between immigrant communities and a police force prone to what would later be termed “institutionalised racism.” The scale of this mutual antipathy would become dramatically apparent at the Notting Hill carnival held at the end of the long hot summer of 1976. When police attempted to arrest a young black man they came under a hail of missiles that would prove the harbinger of the largest riot in Britain for two decades. Two of the members of The Clash, Paul Simonon and Joe Strummer, as well as their manager Bernie Rhodes had happened along to the carnival and found themselves caught up in the violence. Both Simonon and Strummer would later recount what happened in Notting Hill as exhilarating and inspirational and the events that day would certainly have an immediate and indeed lasting effect on the

band (Gilbert 2009, 101–4). Rocco Macauley's image of a police line charging towards rioters gathered in the shadow of the Westway would be adopted as the back cover of the debut album and would feature as the striking backdrop to many of the band's early gigs. The violence at the carnival would also of course inspire Joe Strummer to write the lyrics of "White Riot". Although misinterpreted in some quarters as a racist anthem (Worley 2014, 88), the song was precisely the opposite. Written in homage to those black youths who had vented their anger at the Metropolitan Police, the song invites their white counterparts to summon the courage to follow suit. *White Riot* might perhaps be read as the first inchoate manifesto issued by The Clash, one that committed them to the causes of multiculturalism and radical, perhaps even violent, political change. These commitments would of course offer many hostages to fortune and would time and again provide ready ammunition to the band's many detractors (Worley 2014, 87).

BROADWAY

The crisis of social democracy in the mid 1970s would indeed give rise to a radical transformation of British society but this would assume a form altogether different to that desired by the radicals that had come to gather beneath the standard of punk rock. On 4 May 1979, Margaret Thatcher assumed the office of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Over the next decade, her "authoritarian populist" (Gamble 1979) regime would introduce policies that would leave British society barely recognisable. At the heart of the Thatcherite project was the neoliberal conviction that it is the market and not the state that facilitates the efficient allocation of resources that is the wellspring of economic prosperity (Gamble 1994, 108). This faith in the free play of market forces would lead to the removal of government subsidies to nationalised industries which in time would be sold off one by one to the private sector. The inevitable outcome was a further acceleration of unemployment and in the first two years of the Thatcher government the jobless figures trebled to the historically unprecedented level of three million. In the early summer of 1981, the polarisation at work within British society came dramatically to the surface when violence erupted in the south London neighbourhood of Brixton sparking a sequence of riots in other cities across the country (Gamble 1994, 117).

It was widely anticipated among fans of the band that The Clash would be in the vanguard of the cultural resistance to Thatcherism (Cashell 2011, 6–7). This assumption was premised in part on the decision of the group to release another set of critical cultural broadsides—the four tracks that comprised *The Cost of Living EP* (1979)—on the same day that Mrs Thatcher swept to

power (Gilbert 2009, 227). It would soon become apparent, however, that the principal preoccupation of The Clash no longer centred on the urban neuroses of an increasingly polarised British society. There was, of course, a hint that the band's field of vision was changing in one of the tracks featured on the record released to mark the dawn of Thatcherism. While the lyrics of "Gates of the West" document a sense of being torn between the call of hometown London and the lure of the exotically alien New York, this dilemma would in time be resolved decisively in favour of the latter. The increasingly global frame of reference of The Clash—albeit one focused primarily on the United States—would in the first instance find reflection in a growing willingness to embrace different musical styles. This cultural openness was apparent even in the early days of The Clash, most notably when they decided to dispense with the stylistic constraints of punk and include a song by the Jamaican artists Junior Murvin and Lee "Scratch" Perry on their debut album. The band's celebrated cover of "Police and Thieves" (1977) was not only an expression of their respect for reggae—bassist Paul Simonon especially was an aficionado—but also a declaration of multicultural solidarity with those West Indian communities that were routinely subject to the suspicion and surveillance of the state. The musical curiosity that was evident from the outset would really begin to flourish, however, during the sessions at the Vanilla rehearsal space that began within days of Mrs. Thatcher arriving in Downing Street. Around their notoriously robust daily games of football (Green and Barker 1997, 161–62), the four members of the group began to sketch a collection of songs that would explore a diversity of influences including rockabilly, reggae, ska, funk and rhythm and blues. The result of these sessions was *London Calling*, a nineteen-track double album retailing for the price of one released in December 1979 that would become celebrated as the band's masterpiece (Gilbert 2009, 260–61). Released a mere twelve months later, the follow-up album featured no fewer than thirty-six tracks over six sides of vinyl, once more for the price of two, and if anything proved even more eclectic in its range of musical sources. While the sprawling *Sandinista!* (1980) would be widely panned by critics, it showcased once more the growing appetite and respect of The Clash for new and different cultural forms. Among the standout tracks on a notoriously uneven collection of songs was the hypnotically relentless "Magnificent Seven", widely regarded as the first time white artists had drawn on the then emerging black urban American style of hip-hop (Imarisha 2014, 149).

The widening of the band's field of vision signalled in their adoption of an array of musical forms was mirrored in their growing preoccupation with world politics (Cohen 2017). There were of course gestures towards global political crises from the very beginning of The Clash's recording career: the Watergate scandal features prominently in the indictments levelled at

the American government in “I’m So Bored With The U.S.A.” on the debut album; the lead single from its successor, “Tommy Gun”, offers a perhaps autobiographical exploration of the glamorous allure of international terrorism; and *London Calling* features the track “Spanish Bombs” which telescopes back and forth between the ascent of fascism on the Iberian peninsula in the 1930s and the rise of package holidays four decades later. The internationalism that informed the work of The Clash from the outset would though come into rather bolder relief in the final two albums recorded by the classic four-member version of the group. A song that might be taken as emblematic here is “Washington Bullets” (1980) which centres on a searing critique of US foreign policy, especially in the context of Latin America (Cohen 2017, 137). When recording the track Joe Strummer spontaneously cried out “Sandinista!” in support of the left wing guerrillas that had seized power in Nicaragua the previous year, inadvertently inspiring the title of the band’s ill-starred triple album (Tranmer 2017, 150).

The theme of global injustice prominent on *Sandinista!* would become sharper still on the final album by The Clash to feature the songwriting partnership of Joe Strummer and Mick Jones. By the time they came to record the tracks that comprise *Combat Rock* (1982) the growing fascination of the band with the United States was in full flower. In the summer of 1981, The Clash played a legendary series of seventeen consecutive concerts in Bond’s Casino in Times Square (Salewicz 2006, 315–19). At a time when they were the subject of incessant criticism from the London music press, the band suddenly found themselves the toast of the New York cultural elite. This love affair between the group and the city would be reflected and refracted in the songs recorded later in the year. The dozen tracks that appear on *Combat Rock* represent arguably the most thematically coherent set of songs the band had recorded since their debut long player. The album returns time and again to the aftermath of the United States’ disastrous war on Vietnam and returns time and again to the fabled streets of New York (Gilbert 2009, 321). Opening the record is what sounds instantly like a classic protest song, the lead single “Know Your Rights”. Against the backdrop of an unremitting, metallic rockabilly beat, front man Joe Strummer barks what our human rights are meant to be and how these are qualified in the face of wealth and power (Dunn 2011, 29-31). Hence, while we have the right “not to be killed,” this entitlement disappears should we fall victim to “a policeman” or “an aristocrat”. The tone of outrage that opens the album is sustained in the following track, the spellbinding and inexplicably often overlooked “Car Jamming”. For the first time but not the last, we are introduced to one of the many victims of the conflict in Vietnam, an introverted soul from Missouri who had his “boots blown off” in the war and is now forced to hobble from door to door in pursuit of a “welfare kindness” that will never materialise.

The mood of belligerence that marks the beginning of *Combat Rock* soon dissipates and the passion of that opening pair of tracks gives way to an increasingly pervasive air of pathos. One of the tracks that lends voice to the sense of abjection running through the album is “Ghetto Defendant”, featuring guest lyrics and vocals from Allen Ginsberg (Salewicz 2006, 326–27). Here Joe Strummer interweaves lines with the esteemed beat poet as the pair document the debilitating impact of hard drugs on the poor. It is not, they insist, the “tear gas or baton charge” of the state that prevents radical social change but rather the scourge of “heroin pity”. The sense of melancholy summoned in a track like “Ghetto Defendant” reaches its apogee in the song which closes side one of *Combat Rock* but which, with its air of abject finality, should perhaps have drawn the curtain down on the entire album.

Of all the songs that The Clash recorded together, “Straight to Hell” (1982) represents perhaps the band’s finest hour. Opened by Mick Jones’ distinctive D Major guitar signature and sustained by drummer Topper Headon’s queasily insistent “bossa nova beat” (Salewicz 2006, 323), the song offers the listener a panorama of the wretched of the earth. In his “heartfelt” lyrics (Barsanti 2014, 169), Joe Strummer begins with a snapshot of those British “railhead towns” devastated by the closure of “steel mills” that were the first to have their state subsidies revoked when Mrs. Thatcher came to power (Gamble 1994, 109). As recession takes hold, the opportunities that once existed have frozen like “winter ice”, not least for those migrants drawn to the country by the promise of a better life who remain capable only of speaking “King’s English in quotation”. In the following verse, listeners are transported once more to south-east Asia where we find the offspring of an American soldier and a Vietnamese mother brandishing a photo of her⁵ parents as proof of paternity. The Amerasian child pleads to be taken to the United States but is informed by her father that there is no place for her there, that her cultural bloodline is defined not by Coca-Cola but rice. Perhaps the callous indifference of the United States service man will prove to be a blessing in disguise. The depiction of American society that features in the penultimate verse is after all distinctly hellish. Discarding all his habitual love of Americana, Joe Strummer portrays the United States as consumed by “junkie-dom”, a place where the dispossessed ease their pain with the sedative procaine and remain mindful of the “volatile molatov” seeking to clear their slums for more lucrative developments.

“Straight to Hell” represents a compelling and epic travelogue around a planet deformed then as it is now by inequality and injustice. It becomes clear, however, that Joe Strummer’s intention here is not merely to document specific instances of poverty, war and displacement but rather to acknowledge their connections within a prevailing social order that is genuinely systemic. In the final verse of the song, Strummer underlines that the moments

of injustice just encountered are not aberrations but rather the norm, that they can, and indeed do, happen “anywhere”, on “any frontier”, in “any hemisphere”. The tone in which the iniquities of the world are documented here is one not of anger but rather of pure resignation. There is simply no prospect of asylum or of justice. King Solomon, after all, “he never lived ‘round here”. The only option that remains is to go “straight to hell, boys”.

If we are to understand the abject tone of “Straight to Hell” we need to acknowledge the manner in which it documents—or, more precisely, immediately prefigures—a certain historical moment. The final days of the “classic” lineup of The Clash coincided with the ascent of the neoliberal project towards power. When the band went into the studio to record *Combat Rock* not only was Mrs. Thatcher in Downing Street but Ronald Reagan had recently taken up residence in the White House. It was never inevitable that the policies advocated by these close ideological allies would become hegemonic. For most of her first term, for instance, it seemed unlikely that Mrs. Thatcher would survive to serve another, let alone a third (Gamble 1994, 119). An imperial skirmish in the south Atlantic—at its height the week that *Combat Rock* hit the shops—would, however, transform the context of British politics. On a tide of patriotic fervour generated by reclaiming the Falklands, Mrs Thatcher was returned to power in June 1983 with a greatly enhanced parliamentary majority. In the course of this second term, the sheer ambition of Thatcherism would become apparent with the Conservatives introducing a series of neoliberal strategies that would leave British society transformed and traumatised and that would in time become the blueprint for other countries across the globe (Cashell 2011, 16). While Mrs. Thatcher may well have survived the perilous political terrain of the early 1980s, the same cannot of course be said of The Clash. Within weeks of her second electoral triumph, it was announced that Mick Jones had been sacked from the band due to “musical differences” both literal and metaphorical, sundering one of the most fruitful songwriting partnerships in the history of popular music.⁶

The specific historical context in which “Straight to Hell” was written was then that of the emergent neoliberal conjuncture. At the moment the track was recorded, those political forces responsible for the misery and injustice documented in the track were in the ascendant and moving towards what only in hindsight looks like their inevitable triumph. In the song’s lyrics, there is no sense that such calamity might be avoided, that another world might be possible. In its refusal to even conceive of a different outcome, “Straight to Hell” might be said to prefigure the ultimate victory of neoliberalism, an ideological project that from the outset insisted that “there is no alternative”. While it may seem a little counter-intuitive at first, it is, as we shall see later, precisely this sense of despondency that makes the track an especially powerful and enduring song of social protest.

But if that is really so, then there is perhaps a problem. Songs of social protest are often understood to draw on what Ian Peddie (2006) has termed the “resisting muse”. The protest song, in other words, is one that seeks to mobilise resistance, to brush against the grain of history. At first glance, it is hard to see how a track such as “Straight to Hell” might accord with such a definition. The tone of the song is, after all, not one of resistance but of resignation. Looking at it again from a different angle, however, it becomes apparent that not only is “Straight Hell” a protest song, it is in fact an especially powerful and enduring one. It is so, moreover, not in spite of its utter dependency but rather precisely because of it. In order to understand how that might be so, the nature of that disposition towards the world sometimes termed “left melancholia” needs to be considered.

LOST IN THE SUPERMARKET

In a provocative essay published in 1999, Wendy Brown seeks to diagnose the malaise afflicting a Left still reeling from the “constellation of defeats” (Traverso 2016, 22) that littered the late twentieth century. Brown draws attention to a condition that she refers to as “left melancholy”, a concept derived from Walter Benjamin but which in her deployment owes rather more to Sigmund Freud. In his famous essay on mourning and melancholia, Freud characterises the latter as arising from a refusal to let go of a love object that results over time in an escalating loathing of the self. It is precisely this mode of pathology, Brown suggests, that afflicts the contemporary Left. The inability of leftists to relinquish those modes of thought and deed that no longer have any purchase on the present day has served to foreclose the field of political possibility. Incapable of recognising the potential of new forms of cultural theory and political practice, the Left has come to represent a deeply “conservative force” (Brown 1999, 25), blind to the transformative power of more contemporary ways of being in, and thinking about, the world.

Among the sharpest responses to this withering depiction of the contemporary Left comes in the work of Jodi Dean. In her book *The Communist Horizon*, Dean (2012, 158) points out, correctly, that Brown’s thesis is premised on an entirely “misleading” representation of the work of Walter Benjamin. The notion of “left-wing melancholy” appeared initially in a brief literary review that Benjamin published in 1931 (Benjamin 1974) and was developed further in an essay entitled *The Author as Producer* that appeared three years later (Benjamin 1998). In both of these works, the object of his ire is not, as Brown suggests, those on the Left unwilling to relinquish their former ideals but rather those who do so with alacrity. The specific focus for Benjamin in these essays is the “hacks” of the New Objectivity movement who throw

progressive shapes but in reality are merely complicit in the assimilation of revolutionary energies into the existing order of things. His critique is remarkably close, in other words, to that often directed towards The Clash by detractors who revel in turning the classic line “turning rebellion into money”—from “(White Man) In Hammersmith Palais”—back on the band.⁷

While Dean (2012, 175) shares with Brown the conviction that there exists a debilitating “left-wing melancholy” she uses the concept in the original sense intended by Benjamin. The essential shortcoming of the Left, Dean contests, is not that it has been unprepared to let go of its erstwhile ideals but rather that it has been willing to do so only too readily. This capitulation has led Leftists into a sequence of “melancholy practices” intended to shield them from the guilt that arises from having abandoned the revolutionary project. Dean suggests, rather pointedly, that this “left melancholy” finds form in precisely the modes of political thought and practice that Brown seems to advocate. It assumes the guise, that is, of that “incessant activity” characteristic of the contemporary left that appears progressive but in actuality leads merely to the “sublimation of goals and responsibilities into the branching, fragmented practices of micropolitics, self-care, and issue awareness” (Dean 2012, 174). However, these once dominant modes of politics are, Dean suggests, in the process of decline. There are growing signs that the left “has worked or is working through its melancholia” and has begun once more to conceive of the possibility of real social transformation (Dean 2012, 176).

The depiction of “left melancholia” that we find in *The Communist Horizon* is one that accords rather better with the realities of contemporary political culture not least because it adheres rather more closely to the original meaning that Walter Benjamin intended for the concept. What is perhaps missing though from Dean’s account is an acknowledgement of the potential of melancholia as a source and form of progressive politics. While Benjamin coined “left-wing melancholy” as a term of abuse he was, it should be remembered, an exemplary exponent of precisely that political disposition. In his writings on Baudelaire, for instance, Benjamin (2006, 29) makes the case that it is “images of the melancholy” that “kindle the spiritual” and ensure that “our gaze is fixed on the ideal”. That the writer was drawn time and again to the notion of melancholia was the outcome not merely of an autobiographical accident—that he was “born under the sign of Saturn”—but also a profound epistemological commitment. As Enzo Traverso (2016, 47) notes, while Benjamin’s devotion to “an empathic and mournful exploration of the world reduced to a field of ruins” might appear a kind of fatalism it was in fact a form of revolutionary practice. Benjamin contends that the purpose and promise of the “tenacious self-absorption” of melancholia is that “it embraces dead objects in its contemplation, in order to redeem them” (Traverso 2016, 47). The role of the writer in this enterprise is the critical one of “ragpicker”,

the person who collects “rags of speech and verbal scraps”, images of the dead and tales of the vanquished (Traverso 2016, 47). The revolutionary potential of these relics only becomes apparent in those periods when radical social transformation seems possible, when we can conceive of making that “leap in the open air of history” (Benjamin 1992b, 253) that marks the revolutionary project. In these “moments of danger”, Benjamin (1992b, 247) suggests, the living must recognise the tributes of the ragpicker, “seize hold of a memory” that will enable them not merely to reinvent the future but to redeem the past. This revolutionary energy exercises a “retroactive force” that “will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers” (Benjamin 1992b, 246). It heralds that long awaited moment of redemption when “by dint of a secret heliotropism the past strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history”.

The beguiling blend of the material and the messianic that threads the work of Walter Benjamin intimates a way in which we might return to listen to “*Straight to Hell*” as though for the very first time. His writings suggest that perhaps the mood of abjection that pervades such a song is precisely the source of its political power, that its heartfelt lyrics are among those “rags of speech and verbal scraps” garnered in the midst of one political crisis that must be reclaimed and repurposed by future generations in the midst of their own. It is to this particular act of reclamation that we turn next.

UP IN HEAVEN (NOT ONLY HERE)

Although one of the finest songs in the back catalogue of The Clash, “*Straight to Hell*” is very far from the band’s most famous. The track would certainly be rather less well known than, say, the almost always hilariously misplaced “*London Calling*” or that hardy perennial of barroom karaoke “*Should I Stay or Should I Go?*” Insofar as “*Straight to Hell*” enjoys any widespread public recognition it does so, of course, primarily because of its association with another song that borrows from it. Over the last dozen years, Mathangi ‘Maya’ Arulpragasam has recorded music that splices together a dizzying array of contemporary urban and global styles. The songs that she records under the stage name M.I.A. often draw heavily on the singer’s personal experience of violence and displacement. The daughter of a senior figure in the Tamil insurgency, M.I.A. was forced to flee her native Sri Lanka as a child and would spend periods of her life in London, Madras and New York (Ramesh 2009). This peripatetic autobiography provides the backdrop to songs that often deal with the plight of migrants and refugees. In view of these preoccupations, it was always likely that M.I.A. would be drawn to the heartsore ballad that is “*Straight to Hell*”. Released in February 2008,

“Paper Planes” would become an international hit on the back of its appearance in the global box office sensation *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). The song borrows the distinctive guitar signature from “Straight to Hell” and like its predecessor seeks to animate the lives of those displaced by conflict and injustice. There, however, the similarity between the two tracks ends. Where the tone of The Clash song is utterly despondent that of M.I.A.’s repurposing of the track is entirely joyous. The migrants who feature in her song are creative and resourceful, manufacturing “in a second if you wait” the bogus visas—the *paper planes* of the title—that render all national borders porous. There is a sense of mischief and romance here that Joe Strummer surely would have loved. The refugees we meet are not only surviving but prospering, making a living from various illegal trades with a certain “swagger” and with a hint of violence that appears entirely comical—most notably, the “irresistible gun-shot/gun-cock/cash-register-ker-ching hook” (Thompson 2011) of the chorus. While the characters that populate “Straight to Hell” appear the wretched of the earth those who feature in “Paper Planes” seem almost certain to inherit it. At first glance at least, it would be difficult to imagine a pair of connected songs that are so disconnected in their sense of political possibility.

The palpable differences between “Straight to Hell” and “Paper Planes” are, predictably, often interpreted as an expression of critical distance. This interpretation tends to centre upon the dramatically contrasting biographies of the people who wrote the lyrics of the two songs: the attempt of the son of a British diplomat to capture the plight of those enduring displacement by war is held to have drawn a stinging rebuke from the daughter of a third-world insurgent whose formative years were spent among the displaced. In his account of “Paper Planes”, the journalist Ben Thompson (2011), for instance, suggests that the song reverses the monologue that usually flows from the developed to the underdeveloped world and in doing so “turns globalization inside out”. An academic version of this reading appears in the work of Cohen and Peacock (2017b, 253) who suggest that the M.I.A hit represents “an act of sedition or revolt” aimed at a song tainted by its “occasionally ham-fisted attempts to speak ‘for’ migrants”. While these interpretations solemnly observe the conventions of contemporary debates on the perils of “cultural appropriation” they do not, alas, capture the spirit of the song that they are attempting to describe. If “Paper Planes” really does harbour some hostility towards “Straight to Hell” it is simply *inaudible* when we actually listen to the song. The joyous and mischievous tone that defines the M.I.A. track suggests that it has in fact a deeply sympathetic relationship to The Clash number from which it draws. This sympathy becomes apparent once we listen to both songs again, this time through the ears of Walter Benjamin.

CONCLUSION

“Straight to Hell” was recorded at a time when the balance of historical forces was moving, seemingly inexorably, in favour of the neoliberal project. While the sense of melancholy with which the track maps this process might initially make it an unlikely candidate for the status of “protest song” it is, however, precisely that quality that makes it such a compelling one. According to Benjamin (1992a, 90), melancholia is a wellspring of creativity, curating and recounting stories with a “germinative power” that only becomes apparent in those sequences of history when the field of political possibility suddenly broadens. It was precisely one of these “moments of danger” of course that gave birth to the M.I.A. track under consideration here. Recorded in the summer of 2007, “Paper Planes” calls to mind more than any other song perhaps the period when the crisis long since latent within the global financial system finally came to a head. As a sequence of previously impregnable corporations went to the wall, it seemed for a time that perhaps another world really was possible after all. If we are to grasp the revolutionary potential of such moments, Benjamin insists, we must seize those images from the past that flash up before us. And in sampling “Straight to Hell” that is, precisely, what “Paper Planes” does. It matters little that the M.I.A track is neither an exact copy nor an homage. The intention of the revolutionary moment, Benjamin insists, is not to repeat history but rather to bring it to a halt. And, for the purposes of the discussion here at least, it does not matter overly if in fact the author of “Paper Planes” does turn out to have had a problem with a former public school boy attempting to summon the refugee experience. The precise motivations that led to “Straight to Hell” being recalled are rather less important than the sheer fact of its recollection.

For Benjamin, it is these acts of remembrance that actualise the radical potential of the melancholy cultural artefacts of the past. As the era of neoliberalism appeared to enter the period of its twilight (Cox and Nilsen 2014), “Paper Planes”, with telling symmetry, invoked a song that perhaps more than any other captured its moment of triumph a quarter century earlier. In sampling “Straight to Hell”, M.I.A unleashes the radical energy that was always present within the melancholia of the track. A song that seems unable to conceive of the possibility of a better world suddenly becomes one imagining its construction. “Paper Planes” should not then be heard as a rejection of “Straight to Hell” but rather as the moment of its redemption. This peculiar sympathy between two classic songs recorded by very different artists at very different times reminds us of something that Walter Benjamin would have known better possibly than any other cultural commentator. It was perhaps only when we had been condemned straight to hell that we could begin to conceive of the possibility of storming heaven once more.

NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank Kieran Cashell for his generous help with this essay.
2. The firsthand testimonies to the power of The Clash as a live act are legion and suggest that the band were hugely influential for a remarkable diversity of musicians. Among those who have cited seeing The Clash live as crucial moments of inspiration are Billy Bragg (Cashell 2011, 6-7), John Baines aka Attila the Stockbroker (Worley 2014, 94), Bono and The Edge from U2 (Onkey 2014, 26) and, ironically given their subsequent vitriolic attacks on the group, Steve Ignorant and Penny Rimbaud of Crass (Ogg 2014, 70).
3. Footage accessed July 12, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvVQMOjTnxE>.
4. The first three quotes in this paragraph are from “Remote Control”, the final one from “White Riot”.
5. The sex of the child is not specified in the song but feminine pronouns are used here to avoid a clutter of gender binaries.
6. The guitarist was of course the second member of the ‘classic’ lineup of the band to be sacked. Gifted drummer Nicky ‘Topper’ Headon was asked to leave in May of the previous year due to his well-documented drug dependency. After Jones’ departure, Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon would continue touring with three additional band members and this five-man lineup would, in principle at least, record the group’s final album, the widely derided *Cut the Crap* released in October 1985. Many biographers of The Clash have, perhaps out of recognition of how great they once were, tended to overlook this final, calamitous incarnation of the band.
7. The story of The Clash exemplifies the very particular dilemma—“the play of resistance and incorporation” (Cohen and Peacock 2017a, 5)—that faces all radical artists operating within the mainstream culture industries. While it was hoped that the band might favour an independent record label, their already considerable ambition ensured that they opted for one of the majors. This was widely seen as act of betrayal, with Mark Perry famously moved to comment that “punk died the day The Clash signed to CBS” (Gilbert 2009, 139). While the group would often decry their record company—the troubled relationship between the two parties was the subject matter of the early single “Complete Control”—this was not the last time they would strike deals with multinational corporations. Since the demise of The Clash, several of their tracks have been licensed to sell the likes of Levi’s jeans and Jaguar cars (Shannon 2014, 23) and there has been a steady stream of increasingly expensively packaged retrospectives designed to cash in on the lasting appeal of the band in an age of escalating musical nostalgia (Fisher 2014, 6–16). The compromises that The Clash made during and after their career have offered ready ammunition of course to those who would lambast the band as frauds. The debate on the “authenticity” or otherwise of the band is a long-running and complex one and certainly beyond the constraints of an essay with this focus and of this size. It might be said in passing though that none of those who would dismiss the group as merely “turning rebellion into money” has left a body of work that, in its aesthetic power or political resonance, even comes close to that bequeathed to us by The Clash.

Chapter 33

The Truth Must be Told So I'll Tell It

Social Protest and the Folk Song in the Music of Christy Moore

Kieran Cashell

Christy Moore (1945–) is the archetypal folkie. On one hand, the epitome of the acoustic guitar-wielding troubadour associated with protest singer Woody Guthrie and popularised in the early 1960s by Bob Dylan; on the other hand, his founding involvement with progressive Irish band Planxty in the 1970s guarantees widespread respect as a key protagonist of traditional music. Promoting himself as a ballad singer in the first instance, Christy Moore closely identifies with the ancient bardic tradition, someone who conveys “news from a different perspective than the state controlled media” (in Prowse 2010, 9). Sustaining such an iconic (now somewhat clichéd) image in conjunction with a long recording career and sell-out concerts in expensive concert halls may strain credibility.¹ Yet Christy retains the power to quell an audience with an acapella account of the vengeance of a victim of domestic violence (“Stitch in Time”, Waterson) or with a chilling song of institutional abuse (“The Magdalene Laundries”, Mitchell) in the vicinity of notable establishments of such abuse in Ireland.

This chapter examines the relationship between folk music and social protest through Christy Moore’s music. In a departure from prevailing approaches where theoretical focus falls on the issue of national identity (O’Flynn 2009; O’Toole 2006; Sørensen 2014; Prowse 2010), the lens here is folksong, and in particular the singing voice as a vector of social protest, to explore the role of folk music in the transmission of radical thought and practice. Beginning with Moore’s experience as an emigrant in the UK during the 1960s, the first section revisits the socio-historical environment within which the singer formed and finessed his distinctive approach to traditional song; the genealogy of “finding his voice” (in both creative and political senses) is traced to the fertile cultural milieu of the post-war folk revival in Britain. Any study of Moore’s contribution to folk music culture must unequivocally acknowledge

the influence of the British tradition (specifically English folk song) on the development of his singing style, performative approach, and attitude to the material: he identifies his period as an émigré in the UK as “a time of learning” on the boxset of unreleased songs 1964–2004 (2004). Moore’s exile was auspicious; emigrating from Ireland during the bank strike of 1966, he seized the opportunity to apprentice himself through his brief but intense involvement with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger’s Singers Group in the late 1960s.² Moore went on to become one of the few Irish performers to make a significant (and lasting) contribution to the “second” English folk revival and is affectionately recalled (along with Margaret Barry and Joseph Heaney) by aficionados of traditional music in the UK and elder members of the EDFSS to this day.³ The development of his nascent political consciousness (which came to full efflorescence only after his repatriation to Ireland) is intimately related to his auspicious inculcation into the UK folk scene. Moore’s association with MacColl in particular occasioned a kind of political awakening for the young Irish singer. Furthermore, Moore’s alchemical expropriation and refunctioning of the English ballad was informed by radical, if subtle, socio-political connotations, the consequence of a crucial lesson learned from his early mentor’s conviction that folk music constituted a medium of social expression with the potential to become a powerful vehicle of political practice. This is because an oppositional energy inheres in the form itself which can be reactivated for social critique without compromising authenticity, a synthesis Moore achieved in his songs, not by emulating MacColl or mimicking his style, but by consciously cultivating an indigenous (if obscure) Irish mode of singing English traditional songs associated with Traveller culture.⁴ Moore’s early discovery of source singer John Reilly, and later contact with song collector Tom Munnely, became a crucial catalyst for his later understanding and elaboration of the connection between traditional music, folk song and the legacy of social protest that assumed its clearest articulation during the ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland (especially in the 1980s). The connections between these nodes of music and political activism are ultimately inseparable from Moore’s understanding of the song as an authentic, evocative, and irreducibly communicative signifier of the specificity of lived social experience, experience that it is possible to recapture performatively, through singing—and only through singing—the song.

PADDY’S LAMENTATION

At the age of twenty-four, following three years of immersion in the efflorescent folk-club scene of England, Christy Moore recorded his debut album *Paddy on the Road*. Produced by Dominic Behan and released in 1969, the

record witnessed the ex-bank clerk consciously adopting the persona of the Irish construction worker, the prototypical “Paddy” (Wilson 1969): “I wanted to look like a navvy” he recalls, “to sing like a navvy. I had my first publicity shot done on top of the Pennines, the M62 was being constructed above Halifax” (Moore 2000, 218).⁵ The title track, a testimonial ballad in the industrial idiom⁶ composed by Behan,⁷ documents the destiny of the Irish labourer in England, cataloguing a litany of accidents on construction sites, railroads, and in the Irish-built subways of the London underground. Encapsulating everything concerning the Irish economic migrant’s experience in England, the synecdoche “Paddy”⁸ refers to the stereotypical Irish casual labourer “singing the dark away” in the smoke-thick pubs of Kilburn and Camden Town on mid-week nights (Williams and Ó Laoire 2011, 3; Campbell 2012, 82).⁹ Affiliated by acute awareness of displacement exacerbated by British anti-Irish discrimination, the expatriate Irish community in England occupied internalised pockets of alterity within an environment perceived as hostile. Foucault famously identified such social infra-spaces using the term “heterotopia”, designating locales that somehow subsist “outside all places” yet remain strangely “localisable” (Sørensen 2014, 222).

At once nostalgic, dark, and protected, the pub constituted Paddy’s diasporic heterotopia *par excellence* (Campbell 2012, 156). The English public house, ironically, supported the summoning of spaces of social cohesion and community ethos for the alienated Irish in Britain, imaginary places where ex-pats could cluster in “enclaves” and express their “common predicament” (Williams and Ó Laoire 2011, 20; Marcus 2001, 312). Regular sessions of traditional music erupted spontaneously in this environment, the default medium for a people deeply suspicious of the expression of emotion. In their recent study of Joe Heaney (Connemara *sean-nós*¹⁰ singer and lifelong resident of MacColl and Seeger’s Singers Club in London during the 1960s)¹¹ Williams and Ó Laoire emphasise the profound association with place that defines the cyclic form of Irish traditional music and imbues it with such poignant nostalgic resonance: “Place, for many migrant communities, is something which is constructed through music with an intensity not found elsewhere in their social lives” (Stokes in Williams and Ó Laoire 2011, 20). In fact, Alan Lomax, celebrated transatlantic protagonist of both British and American folk revivals (“discoverer” of Woody Guthrie), regarded folk music as functionally defined by the provision of a sense of “security for the listener”, specifically referring in this connection to its power to evoke the “familiar emotion of home” (in Willhardt 2006, 31). Vitalising the space wherein Paddy’s lost *heimat* could be reimagined, traditional music (infused through alcohol) enabled the reconstruction of an inclusive space of belonging in the heart of a socio-economic context of displacement and alienation (King 2011, 108).

Experiencing traditional music in the pubs of England in the late 1960s with the emigrant's nostalgic distance, Christy Moore, like many Irish abroad, was awakened to its emotional intensity, which, on foreign soil, had the capacity to evoke lost experience through its rich heritage of transmitted generational memory. Music suddenly became emotionally necessary, and was participated in with renewed enthusiasm, in order, precisely, to recreate that sense of belonging that compensates for an absent sense of place, giving Moore "a whole new outlook on the emotion and beauty in the music," leading him to become "transfixed" (Moore in Prowse 2010, 50).

EWAN MACCOLL AND THE BRITISH FOLK REVIVAL

Moore, like Luke Kelly before him,¹² owes a profound debt of influence to the UK revival and in particular to MacColl's mission to reactivate the tradition as "a popular [social] movement in music based on something other than mere entertainment" (Harper 2000, 35; MacColl 2009). He became seriously involved with the folk circuit in London around 1968 and his first encounter with MacColl, at the instigation of Dominic Behan,¹³ was a major turning point for Moore.¹⁴ His subsequent invitation to perform at MacColl and Peggy Seeger's Singers Club at the Union Tavern on Kings Cross Road in 1969 represented, he says, a "seal of approval" that he carries in his "arse pocket to this day." This, he recently claimed, was the defining moment of his career (Moore 2015).¹⁵ An anticlimactic period following his debut album found Moore agonising about becoming typecast as an entertainment act performing stage-Irishness with a derivative street-ballad repertoire bootlegged from The Dubliners and Irish-American expatriate troubadours, the Clancy Brothers (Murray 2015; Prowse 2010, 50). Mike Harding, with whom he lived in Manchester around 1970, recalls that, during this period, Moore became disillusioned with the commercial folk genre and bitterly regretted engaging session musicians for *Paddy on the Road* (1969). A subsequent meeting with producer Bill Leader (executive of Trailer and Leader imprints of Transatlantic Records) resulted in the breakthrough album, *Prosperous* (1972) recorded back in Ireland on Leader's infamous Revox equipment in the reverberant basement of an old Georgian house (Harding 2013, 20).

Ultimately, however, it was Ewan MacColl who provided resolution for Moore's creative aporia by demonstrating that the tradition is not a monolith, hermetic and moribund, but rather a dynamic, evolving force. In fact, the entire British revival was a testament to the flexibility of the tradition to creative "reconstitution" (Piccone 1993, 99). "Folk-song and folk singing have their own disciplines", MacColl notes, "but inside those disciplines the singer is free to choose and, if he wishes, free to invent" (MacColl 2009, 335).

“Reconstitution” in this sense is badly misconstrued by the facile notion of composing songs “in the idiom”; rather, as Moore was beginning to realise, any meaningful creative intervention necessitates implicit knowledge of and immersive familiarity with complex traditional forms (2009, 348).

MacColl’s convictions are falsified however if this defence of creativity is understood as equivalent to an endorsement of the adaptation of traditional song to contemporary modes of “progressive” accompaniment.¹⁶ Reminiscent of Adorno, he rejected popular-folk or folk-rock innovations as ersatz, as making “no demands on the listener”; such genres, unlike traditional song, also strictly avoided subjects like “politics or exploitation” (2009, 333). As committed Marxists, MacColl and Lloyd¹⁷ believed that because folk music was a medium of social expression, with the potential to be reconstituted as a powerful vector of political practice, not because topical issues can be plugged into generic traditional forms, but rather, more precisely, because an oppositional energy inheres *in the form itself*.

MacColl’s great achievement is to have recognised that folk music is *not a conservative* medium. In its emphasis on retrieving the latent critical potential from the tradition, this accomplishment can be considered a paradigmatic instance of Walter Benjamin’s “rescuing-critique” (Habermas 2000; Bürger 1992). Explicitly invoking tradition (specifically, the ‘tradition of the oppressed’) in this connection, Benjamin cautions that renewed attempts “must be made” to resist the powers of “conformism” that constantly threaten “to overpower it” (Benjamin 1970, 247). Benjamin’s hermeneutic effort to reawaken the dormant communicative potency of “seemingly redundant narrative forms” such as “folklore and fairytales” (Dolber et al. 2016, xii) is related to his radical ethos of retrieval (Benjamin 2009, 148). For him, it is precisely in the obsolescent orality sublimated in these strange traditions of storytelling that their radical content is discerned. This attitude of retrieval also provides an effective frame of reference for clarifying MacColl’s revivalist aspirations. “As far as I was concerned” he later reflected, the folk movement “meant reappraising the songs of the working-class struggle” (MacColl 2009, 352). Indeed, MacColl’s socialism ensured that the British folk revival was informed by a robust, left-wing ethos that determined how it was articulated, and influenced its subsequent development (through, for instance, Dick Gaughan and Billy Bragg) (Cashell 2011). Coupled with the powerful anti-establishment attitude of the US folk revival, the folksong accrued associations of radicalism and civil disobedience in popular consciousness. For MacColl the folk song was simply an ordinary-language expression of lived experience (Marcus 2001) and, in his view, enabled the tradition to be construed in ethnographic terms as an unofficial counter-historiographical archive with a powerful subtext of oppositional energy. It was a question of the most effective method of emancipating (and amplifying) the “aesthetics

of resistance” (Weiss 2005) embedded in this archive of social history, in order to retroactively accomplish its unrealised political potential (Benjamin 1970). In U.S. protest singer Pete Seeger’s words, “History shows that there is a hidden heritage of militancy which comes and goes, but never completely dies ... Right now [i.e., the 1960s] many of the song traditions of the 1930s are seeing new life as never before—in the freedom songs of the South and in the topical singers of the campus” (Rodnitsky 2006, 28).

Despite his reputation as judgemental and dogmatic,¹⁸ MacColl’s ethos remains paradigmatic for Christy Moore. An important mentor for the singer at a crucial stage of development, Moore still pays tribute to him, defending MacColl against invectives of academicism and cultural elitism; insisting as recently as 2015, for instance, that his advice was always constructive and objective, and indeed, stood to him throughout his career, adding that the critics’ negative assessment of Luke Kelly’s singing was actually quite perceptive (2015). Although respecting MacColl’s ideology, however, it is “the songs themselves” that matter most to Moore. As has been repeatedly remarked, many of these have been recuperated by the very culture industry that MacColl so bitterly maligned (McNally 2011, 17). Marketed under the generic aegis of Irish Trad or Celtic, the process of commercial commodification that, as MacColl correctly recognised, poses the most pernicious threat to the survival of the tradition, annuls the very possibility of conceiving a relationship between traditional music and social protest (MacColl 2009, 333).¹⁹ Ultimately, however, for Moore, these songs will outlast any of MacColl’s alienating ideological attitudes; and it is their endurance (and, more importantly, their unambiguous and sometimes uncomfortable socio-political content even in the face of commercial recuperation) that ought to remain the preeminent criterion of MacColl’s legacy: “the music lives on in a way that justifies his approach” (2015).²⁰

“Sweet Thames Flow Softly” was composed by MacColl for a Cockney version of *Romeo and Juliet* broadcast in 1966. Moore heard him perform the song (possibly as a duet with Seeger) following his own gig in the Union Tavern in 1969 (O’Toole 2006, 160) remarking that it was “the most wonderful love song I had ever heard.”²¹ Recorded in 1973 with Planxty on their first album (aka the *Black Album*) this song witnesses Moore finding his voice—discovering, that is, what Tracey Thorn calls his “vocal personality” (2015, 8). Audibly more sophisticated and confident than on the previous release, *Prosperous* (1972), his voice is modulated here with a distinctive nocturnal burr; less stylised, more relaxed and instinctive, seeming to delight in rhythmically and intuitively articulating the content of the song without compromising its poetic clarity. Rather than cover “Sweet Thames,” however, Moore’s performance uses voice to *appropriate* the song, resulting in subtle yet significant shifts of meaning.²²

Everything conveyed by the texture of the voice carries distinct phonetic and emotional nuances irreducible to the literal content of the lyrics. As a recent study of Morrissey's 'wandering' vocalisation observes: "voice, as well as sound more generally, is never a mere accompaniment of the message in speech. But rather something that [contains or transmits] a meaning of its own" (Hopps 2008, 33). In this connection, Barthes (1977) refers to the choric 'excess' of the voice, using the term 'vocal grain' to encapsulate the musicality of meaning that fills the signifiers of the text with an acoustic physicality that overflows the lyrical message (1977, 181). Above all it is Moore's accent (Sørensen 2014) that contributes this semantic surplus to the (English) song. Pronunciation of the lyrics with an Irish accent involves a significant semiotic displacement away from the song's 'preferred reading'.

Emphasising the polyvalence that the act of singing brings to the song,²³ Gammon and Stallybrass (1984) argue that meaning in folksong depends on the specificity of performance. Constructing *Gestalts* "of multiple imaginings", individual singers' variations become crucial to a song's reception, allowing complex psychological reimagining on behalf of the listener (Gammon 1999, 3). It is important, they say, to be cognisant of the fact, for example, that "Mrs Brown [of Falkland, celebrated source singer] *listened* to [Long] Lankin' [Child no. 93] before she sang her version" (1984, 18). Their conclusion has unexpected application for the association of folksong and social protest when they claim that "every performance [of a song] is an implicit critique of a previous performance" (18).

Yet, though the 'critique' of performative specificity is relevant here, I suggest that something more subtle, even uncanny, occurs apropos the remediation of "Sweet Thames" through Moore's pronunciation, something that conjures the experience of an Irish immigrant wandering through the dark London districts, longing for home. In giving MacColl's song this interpretation through *othering* it in an Irish accent, the tension between lyrical content and the grain of the voice creates semantic effects that 'wander' away from the conveyance of the primary message, facilitating that complex audial process of projection and reimagining referred to above. In this way, Moore subtly subverts the preferred reading of MacColl's lyric, in the process, transforming it into a song of emigration. This is achieved, I will argue, through a subliminal connection with the *Aisling* tradition of Irish-language vision poetry.

Apropos the typology of rebel songs in collector Tom Munnely's archive, lyrics that express resistance to British occupation, Smith refers to the curious *Aisling* subgenre (Smith 2007, 299).²⁴ In the *Aisling*, "the poet represents himself as wandering alone, either at twilight or ... in the early morning, when suddenly there appears in his sight a most beautiful maiden" (O'Boyle 1976, 69). The vision conjured by the *Aisling* is commonly understood to be a personification of the nation, a female synecdoche, as Smith observes, that

synoptically encapsulates all the Irish dispossessed, and whose spectral form, lost and wandering the earth, haunts the poet (Smith 2007, 300). Likewise, Triona Ní Shíocháin has studied lyrical effects of ‘anti-colonial’ subversion in the *Aislíní* of *sean-nós* singer Maire Bhuí Ní Laoire (Ní Shíocháin 2015, and this volume), arguing that the vision articulated in the form is far from benign but is, rather, a radical ecstatic vision which consequently inspired a larger movement of social unrest and anti-authoritarian revolt in Ireland (2015). Both Smith and Ní Shíocháin maintain that *Aislíní* songs qualify, and should be theorised therefore as, paradigmatic expressions of social protest.

Connection with the *Aislín* song tradition explains the oneiric vividness of Moore’s version of “Sweet Thames”: the sung city is reassembled in images that combine and shift in hallucinatory, almost surrealistic distortions of scale. All the gifts the peripatetic poet has to offer are provided by the city itself: the jewellery of its filigreed nocturnal bridges, the glittering street lamps, the traffic lights reflected in the surface of the river. Just as in the *Aislín*, the apparition delivers “some apocalyptic message” before vanishing (O’Boyle 1976, 69). Under the shadow of a harbour crane, the poet’s truelove appears; they waltz through the streets. But she doesn’t belong here; and the tide is turning.

Gammon also discusses the exile’s tendency to adapt previously ‘learnt songs’ and to their immediate environment: “songs change for all sorts of reasons” some “are remade to blend in with new surroundings and a new social context ... others are handled creatively by particular singers” (1999, 3). In these instances, again, the iteration of the song draws out certain heterogeneous and supplementary meanings not directly denoted in the text – a semantic surplus that subtly *others* the song. A case in point: the final stanza of “Sweet Thames” uses the metaphor of *blight* to characterise the poet’s bereft condition.²⁵ Is it possible for this to be heard neutrally in this context? Whatever its original poetic effect, it becomes a strong metonym of post-famine emigration when articulated in an Irish accent, that is, with a tendency to mispronounce *Thames* with a θ phoneme (*th*-sound) (it is the attempt to pronounce the word correctly and still getting it wrong that makes this peculiarity “so Irish”).²⁶

In an essay on Joni Mitchell, Sheila Whiteley observes that Moore’s version of “The Magdalene Laundries” *others* the modality of the original song by replacement of Mitchell’s personal pronoun with the proper name *Joanie*. Becoming narrator, in this way, Whiteley claims, involves a significant if very subtle shift in focalisation, as “Joanie’s story” is narrated from an almost empirical perspective (as the author of the song, Joanie is also the imagined protagonist) that envisions her amid the “dreamless drudgery” of institutional life, and incipiently invokes the image of Joni Mitchell’s own child given up for adoption in 1963 (2011, 164–65). Arguably influenced by the early

Dylan's technique of appropriating traditional material, Moore uses his voice to awaken a latent content in the songs he sings. Through subtle transitions in focalisation and narrative perspective, the vision is articulated with an expressional intensity suggestive of direct experience. This explains Moore's renowned capacity to "live a song" (Marqusee 2008; 2005). By virtue of this ability, a familiar ballad is imbued with a poignancy and confessional verisimilitude that inform its narrative content with a kind of testimonial vividness.

WOODY GUTHRIE AND THE US PROTEST TRADITION

At a gig in 1996 Moore introduced a medley of MacColl songs apropos a lateral reference to Woody Guthrie (Moore 2004).²⁷ Not as fundamental an influence as MacColl, perhaps, Guthrie is nevertheless equally important for thematising the political dimension of Moore's music (Prowse 2010, 38). As a mode of social expression, folk music has a long genealogy. While the journalistic theory (the thesis that folksong is essentially a vehicle of topical content) is often adverted to in this connection (Du Noyer 2003, 227; Baggelaar and Milton 1976, 160), a stronger argument is required to accommodate the relationship between music and political activism. Guthrie treated folksong as more than an ephemeral news vehicle; rather, for him, it was a motivator of collective opposition and, ultimately, a potential agency of social change (Kaufman 2011).²⁸ Because of its capacity to engage vernacular speech to communicate quotidian experience in a direct and undisciplined way, and thus to mobilise collective movements, folk music, largely thanks to Guthrie, has been regarded with suspicion by the establishment (Willhardt 2006, 33; King 2006, 108). Yet it is precisely the substance, the *attitude* and ethos of the performer, as Mark Willhardt observes, that is the decisive factor in determining the political content of protest songs (2006, 34). When the young Moore returned from the UK to Ireland in 1971 to record *Prosperous*, the album that led to the formation of Planxty and revolutionised Irish traditional music, he included a version of Dylan's "Song to Woody" (1962) immediately followed by "The Ludlow Massacre"²⁹ by Guthrie, thus underscoring the 'self-evident' link between activism and folk music (Willhardt 2006, 33).

Renowned for chronicling the condition of the disenfranchised rural poor in the U.S. during the 1930s and 1940s, Guthrie stands as a testament to this conviction. Documenting the hardships endured by victims of the Great Depression, his songs reflect his voluntary nomadism, an expression of solidarity with the unemployed migrants and economic refugees of the Dustbowl exodus (Guthrie 2004). The documentary *verité* of his songs is a function of their 'directness, simplicity and compassion,' giving them an aspect of eyewitness testimony ("protest" relates etymologically to "testify")

and “testament”): “O say there, did you hear the news?” But Guthrie’s songs are never simply “impartial” commentary: they are, rather, overtly oppositional, intended, that is, to agitate, *provocation* being integral to the tradition of social protest.

The Spartan directness of Guthrie’s mode of address, captured in Harlan Howard’s famous epigram: “three chords and the truth” (Howard in Prowse 2010, 38), is significant here. The folksinger’s approach involves a conception of *truth* not adequately captured by the criterion of documentary evidence. Better construed as a category of *direct action*, this concept relates to truth-telling as a social practice, as analysed by Foucault under the category of ‘fearless discourse.’³⁰ Guthrie’s vector of truth, we could say, *is his tongue*, the only means available to express his opinion in the most direct, muscular way possible. With a mandate to inspire anger and motivate collective action, his “Okie” accent viscerally utters solidarity with the legion of dispossessed at its point of origin: his vocal chords.³¹

Arguably, however, the content of his songs is not as influential as the attitude that inspires them. There are only four Guthrie songs in Moore’s entire repertoire. But Moore quickly recognised that doing cover versions in a corny Okie simulation is not credible way to access Guthrie’s mode of truth and ‘authenticity.’ (Moore originally affected a quasi-Americana approach which, predictably, resulted in a significant deflation of political authenticity.) Rather the point is his motivation by the uncompromisingly *critical* ethos that informs the songs, infusing lyrical content with the physicality of meaning. Admitting he knows little about Guthrie, Moore quickly adds, “everything I need to know is in the songs” (2000, 91).

Applying this critical practice of truth-telling proved highly enabling for Moore, his fearless ethos informing the composition of many songs of protest structured in “simple, basic language and ordinary words” (2000, 92) such as “The Wicklow Boy” (about the false imprisonment of Nicky Kelly for the 1976 Sallins train heist),³² “The Middle of the Island” (about Anne Lovett, the teenager who died giving birth at a grotto in Co. Longford in 1984; Moore 2000, 57; 28)³³ and “Dunnes Stores” (about Mary Manning and her heroic organisation of anti-apartheid industrial action at the Irish department store in 1984-87). Referring specifically in this connection to “They Never Came Home”, a song about the Stardust Ballroom fire in Artane on Valentine’s Day 1981 in which forty-eight people died, Moore remarks, “I used Guthrie’s technique of describing the events to create not only a picture of the event, but also [to expose] the underlying inequalities of injustice and blatant discrimination that still exists in our society” (2000, 96). Fearing legal repercussions, the owners of the club abrogated all responsibility, remaining aggressively unapologetic to the survivors and bereaved families. Ultimately they were awarded over half-a-million in state compensation due to the 1981

investigation's controversial "finding" that the probable cause was arson (a conclusion vigorously contested by survivors and victims' families). A radio documentary provided the starting point for the singer: "one night I heard a broken-hearted mother utter the words: "they never came home" as she described the loss of her three daughters" (96). Recorded on his tenth solo studio album *Ordinary Man* (1985) the song was banned because the lyrics referred to emergency exits which, it emerged, were padlocked. Accused of implying that the barred doors caused the fatalities, Moore was indicted and the album withdrawn from circulation. He was later charged with contempt of court. The offending lyric is still considered libellous. Reflecting (in 2010) he admitted to Niall Stokes (editor of Irish music magazine *Hot Press*) that it was a distressing time. Moore later re-released *Ordinary Man* with a new track ("Another Song is Born") substituted in place of the censored track.³⁴

Folk song as a vehicle for fearless discourse came into sharp focus in the late 1970s and early 80s during the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland.³⁵ Moore also cites Guthrie in this connection: "Many of us sit around bars and rooms talking about solidarity ... about playing our part in the struggle. Woody's approach was: 'Get off your arse and get down to the picket line and sing your songs side by side with the proletariat. Never mind singing protest songs in the folk club, you've gotta do it at the prison gates too ...'" (2000, 91). Around 1977 Moore certainly 'got off his arse'. In one of the most divisive strategies of his career, he began to use his music to raise awareness of the worsening political situation in Northern Ireland (the so-called 'Long War'). The twenty-six counties administration was vulnerable to ideological manipulation by UK foreign policy, especially in light of the undemocratic Section 31 (of the 1971 broadcasting act) mandate to censor any material considered to undermine the authority of the state—alluding in particular to the opinions of the provisional IRA or democratically elected members of Sinn Féin (then popularly criticised as the 'political wing' of the IRA).³⁶ What was occluded by the censorship and sensationalist contemporary media propaganda however was the social and economic source of the violence in Northern Ireland (O'Donnell 2012). Thatcher's rhetoric of terrorism efficiently camouflaged any causal reference to political oppression, the violation of civil liberties or sectarian intimidation.

'Bloody Sunday' became the catalyst of Moore's radicalisation,³⁷ motivating his cultural intervention in the ideological struggle, and inspiring him to use the ballad form, apropos Guthrie, as a means of communicative action capable of bypassing the hegemonic control of information in order to expose the truth about the injustices at the heart of the conflict (Moore in Jausch and McLoughlin 2016). Later, astonished at the widespread belief that the fourteen civilians shot dead on the streets of Derry in 1972 were Republican terrorists, he composed a song, "Minds Locked Shut", a call for collective

responsibility based on the recollections of the audience at a Bloody Sunday commemoration in the city in 1993 (Moore 2013).³⁸ Moore was instrumental in the formation of the innovative polemical folk-rock band Moving Hearts. From 1980-83, with founding collaborators Donal Lunny and Declan Sinnott,³⁹ the band became the singer's principal vector of cultural activism. In explicit opposition to Section 31, the Hearts' music acted as an interventionist apparatus of fearless discourse with which to inform and critique issues such as the suppression of the civil rights movement, British Army occupation, internment, RUC collusion with Loyalist paramilitaries, use of non-lethal ammunition (plastic bullets), and to highlight the political prisoners' protests and condemn strip-searches in Armagh women's prison.

Moore visited HM Prison Maze (aka H-Block) in Antrim in 1977 in response to a request to compose a song about the prison protests and renunciation of 'Special Status.'⁴⁰ There he met Brendan McFarlane, OC of the Republican prisoners, and began to support the campaign for political recognition by Republican prisoners,⁴¹ who were concerned about the media distortion of their campaign and wanted to provide the singer with an accurate account of their predicament. "Ninety Miles to Dublin" was written just prior to the second hunger strike led by IRA prison commander Bobby Sands in March 1981 (which ended in his death 66 days later) and saw Moore become a person of interest to the authorities. Released independently in 1978 on the album *H-Block*, the song was immediately banned, and special branch detectives dispatched to seize copies at the record launch.

"On the Blanket", credited to Mick Hanley⁴², was performed (by Hearts) to rapturous, if sombre response during the height of the hunger strike. One particularly poignant occasion was at a gig in Sligo town the evening when hunger striker Martin Hurson died. Apparently Hanley and Moore rapidly composed an extra verse in the dressing room of the Blue Lagoon just before they went on stage referring by name to the latest hunger striker death (Moore 2004; 2000, 225; 1984, 123). "The Boy from Tamlaghtduff" was written in memory of Francis Hughes who died in early May 1981. Moore recalls how he "met Francis's parents in Bellaghy and spoke to them at length" and "to his sister in Belfast" where he "received the go-ahead to meet volunteers who had served with Francis in the IRA" (2000, 152). Although intimidated (by British soldiers) in the North and *Garda* Special Branch in the Republic, Moore acknowledged to Niall Stokes in 2010 that he "got off very lightly ... it was a time when a lot of H-Block activists were being murdered" (2010). He was famously accused of "flirting with the glamour of armed resistance" by Gerry Smyth in *Noisy Island* (2005, 70). But when I put this to him and mentioned that Ian Prowse enthusiastically defends his disinterested brand of activism during the Troubles as motivated solely by compassion for the individuals involved, he was reticent: "I did

what I did. I do what I do ... I sing my songs publicly and let listeners draw their own conclusions" (Moore 2015).

A turning point was the IRA's Enniskillen Bombing on Remembrance Day 1987 in which eleven people were killed and sixty-three wounded. In a 1989 interview, Moore confessed his ideological confusion, "I don't [know] where I am. I sing songs about hunger strikers. I see IRA volunteers as soldiers, not as terrorists. But I find violence and bloodshed barbaric" (Trench 1989, 21). "Tyrone Boys", first recorded as "The Other Side" in 1987 (on *Unfinished Revolution*) among the multiple rich and evolving uncomfortable cultural references notably contains a verse from the perspective of a British Soldier: a young anonymous working-class bloke just over from Newcastle to begin his posting in Ireland, in camouflage, surveys the bleak Tyrone border, and thinks of home. Drawing on his own exilic experience, Moore turns to the rich modes of Northumberland dialect to express empathy with another undocumented victim of post-colonial displacement, identifying precisely with the British soldier's profound longing for home (Moore 1987).⁴³ With its free-association of dark episodes in recent Irish history (North and South), this song functions like a psychoanalytic X-Ray of the national psyche. Yet the "squaddie verse" evinces the initial symptoms of Moore's re-evaluation of his position. A later song, "North and South of the River", co-written with U2's Bono and Edge, signifies a more confident statement of reconciliation. Composed following Bono's deconstruction of Christy's original lyrics, it coincides with the initial phases of the peace process. Anticipating the Good Friday agreement and subsequent arms decommissioning in Northern Ireland, the song uses the metaphor of star-crossed lovers as an alibi for sectarian separation; eliciting similar Romeo-and-Juliet associations as "Sweet Thames", the lovers reach across the channel that separates them and dream of walking hand-in-hand through the city precincts, ignoring ideological border zones and the noise of bigotry drumming in their ears.

Following the break-up of Moving Hearts, Moore was back in Windmill Lane studio recording *The Time Has Come*, the first of a trilogy of albums released in 1983–1986 (including *Ride On* and *Ordinary Man*) that solidified his reputation as a solo artist. Simultaneously a critical reassessment and defiant declaration of identity (Lunny in Moore 1984, 8), the album revisits key songs previously recorded with Planxty and Moving Hearts,⁴⁴ re-appropriating and reworking songs in a stark, defiant and austere style, an attitude that extends to the iconic photograph on the record sleeve. Slightly out of focus, the singer approaches from the surrounding darkness, eyes shut tight, the ghost of an expletive on his lips.

Affectingly crystallised in the melancholy title track, the album is haunted by a sense of loss. Establishing the keynote of the album's mixture of pathos and defiance, "The Time Has Come" is a disquieting song; its elegiac melody,

changes of time signature and minor-major transitions evoking a spectrum of emotions: the apprehensive sentiment gradually strengthens, becomes more focused and defiant as the melody progresses from C through F to G, finally ascending to E, tracking an emotional trajectory rearticulated in the lyrics. Accompanied by Lunny's atmospheric keyboards and vocalist Mandy Murphy's inconspicuous harmonies, the song is more complex and subtle than Moore's previous political material, and, in a similar way to Billy Bragg's song "I Keep Faith" (2008),⁴⁵ signals a new departure in protest music where political content, neither explicit nor aggressively stated, remains at a tacit, suggestive level (Cashell 2008; 2011).⁴⁶ When "The Time Has Come" was released in 1982, the single received a lot of airplay until Eamonn McCann inadvertently revealed that it was a lament for the deceased hunger strikers. Significantly, it was only then that the song was regarded as seditious.

From one perspective, "The Time Has Come" is a conversational phone-call of departure and lonesome valediction, which, in the context of the Irish heritage, carries strong connotations of emigration (and engages with the acceptable tradition of 'singing the darkness'); from another, the socio-political subtext eventually leaks through the porous lyrics revealing a deathbed tableau: the bereaved dimly illuminated by guttering candlelight. Communicated obliquely through subtlety, restraint and understatement, the theme of the hunger strike is gradually brought to focus that engages the context of the famine song tradition to explore a new chapter of Irish darkness.

The hunger strike was eventually suspended because distraught relatives announced their intention to intervene: "ten men died, we marched and cried and went home again. I was left with a feeling of hopelessness and thought to write a song for the families of the strikers; Peggy O'Hara [mother of Patsy who died on 21 May 1981] of Derry was the main source of information with regard to what they had to endure" (Moore 2000, 39). Expressing compassion for the burden of this responsibility, "The Time Has Come" economically captures the sense of desolation such an onus, and its subsequent haunting involves: "In most cases" he explains, "it's the families or the wives that have to make the final decision and have to allow their sons go ahead with their ultimate sacrifice once they've lapsed into unconsciousness" (1984, 106). The transfer of responsibility is made vivid by the trope of the enduring flame kindled by a departing spirit, whose imminent absence only elucidates the chronic epoch of grieving with more clarity.

Exploring an ambiguous zone of darkness, sensitivity and deep sentiment, this song in an analogous way to "North and South" (which on one level is a straightforward, if melancholy, love song, but a complex political song on another), and is made more poignant because it transcends Manichaean ideological (as well as religious) divisions. Its melodic interweaving of the personal and the political at once gives it more depth than any ephemeral

journalistic 're-ax' protest song (Weinstein 2006, 3; Marqusee 2005).⁴⁷ In this connection Billy Bragg referred to his belief in the redemptive power of song, the fact that human beings respond emotionally to and can be profoundly and ethically affected by simple song, (Cashell 2008; also Power, this volume).⁴⁸ Through empathy and subjective experience, "The Time Has Come", like the other songs discussed here, evokes complex unscripted responses which give it more powerful and lasting emotional resonances than any literal statement of protest. However, unlike the other Moore songs, this song is not a ballad but has a lyrical form, and this explains its haunting ambivalence and subtle ambiguity of affect. As listeners, we are involved, sharing in its elicitation of darkness, grief, and collective responsibility. We sing the dark away.

CONCLUSION: THE TRANSMISSION OF TRADITION AS RADICAL PRAXIS

Perhaps the central problem of any inquiry into the relationship of folk song and social protest is how the transmission of tradition can become a radical practice. A similar question motivates the late writings of Walter Benjamin (Buck-Morss 2002, 224; Benjamin 1999). Concerned with the rescue of failed or forgotten social movements, the political significance of Benjamin's late work resides not in the effort to preserve the ethos of such movements but rather in the attempt to accomplish their unrealised radical potential for subsequent generations. The way certain folk singers have excavated the tradition for material and in the process reactivated and amplified its latent potential can be regarded as a paradigmatic instance of Benjamin's concept of the radical transmission of tradition. This chapter examined the songs of Christy Moore from this perspective. His seminal contribution to the legacy of protest was explored through assessment of his commitment to (and ultimate transformation of) the folk tradition as a vehicle of oppositional culture. Revisiting Moore's participation in the post-war folk revival in Britain (and his close association with its principal catalysts) was predicated on the proposition that traditional music is not a conservative form but rather itself represents a powerful vector of social expression. An oppositional energy is embedded in the music itself which it is possible to retrieve for contemporary critique without compromising historical authenticity. Accessing the radical potency of the tradition, for Moore, involves reactivating the ancestral voices sublimated in traditional folk song through *singing* it. To achieve this, he adopted an indigenous style associated with the travelling community, rescuing from this vernacular Irish practice of English-language traditional song something both radical, and original. Moore's application of this singing style (and his subsequent singular vocal technique) *others* the 'preferred reading'

of, for instance, an English ballad, tending to draw out latent elements of resistance from within the lyric in a methodology comparable to the exposure of counter-historical narratives suppressed in the official historiographical archive (a process thematised by Benjamin precisely in connection with the ‘weak messianic power’ of the ‘tradition of the oppressed’.) In this way, it becomes possible to speak of (and seek to transmit) the radical content of the tradition and, apropos of this, to critically justify the time-honoured affinity between folksong and social protest as radical praxis.

NOTES

1. Moore has been at the forefront of the Irish music industry for five decades and remains one of the few contemporary folk acts in the British Isles with a major record contract, having recorded over twenty solo studio albums, as well as six live records (not including Planxty and Moving Hearts recordings).

2. Moore told Tony Wilson, presenter of Granada TV’s music show *So it Goes*, and co-founder of the independent record label Factory, who interviewed the singer for *Melody Maker* in 1969, that there was no comparable folk scene in Ireland at the time.

3. EFDSS—English Folk Dance and Song Society: see reviews of *Folk Tale* (2011), and *Where I Come From* (2014) by Vic Smith and Derek Schofield respectively in *English Dance and Song* (2012, 42) and (2014, 45). Moore’s extensive peregrinations through the close-knit network of folk clubs of the North of England were equally significant in the structuring of his craft. Moore spent four years observing, studying, listening to, and sharing songs with legendary exponents of the British tradition such as Martin Carthy, Mike (and sisters Norma and Lal) Waterson, Michael Harding, Anne Briggs and many others in Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northumberland and beyond.

4. Travellers are traditionally identified as a nomadic group with origins in Ireland, possessing a distinct identity, heritage and culture.

5. Nавvy (abbreviation of “navigator”) originally referred to canal workers, but since the late nineteenth century applies to labourers in the construction industry; M62 is the British motorway in alphanumerical nomenclature; the Pennines, the mountain range separating the English Northwest from Northeast.

6. The idiom of the urban industrial folksong as collected and codified by A.L. Lloyd (*Come all Ye Bold Miners* 1952; *The Iron Muse* 1956; *Folksong in England* 1967, 297-385) and creatively applied by Ewan MacColl in the critically acclaimed Radio Ballads series for the BBC (1957-64).

7. Brother of playwright Brendan Behan. “Paddy on the Road” is one of four Behan tracks on this album (1969).

8. Associated particularly with London, the scope of the stereotype includes “Drunken paddies, Sentimental paddies, Homesick paddies, Pathetic and Nostalgic paddies” (Campbell 2012, 81).

9. Williams and Ó Laoire (2011, 13) discuss how music expresses the *darkness* of the Irish Famine (mass starvation in the mid-nineteenth century caused by the failure of the potato crop, and the subsequent decimation of the population by 25 percent from mortality and emigration from 1845–1852).

10. Literally “the old way;” *sean-nós* refers to indigenous Irish vocal tradition of unaccompanied, richly ornamental singing involving unusual improvised variations, and more lyrical than narrative in content (O’Boyle, 45). Ó Riada (1982) identifies its distinctive feature as improvised melismatic variation, a practice regarded as very unusual, even non-existent in the English monodic vocal tradition. For a thorough codification of *sean-nós* see Williams and Ó Laoire (2011).

11. Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger’s famous Ballad and Blues Folk Club (established in 1957, later renamed the Singers Club with resident performers including Seamus Ennis and ‘resident for life’ Joe Heaney) based originally at the Princess Louise in High Holborn (Harper 2006; MacColl 2009).

12. Kelly travelled to the UK in the late 1950s (Geraghty 1994) to apprentice himself to MacColl and Seeger’s Singers Club / Critics Group (an initiative established in 1964 as a kind of ‘bardic school’ with a mission to establish criteria for the performance of folk songs) (Harper 2006, 162; MacColl 2009, 296).

13. Behan had been an associate of MacColl’s since 1948.

14. Moore first heard MacColl perform in the Singers Club in High Holborn around 1968 (2000, 84).

15. MacColl Centenary, RTE Radio, December 2015. Moore performed upstairs in the Union Tavern, corner of Kings Cross Road and Lloyd Baker Street, where the club was located during this period (MacColl 1977; MacColl 2009, 285; Bean 2014; Moore 2015).

16. Moore sent a copy of his 1975 album *Whatever Ticks Your Fancy* to an unimpressed MacColl (including a version of MacColl’s “The Ballad of Timothy Evans” with bass and drums).

17. Lloyd, a towering figure in the post-war folk revival, is credited with bridging the first and second revivals and drawing critical attention to the neglected industrial and urban dimension of the tradition: *Folksong in England* (1967) and *Come all ye Bold Miners* (1952) did much to place folksong in the social context of the class struggle. He argues that the ‘tradition’ can never be ‘fixed or immutable’ (Lloyd 1967, 66). MacColl defends his reputation in *Journeyman* (2009, 281). Eliza Carthy’s review of Dave Arthur’s biography of Lloyd, *Bert*, is worth reading for her defence of Lloyd’s legacy as a vehicle of tradition (Carthy 2012, 41).

18. Eminent critics include Shirley Collins, Andy Irvine and Bob Davenport (who regarded the Critics as a ‘petty dictatorship’ [in Young 2014]).

19. See also Steve Roud’s 2011 review of *Folk Music: A Very Short Introduction* by Mark Slobin.

20. See *The Joy of Living: A Tribute to Ewan MacColl* (Neill, Calum and Kitty MacColl) (Cooking Vinyl 2015).

21. In *One Voice* he maintains that he first heard the song on record when living with Derek McEwan in Rochdale, East Manchester (2000, 122); in the *Songbook* he says he acquired it in 1971 (1984, 31).

22. Moore's distinctive vocal is informed by an alternative song tradition to *sean-nós*, one that possesses equal claim to indigenous provenance, namely, the "vernacular Irish practice of English-language traditional song" associated with Traveller oral heritage (Smith 2007, 315; Munnely 1975). Moore first witnessed Traveller John Reilly singing obscure ballads in the early 1960s which had a profound impact on him (Moore 2000, 76). His adaptation of the style engages not only with the heritage of storytelling and the rich oral legacy of the Travelling communities that traverse Ireland and Britain, but also represents a conscious identification with an ethnic sub-culture historically stigmatised in Irish society; as such it is a subversive gesture.

23. A ballad is not a ballad until it is sung, MacColl and Seeger assert on their 1986 collection *Blood and Roses* Volumes 1–4.

24. Indigenous culture in Ireland (which due to the Diaspora, thrived in international settings) tends to possess an inherent political "edge" (Prowse 2010). Smith notes the significant proportion of political material in Munnely's archive (about 40%), constituting an expression of 'discord' that, articulated in the vocal realm, "reinforced a sense of separateness and hostility that might otherwise remain latent" (Smith 2007, 296-97).

25. Incidentally, MacColl's original lyric contains intertextual references to Blake's "London" (1794) and the title alludes to T.S. Eliot's epic poem *The Wasteland* (1922).

26. This process of adaptation is not unique to Christy Moore. Williams and Ó Laoire cite an instance of Irish-language love song transformed by Joe Heaney into a lonesome "Erin Grá mo Chroí" song of emigration (2012, 21).

27. The historical link between the two musicians is Alan Lomax who introduced them to each other at a benefit gig for Spanish Civil War Refugees in New York in 1940.

28. Of many examples that we could cite, the mass anti-nuclear protests of the 1970s in Ireland in which Moore participated led to the reversal of plans for a nuclear power station at Carnsore Point in Wexford.

29. Both songs were acquired from Tony Small with whom he shared a squat in Finsbury Park in the late 1960s. Moore admits that he has never heard Dylan's version (Moore 1984, 26; 2000, 198). Both songs are delivered in an incongruous American accent.

30. "More precisely, *parrhesia* [Fearless Discourse] is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognises truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself)" (Foucault 2001, 19).

31. Okie? John Steinbeck sums it up in the *Grapes of Wrath* (1939): "Well, Okie use'ta mean you were from Oklahoma. Now it means you're a dirty son-of-a-bitch. Okie means you're scum" (Steinbeck 2000).

32. Kelly was released in 1984 (following hunger strike) and pardoned by the state in 1992.

33. "Everybody Knew, Nobody Said."

34. A live version of the original appears on the 2004 boxset and a new recording has also been released on *Where I Come From* (2013) including a new verse directly

incriminating the legal system and alluding to the insurance company pay-off (2000, 96; 2004).

35. The 'characteristically understated' (Smith 2007, 296) term for the sectarian paramilitary conflict in the UK jurisdiction of the North of Ireland that lasted from the suppression of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, seriously escalating following Bloody Sunday (Derry, January 1972), to the advent of the peace process in the late 1990s.

36. Section 31 was repealed in September 1994.

37. *Christy Moore: Journey* (2016). Although claiming that Bloody Sunday (January 1972) marked the scene of his politicisation, the H-Block protests were the original catalyst of his use of music as a vehicle of political activism.

38. Later the families of victims requested Moore attend the injustice inquiries in Derry and London.

39. Other notable members of Moving Hearts: Eoghan O'Neill (bass), Brian Calnan (percussion), Davy Spillane (uilleann pipes), Keith Donald (saxophone) and, later, when Christy left, Mick Hanley.

40. In 1977, 150 Republican prisoners refused to wear convict uniforms, wrapping themselves in blankets and bedsheets. Failure of this protest, in March 1978, led to the so-called 'Dirty Protest', the smearing of faeces on their cell walls. See *Bobby Sands: 66 Days* (2016; O'Donnell 2012).

41. Moore was a member of the National H-Block Committee.

42. "On the Blanket" is credited to (and recorded) solely by Mick Hanley on *H-Block* (1978); it does not include the verse referring to Hurson (as recorded in the live version by Moore and Hanley and released on the *Boxset 1964-2004* [2004]).

43. Later revisions of this song appear on *Folk Tale* (2011) and *Where I Come From* (2013): the "Squaddie verse" is included in both. (In Northumberland dialect "Bairns" and "Hinny," mean "Children" and "Wife"). The song can be viewed as a critique of Paul Brady's saccharine hit: "The Island" (Brady is from Strabane Co. Tyrone).

44. Namely: "Go Move Shift" ("The Moving On Song" 1975/1983), "Curragh of Kildare" (1969/1983), "Sacco and Vanzetti" (1976/1983), "Nancy Spain" (1976/1983) and "Lanigans Ball" (1976/1983).

45. On his twelfth studio album, *Mr Love and Justice* (2008).

46. Bragg explains: "I Keep Faith" (2008) functions on two distinct semantic levels—on the surface, it sounds like an innocuous love song (it's catchy, melodic, lyrical etc.) yet the political message is conveyed on another, deeper level, and, according to Bragg, has a more profound effect on the listener because its subtext permeates gradually (Cashell 2011, 22).

47. Compare with Marqusee's (2005) thesis that Dylan's later post-protest song period did not jettison political content and lyrical activism but rather only became more subtle and sophisticated in its mode of sonic critique.

48. Cashell, interview with Bragg, December 4, 2008.

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