

Sounding Sentimental:
American Popular Song From Nineteenth-Century Ballads to 1970s Soft Rock

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*For Ma
with love*

ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the relationship between American popular song and “sentimentality.” While eighteenth-century discussions of sentimentality took it as a positive attribute in which feelings, “refined or elevated,” motivated the actions or dispositions of people, later texts often describe it pejoratively, as an “indulgence in superficial emotion.” This has led an entire corpus of nineteenth- and twentieth-century cultural production to be bracketed as “schmaltz” and derided as irrelevant by the academy.

Their critics notwithstanding, sentimental songs have remained at the forefront of popular music production in the United States, where, as my project demonstrates, they have provided some of the country’s most visible and challenging constructions of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and morality. My project recovers the centrality of sentimentalism to American popular music and culture and rethinks our understandings of the relationships between music and the public sphere. In doing so, I add the dimension of sound to the extant discourse of sentimentalism, explore a longer history of popular music in the United States than is typical of most narratives within popular music studies, and offer a critical examination of music that—though wildly successful in its own day—has been all but ignored by scholars.

As a whole, my dissertation takes a long view of sentimentality and music, but each chapter offers a close-reading of a particular moment in sentimental song history, including: sentimental ballads of the long nineteenth century; *The National Barn Dance*, an early radio show from Chicago; Mitch Miller’s 1960s television show *Sing Along with*

Mitch; and 1970s soft rock. Engaging with literary criticism, histories of technology, feminist theory, and popular music historiography, I move across various media—print, radio, television, and recordings—in order to highlight the relationships between musical amateurs, listeners, and their publics. My project theorizes the idea of sentimental song in the United States over the last two centuries, not necessarily to argue “for” sentimentality, but rather to more fully consider sentimentality as a conspicuous and persistent strain in the history of American popular music and American culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Salmon is in itself very delicious eating, but too much of it is bad for the health, inasmuch as it is heavy food. For this reason, once when there was a great catch of salmon, the police in Hamburg ordered each master of a household to give his servants salmon not more than once a week. Would that there might be a similar police notice with regard to sentimentality.

—Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*

Pop’s history is obviously marked by moments of collective sentimentality.

—Simon Frith, “Pop Music”

“What is Sentimentality?” asks June Howard in a 1999 article published in *American Literary History*. Howard answers her own question and the title of her essay with the following: “most broadly—when we call an artifact or gesture sentimental, we are pointing to its use of some established convention to evoke emotion; we mark a moment when the discursive processes that construct emotion become visible.”¹ Howard’s historiography of sentimentality makes clear, however, that not everyone agrees on what sentimentality is, what it means, and how or even if it should be wielded. Kierkegaard’s and Frith’s comments above perfectly encapsulate the paradox Howard outlines: sentimentality is understood at once as degraded and pervasive.

This dissertation explores the relationship between sentimentality and American popular song. Critics notwithstanding, sentimental songs have remained at the forefront of popular music production in the United States, where they have provided some the country’s most visible and challenging constructions of race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and morality. From “Auld Lang Syne” in the late-eighteenth century to The

1. June Howard, “What Is Sentimentality?” *American Literary History* 11, no. 1 (Spring, 1999), 76.

Warbler's performance of "Silly Love Songs" on *Glee*, sentimentality has pervaded popular music in the United States for well over two hundred years.

This project argues that "sentimental" is a significant keyword of American popular song. Raymond Williams describes "keywords" as "the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, of the practices and institutions which we group as culture and society."²

Vocabulary, as Williams notes, is always shared and imperfect; we employ available and developing meanings of known words in our everyday lives. I had until very recently forgotten that Williams's introductory example shared my own keyword, a coincidence that makes his approach seem all the more appropriate. He cites an eighteenth-century letter writer who asks:

What, in your opinion, is the meaning of the word *sentimental*, so much in vogue among the polite...? Everything clever and agreeable is comprehended in that word...I am frequently astonished to hear such as one is a *sentimental* man; we were a *sentimental* party; I have been taking a *sentimental* walk.³

Williams explains that the letter quoted above signals the kinds of significant shifts that happen in language and with particular terms.

For this project, it was important to me to find case studies in which sentimental is used in relationship to the songs under consideration. In other words, I am interested in tracking how this term has shifted meaning in relation to song and historicizing its use. The songs considered herein were marketed, described, or marked in some way as sentimental. Instead of deciding what the term meant, and offering my own definition, I

2. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 15.

3. Williams, 16.

decided to follow “sentimental” songs where they led me—to try to get a better sense of what this has meant to its consumers, producers, listeners, and critics.

Howard’s account explains that the vast majority of scholarship on the subject presumes that sentimentality is a literary form—one whose history is marked by polemics and judgment. Howard argues for an approach to sentimentality that “move[s] on from arguments for and against sentimentality to the task of conceptualizing it as a transdisciplinary object of study.”⁴ In what follows, I have tried to vacate the “discourses of judgment” that have marked scholarship on sentimentality, taking my cue from scholars like Howard and like Lora Romero who argue that “we need to study its persistence and investigate its terms.”⁵ While literary theorists and critics have long since understood sentimentalism as a central—if not important—part of the literary tradition, music scholars have been slower to take up the topic. Part of my task then is to make literary criticism and music scholarship speak to each other by adding sound to the extant discourses on sentimentalism.

My project extends the history of American popular song back to the late-eighteenth century. As a discipline, popular music studies has grown up in the age of and after rock criticism. As I point out in chapter four, this has profound implications for the ways popular music history has been told. Recently, scholars including Keir Keightley, Elijah Wald, and Carl Wilson, among others, have grappled with the legacy and

4. Howard, 63.

5. *Ibid.*, 64.

consequences of rock-centric popular music historiography.⁶ All of my case studies have arguably inherited the problems of these narratives. One of the lasting effects of such a historiography is a rather narrow historical field: popular music studies tends to assume that the popular in music is synonymous with recorded sound.

My approach takes a long view of sentimentality and music, allowing us to see successively how this thread has played out in song. Each chapter, however, offers a close reading of a particular moment in sentimental song history, considering what sentimentality has to do with gender, race, nationality, and sexuality. While these arenas overlap and intersect, each case study focuses on a specific facet, namely: gender and nineteenth-century sentimental ballads; race and the early radio show *The National Barn Dance*; nationality and Mitch Miller's televisual sing alongs; and sexuality and 1970s soft rock. This project weaves together primary source documents, album reviews, close-readings of musical texts, critical discourse, and material history to deepen our understanding of what sentimentalism has had to do with popular song in the past and what it means today.

Let's Talk About Sentimentality

In a recent monograph entitled *Let's Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste*, music critic Carl Wilson writes about sentimentality in the music of Celine Dion.

6. See Keir Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109-142; Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Carl Wilson, *Let's Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

Highlighting issues concerning taste and historiography, Wilson points to disparities between the perspective of the historian or critic—often tastemakers—and that of the public or fans. Dion has surpassed most musicians of the twentieth century in album sales and visibility, but at the same time she remains one of the most disrespected and “hated” musicians in accounts by critics.⁷ As Wilson’s work shows, the historical work of the scholar of sentimentalism is necessarily one of recovery, a point echoed in most of the literature concerning sentimental literary works.⁸ Wilson takes Dion seriously and asks us to think about what might be gained by listening for the more positive aspects of sentimental musical works and history. What matters to Wilson, in the end, is to give Dion what he refers to as a “sympathetic hearing,” a thoroughly sentimental approach to his sentimental subject.⁹ Karl Hagstrom Miller, David Suisman, and Albin Zak also make compelling arguments about the importance of studying the most popular of popular musics; their significant contributions to twentieth-century popular music studies highlight the value systems that underscore much music criticism and history—systems that have excluded much sentimental music.¹⁰

7. Wilson, 1-5.

8. See, for example, Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

9. Wilson, 155.

10. See Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); David Suisman, *Selling Sounds: The Commercial Revolution in American Music* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009); and Albin Zak, *I Don’t Sound Like Nobody: Remaking Music in 1950s America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

Wilson's taste experiment has been the most influential for my thinking on this topic, but he is not the only music scholar to study sentimentality. Others have used sentimentalism to interpret European works from the eighteenth century. Mary Hunter, for instance, shows clear parallels between the stock characters of Samuel Richardson's well-known sentimental novel, *Pamela* (1740), and many operatic productions from the second half of the eighteenth century.¹¹ Other attempts at understanding a relationship between sentiment and music have prominently exhibited the often modernist bent of much musicological scholarship.¹²

While not concerned with sentimentality specifically, Nicholas Tawa has noted that the influx of European immigrants to the United States in the early nineteenth century deeply influenced musical production and practices. These composers, influenced by earlier sentimental art forms, wrote parlor ballads that employed the devices and themes of sentimentalism. Later in the century, US-born composers would continue to pursue this trend. Stephen Foster is but one example of an American composer who composed sentimental songs during the nineteenth century. Scholars such as Susan Key, Amy Lang, and Martin Stokes have recently written about the parallels between an older idea of sentimentality—drawn from literary criticism—and more recent musical

11. See Mary Hunter, "'Pamela': The Offspring of Richardson's Heroine in Eighteenth-Century Opera," *Mosaic* 18 no. 4 (Fall 1985): 61-76; Edmund Goehring, "The Sentimental Muse of Opera Buffa," in *Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna*, ed. Mary Hunter and James Webster, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 115-145; and Jessica Waldoff, "Sentiment and Sensibility in *La Vera Costanza*," in *Haydn Studies*, ed. W. Dean Sutcliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 70-119.

12. See, for instance, Charles Rosen, *Music and Sentiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010). Despite its title, Rosen remains detached from ideas about emotion and takes for granted that the obvious candidates for study are the "great works" of European instrumental music.

practices.¹³ This otherwise very helpful work tends to focus on local intersections between sentimentality and music; my hope is that by looking at a range of examples this dissertation may provide a framework into which these studies could be further contextualized.

While the musical literature on sentimentality remains somewhat sparse, literary critics and philosophers have broadly discussed and theorized this topic. In the western tradition, sentimentality has operated as an evaluative term from the eighteenth century through to the present. Referred to also as “sensibility,” in the late eighteenth century sentimentality was initially employed as a positive evaluation, but quickly became synonymous with negative judgment. Scholars disagree as to exactly when this shift occurred, but agree that “by the end of the [18th] century, ‘sentimentalist’ was clearly a term of ridicule...the evocation of emotion, once a great virtue in a novel, poem, or painting...now became something of a vice, a reason not only to disparage the quality of the work but to doubt the sincerity of and the integrity of the writer or the artist.”¹⁴

Philosopher Robert Solomon urges us to take feelings seriously, suggesting that moral philosophy would benefit from the reinstatement of sentimentality. Indeed, the very title

13. See Susan Key, “Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster,” *American Music* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 145-166; Amy Lang, “Jim Crow and the Pale Maiden: Gender, Color, and Class in Stephen Foster’s ‘Hard Times,’” in *Reading Country Music: Steel Guitars, Opry Stars, and Honky-tonk Bars*, ed. Cecelia Tichi, 378-388 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); and Martin Stokes, “Adam Smith and the Dark Nightingale: On Twentieth-Century Sentimentalism,” *Twentieth-century Music* 3, no. 2 (2007): 201-219.

14. Robert Solomon, “In Defense of Sentimentality,” *Philosophy and Literature* 14, no. 2 (October 1990): 307-9. See also Robert Solomon, *In Defense of Sentimentality* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

of Solomon's study, *In Defense of Sentimentality*, insists on sentimentality's degraded status and the worthiness of its defense.

For moral sentiment theorists in the eighteenth century, sentimentality—or the evocation of emotions through performative or literary means—was thought of as a powerful tool with which to inspire sympathy. Teaching others to feel served the didactic purpose of ennobling benevolence among humans. Adam Smith, for instance, opens his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* with a section entitled “Of Sympathy.” Smith's version of sympathy sounds much like what we understand today as empathy with feeling and sentiment at its core. Smith writes:

As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dullness of the conception.¹⁵

Smith's emphasis on the role of the imagination in the sympathetic process directly implicates the arts in sentimentality. Of course the sympathy described by Smith was not

15. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759] (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 13-14.

applied evenly then—his address to men makes this clear—just as it is not today.

Smith's theory though opens a space of possibility through sentiment and sympathy.

Scholars of sentimentalism have helped to shape my thoughts on the sentimental in music. Janet Todd's *Sensibility: An Introduction* argues for the prominence of the cult of sentiment during the eighteenth century:

Sentimentalism entered all literary genres – the novel, essay, poetry and drama. But the cult of sensibility was largely defined by fiction from the 1740s to the 1770s. This fiction initially showed people how to behave, how to express themselves in friendship and how to respond decently to life's experiences. Later, it prided itself more on making its readers weep and in teaching them when and how much to weep. In addition, it delivered the great archetypal victims: the chaste suffering woman, happily rewarded in marriage or elevated into redemptive death, and the sensitive, benevolent man whose feelings are too exquisite for the acquisitiveness, vulgarity and selfishness of his world.¹⁶

While sentimentality was often reserved for ideas of moral reflection, sensibility's domain was the faculty of feeling, understood broadly as a physical process, and as such, often interpreted in correspondence with sexuality and feelings of arousal.¹⁷

Todd observes that sentimental works aim to inspire feelings of sympathy in the viewer; they are intended to serve didactically; they make use of stock characters and situations; they identify compassionately with characters of low-birth or minorities including old people, children, slaves, animals and women; and they treat everyday, commonplace issues. Todd's monograph illustrates just how widespread the phenomenon of sentimentality was during the eighteenth century as she argues that it is fundamental to the interpretation of literary works from this period. Significantly, Todd states in her

16. Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London; New York: Methuen, 1986), 4.

17. Todd makes this subtle distinction between the two terms, but points out that they were used somewhat interchangeably during the eighteenth century.

epilogue that “the sentimental strain did not die in 1800 but continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in the popular genres of drama and fiction.”¹⁸

In the 1980s, feminist literary critics including Ann Douglas and Jane Tompkins debated the value of nineteenth-century sentimental literature, asking important questions about the relationships between gender and the processes of canon-formation.¹⁹ Such debates crystallize over the question of sentimentality’s relation to dominant ideology—are sentimental works complicit in reinscribing the status quo or do they have subversive potential? Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* offers an excellent example, one discussed by both Douglas and Tompkins. Vastly popular and often credited with stirring up Northern sympathy for Southern slaves, Stowe’s novel provides examples of a similar kind of sentimentality to those invoked in Richardson’s *Pamela*. While the sites of virtue are not the same, the issue was still one of sympathy and compassion, and it was the sentimental art form that was recognized for inspiring and structuring such feelings.

Tompkins writes:

Uncle Tom’s Cabin was, in almost any terms one can think of, the most important book of the century. It was the first American novel ever to sell over a million copies and its impact is generally thought to have been incalculable. Expressive of and responsible for the values of its time, it also belongs to a genre, the sentimental novel, whose chief characteristic is that it is written by, for, and about women. In this respect, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is not exceptional but representative. It is the *summa theologica* of nineteenth-century America’s religion of domesticity, a brilliant redaction of the culture’s favorite story about itself—the

18. Todd, 147.

19. See Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* [1977] (New York: Noonday Press, 1998); and Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

story of salvation through motherly love. Out of the ideological materials at their disposal, the sentimental novelists elaborated a myth that gave women the central position of power and authority in the culture; and of these efforts *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the most dazzling exemplar.

However, it is also during this time, that sentimental forms came to be widely critiqued because of their associations with the nascent mass culture.

More recently, scholars like Lauren Berlant and Lori Merish have reopened debates on sentimentalism; Berlant questions what sentimentalism has to do with different conceptions of the public sphere and nationalism while Merish explores the connections between sentimentalism and the formation of commodity culture.²⁰ Like Douglas and Tompkins, these accounts assume that nineteenth-century American sentimentalism pertains to women's literary and material culture. Essays included in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, however, challenge the gender stereotype of sentimentalism. The contributors explore different case studies of sentimental men who made important contributions to nineteenth-century American popular culture, thereby countering the received history.²¹

In the art world, contemporary criticism of sentimentality usually refers to a work's excess, bad taste, manipulateness, falseness, kitsch, self-indulgence, and its

20. See Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) and Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

21. See Mary Chapman, and Glenn Hendler, eds., *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

“essential defectiveness.”²² Scholars such as Michael Tanner have noted that sentimentality is made to stand in diametric opposition to Enlightenment ideals such as reason, rationality, truth and logic as well as Kantian aesthetics of disinterested appreciation.²³ Many sentimental works have experienced vast popularity such that they are further aligned (or maligned) with concepts such as mass culture and commercialism, domesticity and femininity, and said to privilege professionalism rather than creativity, reproductivity over productivity.²⁴ As Andreas Huyssen compellingly argues mass culture is gendered as feminine and positioned as modernism’s Other.²⁵

Most scholarship—musical or otherwise—similarly narrates sentimentality’s decline in status. And certainly there are clear examples that illustrate how this works. My case studies, however, suggest otherwise: sentimentality has neither gone away nor is it necessarily degraded. In fact, all of my case studies, with the exception of soft rock, explicitly used “sentimental” to market their wares. Nineteenth-century ballads were categorized and touted as “sentimental songs”; *National Barn Dance* performers in the 1930s spoke of singing the old “sentimental ballads” of their parents; and Mitch Miller

22. Anthony Savile, “Sentimentality,” in *Arguing About Art: Contemporary Philosophical Debates*, ed. Alex Neill and Aaron Ridley (London; New York: Routledge, 2008).

23. Michael Tanner, “Sentimentality,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 77 (1976): 127-147.

24. Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other” in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1986), 44-64.

25. Ibid.

emblazoned “sentimental” clear across the cover of one of his famed sing along LPs in 1960. Only in the wake of the rock era does “sentimental” become a pejorative.

The majority of scholarship also overlooks the transatlantic relationship between eighteenth-century British sentimentalism and subsequent iterations of American sentimentalism. Howard makes this same critique of literary studies; as she argues, “there is a strong relationship between Enlightenment notions of moral sentiments and sympathy and nineteenth- and twentieth-century sentimentalism. Making that link helps us to understand the significance of contemporary usages.”²⁶ It proves productive to consider the continuities evident between eighteenth-century British sensibility and nineteenth-century American sentimentalism.²⁷

Many sentimental songs over the last two hundred years exhibit these connections. Stephen Foster’s songs offer but one example, suggesting that eighteenth-century European sentimentality mapped quite directly onto nineteenth-century American musical culture.²⁸ Early nineteenth century American parlor songs wear the marks of

26. Howard, 69-70.

27. Nicholas Tawa is one of few scholars to acknowledge this continuity; he points out that this correlates directly to the British immigrants who influenced American parlor song traditions. Tawa divides the history of *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans* into three different periods: from 1790 to 1810, affluent amateur musicians were ordering music from London and purchasing imports in the music stores of American urban centres; the period from 1811-1840 marked a transitional period during which British musicians toured throughout the US, American vocalists “began appearing alongside the British professional singers,” and many publishers appeared; during the last period, from 1840-1860, what Tawa refers to as the “parlor-song public” increased dramatically with the emergence of many more American singers as well as composers.

28. See Susan Key, “Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster,” *American Music* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1995): 145-166.

influence from British immigrants and by the 1830s, those of Italian opera as well.²⁹

By mid-century, the sheet music industry was burgeoning and many homes featured keyboard instruments. As Ruth Solie and Matthew Head have discussed, the piano girl was a ubiquitous figure, helping to shape narratives of domestic music making. Song composers worked the amateur angle of domestic music production, publishing songs for home consumption. Singers worked with industry men to promote sheet music by presenting publishers' songs on the concert stage. Richard Crawford explains the significance of sincerity to such performances, citing the example of singer and composer, Henry Russell, who "accompanied his singing on a small upright piano, which allowed him to face the audience and deliver his songs with dramatic nuance and directness."³⁰ Russell, as Crawford points out, worked to manipulate the emotions of his audience through his pitiful and sympathetic performances, but would then later privately mock his audiences for weeping.³¹ As in sentimental literature, the subjects of sentimental song are often the downtrodden and/or minorities: women, children, servants, slaves, natives, old people, and animals.³²

Song was also often used as an expressive vehicle to unite large groups of people through community singing. Nineteenth-century American groups like the Hutchinson Family used song as a means through which to promote political messages and social

29. Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York: Norton, 2001), 243.

30. Crawford, 250.

31. *Ibid.*, 251.

32. Tawa, 123-157.

reform including temperance and antislavery movements.³³ Later in the century, songwriters turned their attention to songs for the Civil War, discovering “that they could sentimentalize grief over wounded and dead soldiers as they had missing lovers or the longing for home.”³⁴ Here, song becomes a medium for democratic and nationalist sentiment.

In the twentieth century, recorded sound, radio, and televisual representations augmented and further increased the possibilities of imagined communities, and later, of global audiences. Musical guests performed on air, in studios, and made appearances on programs such as the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Later, on MTV and its Canadian counterpart, Much Music, North American and British musical celebrities secured their global dominance. Performers including Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson, and Celine Dion attained levels of recognition previously unknown. While this phenomenon is certainly not specific to music, some of these singers used their fame to drum up sympathy and compassion; sentimental strains run through projects like some of Dylan’s political songs, the “We Are the World” project, and public reactions to Hurricane Katrina like that of Celine Dion’s on Larry King.³⁵ As Carl Wilson points out, Dion’s response to the Katrina crisis illustrates aspects of historical sentimentality through and through: as she weeps, Dion speaks in defense of the underprivileged people of New Orleans.³⁶

33. Crawford, 257.

34. Ibid., 262.

35. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXD4BGvPngM>, accessed May 25, 2011.

36. Wilson, 23.

What gets left out when we disregard sentimental songs? Some might insist not much. This dissertation argues otherwise. Popular songs have long afforded their listeners and participants a means through which to make sense of themselves, the world, and their place within it. Song offers an identificatory possibility and many sentimental songs—songs that put emotional performance on display, often with didactic aims—were heard as significant, and significantly emotional, by vast numbers of American people. Sympathetic aspiration marks many such songs. In fact, in many cases, song was understood as the prime mover of sentiment—the ultimately effective vehicle of affect, as I discuss in chapter one. Songs afford the possibility of community and performing together marked songs as sentimental; together singers envoiced necessary feelings. Importantly, songs put words into voice, heightening both speech and emotional intensity.

Emotion remains at the core of what most listeners and musicians believe music to be about which makes music scholarship's relative deafness to sentimentality a kind of elephant in the room. This project attempts to account for the way that most people actually experience, use, and think about music: as a social practice of expressing, cultivating, and communicating emotion. Embracing rather than ignoring this fact can result not in closing down but in opening up new spaces for important critical and interpretive work.

Sentimental songs are not just important because they have been left out; they matter for what they can tell us about gender, race, nationality, sexuality, and morality. Moreover, they matter for what they tell us about public life; in this sense they are political. Contrary to nineteenth-century separate spheres ideology, sentimental songs

have trafficked amongst and between people. They reside not just in the private spaces of bourgeois parlors, teenage bedrooms, or on personal iPods—although they do occupy these spaces, too—but on street corners, in taverns, at public ceremonies, and on national networks. It is in this public realm that sentimental songs have stayed. While the term itself seems to have fallen out of fashion again and again over the last two hundred plus years, sentimental songs have remained. By listening for the sound of sentiment, we can begin to hear its resonances in everyday lives of ordinary people.

Chapter Outlines

Like any case-study approach, this dissertation is far from comprehensive. I have little doubt that I could spend the rest of my life studying nothing but sentimental songs and still not scratch the surface; sentimental songs are everywhere. I can easily imagine four completely different sentimental song cases that would have yielded similarly productive and rich material. In the end it was important to me to consider cases that were described as “sentimental” by their producers, consumers, or critics, allowing me to historicize the shifting senses of the term, and to get closer to what this term has meant at different points in American history.

The first chapter traces the beginnings and the rise of the “sentimental ballad,” or “sentimental song.” My survey of collections dating from 1777 to 1848 reveals that “sentimental song” emerged as a distinct category in the United States in the second half of the eighteenth century and gained prominence by the turn of the century. Contrary to their commonly feminized image, many early sentimental songs were written and circulated by men, particularly in the context of fraternal orders including the Masons.

This music exemplifies a distinctly masculine sentimentality associated with the eighteenth-century “man of feeling.” The chapter illustrates that sentimental songs have a longer and more complicated history than has previously been suggested; sentimental songs underwent a process of feminization across the nineteenth century, and men played a significant role in this development.

The second chapter focuses on the early years of the *National Barn Dance*, a radio show produced in Chicago on Sears’s station, WLS. Widely considered to mark the beginning of commercial country music, the *Barn Dance* began in April of 1924. The show featured hillbilly musicians who performed sentimental ballads that entered oral tradition from minstrel shows and the songbooks described in chapter one; this repertory has contributed to country music’s long-lasting associations with sentimentality. *Barn Dance* producers created an “intimate public” on radio, but they did so through the already familiar channels of print media and songs.³⁷ Like ethnographers and folklorists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *Barn Dance* idealized the past and romanticized mountain and southern life. Barn Dance performers, including Bradley Kincaid and Gene Autry used sentimental songs to advance the sound of whiteness, taking ownership over sentimental repertoire on behalf of all white rural people.

In chapter three I discuss *Sing Along with Mitch*, a popular variety television show that aired on NBC from 1961-1964. This chapter considers the relationship between sentimentality, nationalism, and Cold War redefinitions of America. Like eighteenth-century sentimental songs and nineteenth-century American patriotic songs, *Sing Along*

37. Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

with Mitch employs song as a tool of the community to engage cultural nationalism and ideals of democracy. The show aired at a critical time in popular music history, when tastes were shifting along with audience demographics. By featuring music from a generation or more before, the show was clearly aimed at an older audience and illustrates that a market for such sentimental engagements still existed despite what narratives about the rise of rock and roll might suggest. Miller used television to enact what I refer to as “sounding citizenship,” a participatory experience for mass audiences that sought to unify and structure a sense of identity and to construct an American musical past.

The fourth case study considers the extremely successful soft rock of the 1970s. Bands including Bread, Hall and Oates, and The Doobie Brothers maintained a stronghold in record sales and chart positioning. At the same time, they faced the derision and scorn of many rock critics who disparaged these bands precisely for their popularity and success, their soft approaches to rock music, and their professional approaches to music making. Such critiques suggest that sentimentality both made and undid these groups. This chapter reads soft rock against the powerful backdrop of the rock formation and its attendant ideology. I argue that the hegemonic masculinity of rock shaped both the narratives about and interpretations of soft rock. The second half of the chapter theorizes four types of soft rock sentimentalism: the sensitive man, the platonic man, the sincere pop man, and the minstrel man, all of which represent musical manifestations of the 1970s “new man.”

The epilogue offers some preliminary thoughts on the now widely successful television show and multi-media phenomenon, *Glee*. Like its sentimental precursors,

Glee emphasizes didacticism. The *Glee* class comprises a group of young, minority misfits as defined by normative ideas of race and sexuality. As they struggle with social issues, they ultimately aim to redefine high school cool. *Glee* reiterates the democratic aspects of sentimental song once more as the characters unite as a community of singers. Furthermore, much of the music performed by the *Glee* cast harkens back to the sentimental songs of the 1970s and 80s; Journey forms their signature repertoire, but they also perform a version of “Silly Love Songs.” By putting the discussion into contemporary terms, I show that sentimentality remains an important and relevant aspect of popular music production in the United States to this day.

CHAPTER ONE

SENTIMENTAL SONGS FOR SENTIMENTAL MEN; OR,
THE FEMINIZATION OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY SENTIMENTAL SONG

The sentimentality of the nineteenth century, which started as a timid pianissimo, worked itself through a powerful crescendo during the Victorian era and Civil War, into a double fortissimo of mawkishness in the mauve decade. Emotional overstatement drips especially from the songs of those years from 1890 to 1900, to form a kind of stalactite which souvenir hunters of today break off and carry away to preserve among their musical curiosities. Curiosities they are, if not objects of art, for they represent a whole outmoded school of thought and feeling.

—Helen L. Kaufmann, “The Sentimental Ballad and Its Foster Father”¹

Kaufmann’s account may sound familiar: critics have often portrayed sentimental ballads as mawkish and overwrought. And yet, as Kaufmann points out, sentimental songs resounded loudly in the United States during the nineteenth century. This chapter reconsiders the sentimental ballad or song, a popular genre that challenges some of the most lasting stereotypes and pervasive categorizations of nineteenth-century American musical culture.²

Like Kaufmann, historians of nineteenth-century American music have tended to lump sentimental songs in with all other parlor songs, understanding them as part of the private domestic sphere. This separate spheres ideology has profoundly shaped the narratives not just of nineteenth-century American music, but also those of literature and

1. Helen L. Kaufmann, *From Jehovah to Jazz: Music in America from Psalmody to the Present Day* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), 89.

2. In this chapter I refer to both sentimental ballads and sentimental songs as they appeared in print materials. The terms seem to have been used largely interchangeably during the nineteenth century; however, a preference for “sentimental song” marks the first half of the nineteenth century while “sentimental ballad” is more popular in the second half of the century.

history more generally. In music, images of white middle class ladies crowded around the family keyboard—playing and singing together—dominate the historical imagination of this musical period. Young women with musical training were considered a valuable asset and musical practices featured importantly in courting rituals. At the same time, the piano emerged as an important technology for home entertainment and family engagement. With the piano came the image of the “piano girl.” Historians have frequently emphasized the feminine and feminized aspects of parlor songs, aligning them with the domestic sphere and the values of polite Victorian society.³

As a term, “parlor song” has semantically fixed this music within the domestic sphere; or, at the very least, the term has perpetuated such associations. But parlor songs, including sentimental songs, were not confined to the space of the parlor, nor were they limited to female performance as has so often been assumed. They spilled out from theaters, Masonic lodges, taverns, and other public spaces; sentimental songs overwhelmed the early American soundscape. Sentimental songs exemplify the ways in which music of the long nineteenth century does not always fit the tidy categories and binaries that structure its histories. Sentimental songs straddle folk and popular musics as well as oral and written traditions; they were considered genuine expressions of the people at the same time they were part of an emergent commercial and commodity culture.

3. Andreas Huyssen writes about a similar issue concerning nineteenth-century literature; Huyssen points out that mass culture has long been identified as feminine. See Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other” in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986): 44-64.

In his monograph entitled *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans: The Parlor Song in America, 1790-1860*, Nicholas Tawa importantly emphasizes the public aspect of parlor songs. Tawa proposes that parlor songs created an important nineteenth-century public—“the parlor song public”—which formed around the aesthetics of simple, attractive melodies that appealed widely to amateur singers.⁴ Tawa explains that parlor songs were popular because they addressed topics relevant to nineteenth-century subjectivities and reflected contemporary concerns: “the subjects receiving the greatest attention in the parlor ballads were those of affection and love, mortality and time, lamentation over death, estrangement, religious feeling, social criticism, praise of nature and didacticism.”⁵

Like other popular and amateur songs, sentimental songs have not often been considered an important part of the early American soundscape. Much of the work on American music has understood its project as the assertion of a national music, both distinct from European musical culture and equal in value. Scholarship performed in the service of defending and legitimizing an “American music” has often been preoccupied with illustrating how American music stands up to European values of complexity, unity, and beauty. The amateur music that concerns me—the ephemeral music of the public sphere—has not always registered as significant within these contexts.

4. Nicholas Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans: The Parlor Song in America, 1790-1860* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980), 15.

5. Tawa, 15.

This chapter traces the sentimental song in the United States at the end of the eighteenth century through its subsequent rise in the nineteenth century. I argue that sentimental songs did not emerge fully formed as products of women's culture; instead, sentimental songs underwent a process of feminization across the century. Early sentimental songs were deeply bound up with male cultural production and placed an emphasis on sentimental masculinity characteristic of eighteenth-century British aesthetics. Later in the century, powerful men and their publications played a considerable role in constructing the association between sentimental songs and feminized domesticity. In the process, such musical men denied actual women the agency of participating in the creation of their own musical cultures while depriving men of the emotional outlet of sentimentality. This chapter listens to the traces of material history, offering a counterpoint to the received history of the sentimental song.⁶

Sentimental Songsters

My survey of collections dating from 1777 to 1848 locates the emergence of "sentimental song" as a distinct category of popular song in the United States in the second half of the eighteenth century. By the turn of the nineteenth century, references to

6. I want to make clear that I do not wish to refute the agency of female cultural producers in the nineteenth-century, nor the excellent feminist scholarship that has been done on this topic. See, for example, Judith Tick, *American Woman Composers Before 1870* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1995); Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle: From Accomplished Lady to Confederate Composer* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010); Petra Meyer-Frazier, "Music, Novels, and Women: Nineteenth-Century Prescriptions for an Ideal Life," *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 10 (2006): 45-59; and Katherine Preston, "Music in the McKissick Parlor," in *Emily's Songbook: Music in 1850s Albany*, eds. Mark Slobin, James Kimball, Katherine K. Preston, and Deane Root (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 2011): 14-20.

“sentimental songs” circulated broadly amongst a literate public via newspapers, journals, sheet music, collections of song texts, advertisements, and concert reviews. But the earliest references I have found to “sentimental song” in print in the United States appear on the title pages of eighteenth-century songsters: pocket sized collections of printed lyrics for the popular songs of the day.

Songsters have not featured centrally in histories of popular song in the United States; historians instead have tended to focus on the early sheet music industry.⁷ In his bibliography of US songsters, Irving Lowens points out that as late as 1976 several important musical dictionaries had not yet defined “songster.”⁸ As objects of musical study, songsters present certain challenges: they do not provide the historical and musical information that musicologists often seek such as melody, accompaniment, tempo, performance directions, etc. These difficult to decipher documents, however, open an important window onto musical culture during the early years of the new Republic.

Songsters were not anomalous documents that refer to eccentric or abstruse practices; rather, they illuminate the sonic world of amateur and public musical culture in

7. It is not hard understand why this would be the case in musicological literature. Beautiful title pages with elaborate engravings combine with curlicue fonts to provide an easily fetishized musical object. However, sheet music, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was itself a fetish object, affordable to elite classes of consumers. The large sized pages along with decorative imagery made it prohibitively expensive thereby marking it as a distinct—and distinctly modern—medium through which to consume musical culture. Collectors such as Thomas Jefferson owned a good deal of sheet music, some of which he gathered during his travels in Europe while other manuscripts he sent away for. But even Jefferson saw the value in his collections and had his granddaughters hand copy songs so as not to spoil the more coveted musical objects.

8. Irving Lowens, *A Bibliography of Songsters Printed in America Before 1821* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1976), vii.

early America. Material traces suggest that early America was alive with song and references to varied practices suggest that Americans were accustomed to singing as a common activity. Singing occurred in churches, in taverns, in public celebrations, and in Masonic halls as well as in the home. While instruments were often difficult or too expensive to acquire, most everyone had a voice, which rendered them indispensable.⁹

Early American songsters counter received histories about classifications of popular song. While studies of popular music genres tend to focus on the commercial aspects of categorization—largely understood as bound up in the recorded medium as a way to organize the music store’s record bins—songsters reveal that such classificatory systems emerged long before Edison and the phonograph.¹⁰ Songsters illuminate a pre-recording musical culture in which songs circulated not only orally and ephemerally, but also in print, and especially through inexpensive forms of printing.

9. Throughout the eighteenth century, colonists regularly used Psalters which featured printed lyrics, but not music, for well-known hymns. These print practices—like the songsters—were utilitarian; a limited number of hymn tunes were employed for the singing of psalms which were printed in common meters. They were legible and recognizable to the practitioners of psalm singing. “Lining out” was an established practice in which a singing leader sang a line of the hymn in order to remind the congregation of the particular tune to be used. Singing masters moved about from place to place in order to educate on the art of singing. These practices formed a familiar part of the musical landscape as a background onto which other practices such as the common publication of song texts within the pages of the newspaper fit easily and were readily adaptable. See Gilbert Chase, *America’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present*, rev. ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Richard Crawford, *America’s Musical Life: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001); H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969); and Irving Lowens, *Music and Musicians in Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1964).

10. See, for example, Keith Negus, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1999) and Fabian Holt, *Genres in Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Songsters anthologized predominantly secular song texts, but they did not contain notated music. Instead, they featured lyrics to hundreds of new songs. Songsters ranged from eight to several hundreds of pages in length. They were often published without a listed editor or compiler, and the individual song texts that comprised these volumes rarely credited an author. Occasionally a songster's editor referred the reader to a tune for the new lyrics. Contrafacta—the practice of reusing melodies for new lyrics—was a popular and practical way to create new songs from familiar tunes.

Songsters were published widely in Great Britain throughout the eighteenth century and the print practice was adopted in the United States; Lowens's bibliography cites over six hundred extant songsters published in the US between 1734 and 1821.¹¹ Commenting on the related print phenomenon of broadside ballads, Leslie Shepard explains that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

American printers had begun to issue their own sheets, some from the oral tradition of settlers, others copied from the English broadsides. From the seventeenth century onwards, English settlers in North America had brought ballads and songs with them from both oral and broadside traditions, and by now it is very difficult to disentangle their interconnections.¹²

While only a handful of songsters were published in the United States during the eighteenth century, by the turn of the nineteenth century dozens of songsters were being printed each year. Lowens points out that—like broadside ballads—songsters were ephemeral, utilitarian documents.¹³

11. Lowens, *Songsters*, xi.

12. Leslie Shepard, *Broadside Ballad: A Study in Origins and Meaning*, (London: H. Jenkins, 1962), 85.

13. Lowens, *Songsters*, xi.

Early US songsters feature lengthy and descriptive titles that categorized their contents and often highlighted the musical values of the time. Words such as “merry,” “polite,” “modern,” “fashionable,” “celebrated,” “ladies,” and “gentleman” adorn the title pages, emphasizing the role that music ought to play in polite society. For instance, titles such as *The American Mockbird: containing a new collection of the most favourite songs now in vogue* (1760) exemplify the common emphasis on qualities such as “newest,” “most celebrated,” “choice collection,” and “most favourite” shown in the songster titles. Some songster subtitles even prescribe their intended use: *Designed for the entertainment of the ladies and gentlemen of New-York, and other parts of North America* (*The Mock Bird*, 1761) and *Intended for the instruction and amusement of little Master Tommy, and pretty Miss Polly* (*A Little Pretty Pocketbook*, 1762). Others explain where these songs were performed, as in: *As sung in the theatres and public gardens in London and Dublin* (*The New Song Book*, 1771). Titles like these signal the function songsters served: they were meant to teach as well as entertain.

In the late 1770s, as their length increased, songster titles began to feature adjective descriptions that more specifically enumerated the types of songs contained within. Rather than simply designating “new,” “celebrated,” or “favorite” songs, as their precursors had done, collection editors began to employ an organizational system for song texts that relied on adjectives: “national,” “patriotic,” “satirical,” “humorous,” “naval,” “military,” “Irish,” “Scottish,” and, of course, “sentimental.” Presumably, such categorization pertained to not only the lyrical content of particular songs, but also to the ways in which people at the time referred to them; regardless, songsters clearly played a

significant role in the emergence and circulation of what were considered several distinct categories of song production.

In the introduction to his songster bibliography, Lowens highlights the importance of these adjectives. He finds that “sentimental” and other variants of amatory descriptors form the second most widely used group of adjectives within the songsters he studied, just behind “patriotic” and its variants.¹⁴ In Appendix A, I have listed all of the songsters from Lowens’s bibliography that employ “sentimental” as a song category in the title: approximately one sixth of the total.

Lowens observations alongside my own survey of these texts confirm that the story of the sentimental song and its gendered presuppositions is more complicated than has previously been assumed. On the topic of who used songsters, Lowens writes: “A content analysis of the extant pre-1821 songsters shows that 65 percent, or 354 items, were intended to be used by both men and women. An additional 22 percent were addressed to a primarily male audience. More songsters were designed for children than for women.”¹⁵

The earliest use of the term “sentimental song” that I have been able to locate appears in the title of a 1777 collection of song texts by George Alexander Stevens (17--1784), an English playwright, poet, and songwriter. As a popular performer, Stevens appeared at Covent Garden Theater and crossed the Atlantic to perform on stages in Philadelphia and Boston. He was best known for his *Lecture on Heads*, “a medley of wit

14. Lowens, *Songsters*, xii.

15. *Ibid.*

and nonsense”¹⁶ on the topic of fashion and heads that commented on the popularity of physiognomy. The practice of reading faces, as Barbara M. Benedict points out, was itself appealing to sentimentalists. “Physiognomy presupposes a unity between observer and observed, object and meaning, sign and significance, that heroicizes naïve perception.”¹⁷ Stevens had his songster, entitled “SONGS, COMIC, satirical, and sentimental,” printed in Philadelphia and Bell’s Book Store promoted it with an advertisement in the Pennsylvania Evening Post later that same year (figure 1.1).¹⁸ The advertisement, which refers to Stevens as “the greatest master of the sing-song art in Europe,” illustrates the well-recognized valorization of European musical culture that pervaded American attitudes about music at this time.¹⁹

16. Thomas Campbell, *Specimens of the British Poets, with Biographical and Critical Notices, and an Essay on English Poetry* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1819).

17. Barbara M. Benedict, “Reading Faces: Physiognomy and Epistemology in Late Eighteenth-Century Sentimental Novels,” *Studies in Philology* 92, no. 3 (1995): 318-9.

18. No doubt this term circulated in relationship to particular songs prior to this time and I would certainly not be surprised to learn that there are earlier uses in print. However, the term seems to have gained prominence by around 1800, appearing with much greater frequency within the songster titles. See Appendix I.

19. In a letter to Italian naturalist Giovanni Fabbroni, Thomas Jefferson famously complained of the state of deplorable barbarism of music culture in the young United States. Jefferson proposes importing domestic servants such as gardeners who could also staff his orchestra. See “Thomas Jefferson to Giovanni Fabbroni,” June 8, 1778.

Just published, and now selling at BELL'S book store
 next door to St. Paul's church in Third-street, Philadel-
 phia (the fine paper price two dollars, and the common
 paper one dollar and a half)

S O N G S, comic, satyrical, and sentimental.

By GEORGE ALEXANDER STEVENS.

For neither pedant nor for prude,
 These sonnets took their birth,
 But are dish'd up, as pleasant food,
 For sons of social mirth.

Prologue to the songs.

This author being acknowledged to be the greatest master
 of the ting-tong-art in Europe, must be very acceptable to
 all who delight in this kind of sentimental entertainment.

N. B. At said BELL'S may be had great variety of new
 and old books.

Figure 1.1. Advertisement for Stevens' Songster. Printed in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (December 11, 1777).

Sentimental songs made their way to the United States in the late eighteenth century, highlighting the processes of transatlantic cultural exchange that, as Glenda Goodman has argued, characterized the musical culture of this time.²⁰ Musically speaking, sentimental songs were imported directly from Great Britain. They grew out of the popular English ballad opera tradition, employing melodies in the familiar galant style of the mid-eighteenth century which featured pleasing, periodic melodies and light accompaniment. Composers such as Thomas Arne, James Hook, Charles Dibdin, Steven Storace, and Ignace Pleyel would become the most well recognized proponents of this style. The songs from their ballad operas appear frequently in the commonplace books of young ladies, including those of Thomas Jefferson's wife and later those of his

20. Glenda Goodman, "American Identities in an Atlantic Musical World: Transhistorical Case Studies" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012).

granddaughters.²¹ Sentimental songs borrow these tunes as well, employing sonic materials of a recognizable European culture while also constructing new traditions that Americans would draw upon for decades to come.

Singing constituted a crucial aspect of the audible world of the United States in the late eighteenth century and songs appeared frequently across various printed media—not just sheet music—demonstrating if not the ubiquity of actual singing at this time, then at least the idea that song formed a significant part of the cultural landscape.²² The idea of the “sentimental song” became widespread in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century because of the dissemination and circulation of songsters like Stevens’s. It would only continue to burgeon throughout the nineteenth century. While songsters clearly participated in the circulation of the “sentimental song,” what do their pages tell us about sentimental songs, and what exactly does the use of “sentimental” mean in these contexts?

21. Glenda Goodman, “A ‘Phrenzy of Accomplishments’; or, the Power of Sentimental Songs” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for American Music, Charlotte, NC, March 18, 2012); and the author’s own research on Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello Music Collection (Special Collections Library, University of Virginia).

22. These aspects of musical life in early America are discussed in Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979); Richard Crawford, *America’s Musical Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001); Irving Lowens, *Music and Musicians in Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1964) and H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969).

Sentimental Songs and the Spectacle of Feeling

The preceding account illustrates that sentimental songs emerged as a distinct category of song in the United States during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, thus pre-dating much of what would become its nineteenth-century parlor song progeny. In order to provide a broader understanding of the significance of the “sentimental” in sentimental songs, I would like to return to the epigraph that opens this chapter in which historian Helen Kaufmann refers to the “outmoded school of thought and feeling” that sentimental songs were thought to represent by the time of Kaufmann’s account in the early twentieth century.²³

Sentimental songs emerged in the eighteenth century during the height of British sentimentalism, a cultural phenomenon that touched or even encapsulated most forms of artistic production between 1740 and 1770, from literature and poetry, to drama and music. The use of the adjective “sentimental” implicates these songs in the broader cultural phenomenon. Surprisingly, however, sentimental songs have not been included as part of the narrative of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, nor have they been paid much attention by specialists in Early American music. Importantly, sentimental songs were often considered to be the ultimate medium of emotion—a fact previously unacknowledged by scholars of music or otherwise.

Janet Todd’s invaluable study of eighteenth-century sentimental literature describes the cult of sensibility and sentimentality that pervaded British literature by the mid-eighteenth century. Novelists including Samuel Richardson, Lawrence Sterne, and

23. Kaufmann, 89.

Henry Mackenzie were recognized as purveyors of sentimentalism, although the style was certainly not limited to the novel alone. According to Todd's study, what was new to the eighteenth century was the "centrality of sentiment and pathos" and authors of poetry, essays, and drama all participated.²⁴

Sentimental works sought to arouse pathos in their viewers or listeners, demanding an emotional response or even physical response. References to gestures—tears, trembling, and sighs—and body parts—cheeks, lips, and breasts—emphasized the embodied aspects of sentimentality. Often the arousal of feeling was intended to be instructive—to teach people how to feel in certain situations and to stir up their sympathies. Sentimental works also assumed a link between life and literature or—to borrow Michael Warner's terms—between public and addressee.²⁵ Todd writes: "A sentimental work moralizes more than it analyses and emphasis is not on the subtleties of a particular emotional state but on the communication of common feeling from sufferer or watcher to reader or audience."²⁶

Describing some of the important characteristics of sentimental literature, Todd explains, "the arousal of pathos through conventional situations, stock familial characters and rhetorical devices is the mark of sentimental literature."²⁷ She writes:

24. Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London; New York: Methuen, 1986), 3.

25. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 67.

26. Todd, 4.

27. Todd, 2.

The sentimental work reveals a belief in the appealing and aesthetic quality of virtue, displayed in a naughty world through a vague and potent distress. This distress is rarely deserved and is somehow in the nature of things; in later sentimental works it even overshadows virtue, which may in fact be more manifest in the sympathy of the observer than in the sufferer. The distressed are natural victims, whose misery is demanded by their predicament as defenseless woman, aged men, helpless infants or melancholic youths.²⁸

Sentimentality educates sympathy as well as the aesthetic sense; as Todd explains, benevolence, pity, and the exaltation of social sympathy and fellowship were broadly considered sentimental traits, ideals to which many aspired during the eighteenth century.²⁹

Todd's work focuses primarily on the literary and dramatic arts, but sentimental songs illustrate that sentimentalism factored significantly into musical production and consumption, too. Writing on the hymns of the Methodist revival, Todd explains that they "are less confessions or songs of praise than efforts properly to align the emotions of the singers and teach the feeling heart, presumed in everyone, a correct response—rather in the manner of contemporary sentimental drama."³⁰ In many cases, song was considered to be an especially effective vehicle for the kind of didacticism and moral teaching described above. Songs added a sonic dimension to the "pedagogy of seeing" described by Todd and they contributed to a continued belief in the power of music to move the passions.³¹

28. Todd, 3.

29. *Ibid.*, 51.

30. *Ibid.*, 49.

31. As I noted in the introduction, a handful of music scholars have noted the significance of such widespread sentimentalism for music studies. Mary Hunter, in

Many of the songs I have studied—which are identified specifically as “sentimental songs”—draw a clear link between the expression of emotion and the feeling that the spectacle of emotion incites in its listener. Early sentimental songs are written in the first person and focus on the immediate present, thus highlighting their intended purpose of provoking an emotional response. Some sentimental songs even include performance directions such as “The University” from *The Nightingale; or Rural Songster in Two Parts* (1800) in which the performer is instructed to dab a tear from his cheek: “Weeps, and pulls out a blue handkerchief with which he wipes his eyes; -- gazing tenderly at it, he proceeds.”³² This kind of performance makes a spectacle of emotion and feeling; it presumes that in order to feel and therefore respond correctly, the viewer/listener must hear *and* see the emotion of the performer. As Todd writes, sentimental works “provoke tears in a way no other literature does. The tears that may be shed at high or heroic tragedy form part of a complex intellectual and emotional response, but, when sentimental works are accepted and in fashion, they primarily make the reader or watcher cry.”³³

Songsters promoted the notion that music operates as the ultimate vehicle for sentiment. By the late 1780s, songster title pages frequently donned an epigraph of a few

particular, has noted the connections between eighteenth-century opera plots and sentimental literature and Susan Key has discussed the continued significance of sentimentalism for later composers, particularly Stephen Foster. None, however, have discussed the relationship of sentimentalism to the emergence and rise of the “sentimental song.”

32. *The Nightingale; or Rural Songster in Two Parts* (Dedham: printed by H. Mann, 1800).

33. Todd, 2-3.

lines of unidentified poetry. The editor's chosen poetry more often than not refers to the affective powers of music and/or song. The following lines appear on the title pages of late eighteenth-century songsters:

Music has charms to sooth a savage breast/To soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak.³⁴

Around th'enchanted music rings, And every vocal grove responsive sings.³⁵

Music the fiercest grief can charm, and fate's severest rage disarm: Music can soften pain to ease, and make despair and madness please.³⁶

The vocal muse has pow'r To sooth [sic] the troubled breast, To cheer the darkest hour, And lull each grief to rest; To banish sorrow, care and strife, And give a double zest to life.³⁷

These particular lines of poetry suggest that sentimental songs were not simply about sentimental content or subjects, but rather that music possesses the capacity to change the emotional state of its listener: it soothes, it cheers, and it transforms emotions. Song, in particular, served as an important vehicle for feelings and an ideal medium through which to promote ideals of social harmony, an idea I return to later in this chapter.

Most songster Prefaces also call attention to Song as an expressive medium that stirs the senses.³⁸ The title page of *The Vocal Standard* from 1824, for instance, features the following passage:

34. *The American Songster* (New York: printed for Samuel Campbell, No. 44, Hanover-Square, and Thomas Allen, No. 16, Queen Street, 1788).

35. *The Vocal Muse* (Philadelphia: printed for the proprietors, 1793).

36. *The Philadelphia Songster* (Philadelphia: printed and to be sold by John M'Culloch, in Third Street, 1789).

37. *Social Harmony* (New York: printed by Samuel Campbell, No. 124, Pearl Street, 1795).

“Song charms the sense, and eloquence the soul” says the Poet. But Song is itself a mode of eloquence, and one of the most pleasing, powerful, irresistible kinds in all the world, the eloquence of Music. In all ages and countries, among all classes and conditions of men, “by saint, by savage, and by sage,” its charms have been felt, its influence owned, its power acknowledged... Song then, metaphorically speaking, may be styled the voice of praise and the herald of fame; the nurse of patriotism and the inspiration of valour; in short, the language of feeling, the effluence and favourite food of love.³⁹

This excerpt, from several decades later, shows the lasting influence of sentimentality and similarly promotes the universality of the power of song, specifically, employed to move the passions and speak the “language of feeling.”

Eighteenth-century sentimental song aesthetics continued to proliferate in the United States in the early part of the nineteenth century. Well-known poet Samuel Woodworth’s songster from 1826, entitled *Melodies, Duets, Trios, Songs, and Ballads: Pastoral, Amatory, Sentimental, Patriotic, Religious, and Miscellaneous; Together with Metrical Epistles, Tales and Recitations*, offers an excellent example. Woodworth actually organized the song texts in his collection into the various categories listed in the sub-title above. His section on sentimental songs proves to be the longest and Woodworth sub-divides it into sections titled “Amatory and Sentimental” and “Sentimental and Convivial.” The latter section is about expressions of more general feelings and includes songs titled “Friendship” and “The Tears of Gratitude” while the former concerns itself primarily with love-themed songs.

38. Most songsters do not list a compiler or editor, but they do feature a preface written by this person.

39. *The Vocal Standard; or, Star spangled banner: being the latest and best selection ever offered to the public, particularly of American patriotic songs; as well as sentimental, humourous & comic songs, duets, glees, &c. many of which are original, and not to be found in any other collection* (Richmond: John H. Nash, Bookseller, 1824), Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

Woodworth's "Amatory and Sentimental" section includes the text for "Music is the Language of Love, Music arranged by E. Riley"—a song that shows both the influence of sentimentalism as well as its shifting terrain. I include here the lyrics in full:

"Music is the Language of Love"

Yes, Love can discourse independent of eyes,
The pressure of hands, or the breathing of sighs;
Attend, then, its accents, and deign to approve,
For Music, dear girl, is the language of love.

'Tis true that the eyes and the lips may impart
A counterfit sentiment, tutor'd by art;
But nought can the pulses of sympathy move
Like Music, for that is the language of love.

The tone of affection is framed in the soul,
'Tis spirit, unfettered by matter's control;
For what is the language of seraphs above,
But Music?—and there 'tis the language of love.

Then doubt, dearest maiden, professions and sighs,
The glow of the hand, the expression of eyes;
But doubt not the soul's aspirations, which prove,
That Music is still the true language of love.⁴⁰

"Music is the Language of Love" eschews the physical and embodied aspects of sentimentalism: the poem refers to the sighs, eyes, and lips so familiar in eighteenth-century sentimental works, but insists that music acts more directly on the senses. The second stanza points out that music remains the mover of sympathy; as a whole the song pins the ultimate sentimentalism onto music.

40. Samuel Woodworth, *Melodies, Duets, Trios, Songs, and Ballads: Pastoral, Amatory, Sentimental, Patriotic, Religious, and Miscellaneous; Together with Metrical Epistles, Tales and Recitations* (New York: James M. Campbell, 1826), Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

Songsters, with their sentimental lyrics and poetry, however, were not the only documents from this period that shed light onto how sentimentalism factored into early nineteenth-century American musical culture. For instance, *the Euterpeiad; or Musical Intelligencer*, which was published in Boston and considered the earliest music journal in the United States, published articles in the 1820s that reflected on the role of singing in society and its relationship to the expression of feelings. In an 1822 article titled “Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Music,” author Thomas Hastings opens with the following statements:

Music is to be understood as a powerful assistant to sentimental expression (I speak here of vocal music) which, by the power of its charms, enforces our attention to some particular subject, adapted to some natural passion of mankind. Under such considerations, we are strongly impressed with the ideas of love, fear, pity, or some other natural affection.⁴¹

A subsequent installment of this article appeared one month later in which the author adds the following: “If singing has any power over our souls, it must arise from its assisting sentimental expression; if the music be too complicated, the sense is confounded, and the effect destroyed. The true pathetic is only to be found in simplicity.”⁴²

Hastings’s multi-installment article entitled “A Dissertation on Musical Taste,” which he published several months later, discusses the relationship between feelings and singing. In “On Expression,” Hastings asks: “For how is the vocalist to persuade his

41. Thomas Hastings, “Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Music,” *The Euterpeiad* (April 27, 1822).

42. Thomas Hastings, “Remarks on the Use and Abuse of Music,” *The Euterpeiad* (May 25, 1822).

auditors, when they evidently perceive that he himself is destitute of emotion?”⁴³ *The Euterpeiad* offers examples of the ways in which people in the United States in the early 1820s continued to think about the relationships between song and emotive expression, music and harmony, both of which were significantly and perhaps surprisingly continuous with earlier ideals.

Writing on eighteenth-century literary sentimentalism, Maureen Harkin—like Kaufmann’s account—highlights the potential dissonance we may feel between contemporary uses of “sentimental.” She writes:

It takes quite an effort of historical imagination to reconstruct a literary culture in which the term “sentimental” was not automatically understood as a pejorative, when admissions of weeping over a novel did not mark one as an unsophisticated reader. Yet in the middle and later decades of the eighteenth century... a tearful response to the novel of sentiment so popular at the time—provided one wept enough—could be read as a sign that one “got” the novel, grasped its ambition and felt the full power of its effects.⁴⁴

Todd’s account explains that by the turn of the century, sentimentalism had lost its ground in England and beyond. The spectacle of affected feeling began to be seen as debased and indulgent and critics of sentimentalism flourished. However, it would be incorrect to say that sentimentalism merely faded away. This “outmoded school of thought and feeling,” in fact, took hold in American popular song where it has remained firmly ensconced ever since.

43. Thomas Hastings, “A Dissertation on Musical Taste,” *The Euterpeiad* (November 1, 1822).

44. Maureen Harkin, ed., *The Man of Feeling* [Henry Mackenzie] (Toronto, ON: Broadview Editions, 2005), 9.

Sentimental Songs for Sentimental Men

As I stated above, the expression of tender emotions in song has commonly been associated with parlor songs and the domestic sphere of nineteenth-century America. Literary critics have pointed out that much nineteenth-century literature underscores this gendered association and this notion has held sway well into the twentieth century; as Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler write in their introduction to *Sentimental Men*, “sentimentality and the public display of emotion are conventionally [and contemporarily] seen as feminine characteristics.”⁴⁵

Early sentimental songs, however, were written, circulated, and performed by men. The previous example from “The University,” for instance, should give us pause: “Weeps, and pulls out a blue handkerchief with which he wipes his eyes.”⁴⁶ In sentimental novels, protagonists like Lawrence Sterne’s Yorick from *A Sentimental Journey Through Italy and France* (1768) and Henry Mackenzie’s Harley from *The Man of Feeling* (1771), in particular, were known for their overt displays of emotion. One Amazon reviewer recently provided this apt summary of *The Man of Feeling*: “A man called Harley wanders through life crying, and bumping into people who have unbelievably bad luck. Eventually Harley dies—but not before crying some more.”⁴⁷

45. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler, eds, *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (University of California Press, 1999), 1.

46. *The Nightingale*, 1800.

47. *The Man of Feeling*, Amazon reader review, January 20, 2013, accessed March 1, 2013, http://www.amazon.com/The-Man-Feeling-Henry-Mackenzie-ebook/product-reviews/B0082R9Z6S/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1.

Another reviewer writes: “I love this book simply because it’s proof of a different time and totally different gender expectations. Yes sir, you go ahead and faint and cry. We won’t judge you.”⁴⁸

Within the pages of extant songsters published in the US in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, hundreds of song texts articulate a man’s perspective and many are addressed to either a specific woman or “to the ladies,” more generally. Much like their literary counterparts, these song texts are ripe with descriptions of feelings and create a spectacle of pathos through song. It should not be surprising that men were at the centre of production and performance of any eighteenth-century art form; what might be surprising, however, is the way in which feeling and affect were central to these productions and performances. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century sentimental songs exemplify a distinctly masculine sentimentality that was typical of the eighteenth century. Through song, the men who wrote, performed, and published sentimental songs could become “men of feeling.”

Of the forty songsters that use “sentimental” within the title from Lowens’s bibliography, roughly a quarter of these are also designated as Masonic, either in the collection’s title or by publication. Lowens emphasizes the role that the Masonic Order played in printing and circulating songsters such as the ones described above.

Masonic song texts exhibit the same salient influences of eighteenth-century sentimentalism as the more general sentimental songs discussed above. *The Columbian*

48. *The Man of Feeling*, Amazon reader review, January 14, 2013, accessed March 1, 2013, http://www.amazon.com/The-Man-Feeling-Henry-Mackenzie-ebook/product-reviews/B0082R9Z6S/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1.

Songster and Freemason's Pocket Companion, a collection that includes “sentimental songs” as the first in its subtitle, offers examples of song texts that draw attention to the high order of love, mirth, friendship, and feelings within the fraternal orders (figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2. *The Columbian Songster and Freemason's Pocket Companion* (Portsmouth, NH: Printed by J. Melcher for S. Larkin, 1798).

The chorus of “The Origin of Masonry”, for instance, highlights connections between song and social harmony:

Thee, brethren, charge! Charge all your glasses;
The sentiment echo along;
United, let’s join to commem’rate
The harmony, mirth, and the song.⁴⁹

Both “The Master’s Song” and “Song XX” emphasize compassion for one’s fellow brother, particularly those who are downtrodden:

The faithful worthy Brother,
Whose heart can feel for grief;
Whose bosom with compassion
Steps forth to its relief,
Whose soul is every ready,
[A---] to diffuse
The principles of Masons
And guard them from abuse.⁵⁰

The fifth verse of “Song XX” refers specifically to “feelings” that inspire bounty and charity:

Inspired by his feelings, he bounty imparts,
For Charity ranges at large in our hearts;
And an indigent brother reliev’d from his woes,
Feels a pleasure inferior to him who bestows.⁵¹

The chorus of “The Master’s Song” also offers an example of a Masonic song aligned with moral edification:

49. *The Columbian Songster and Freemason’s Pocket Companion, A Collection of the newest and most celebrated sentimental, convivial, humourous, satirical, pastoral, hunting, sea and Masonic songs, being the largest collection ever published in America* (Selected by S. Larkin, Portsmouth: New Hampshire, printed by J. Melcher, 1798), Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

50. *The Columbian Songster and Freemason’s Pocket Companion*.

51. *Ibid.*

These are thy songs, whose pleasure,
 At every Lodge, will be,
 T' improve themselves by lectures,
 In glorious Masonry.
 Hail! Glorious Masonry!⁵²

Within Masonic songsters, sentimental texts like these are by no means exceptional. The Mason becomes but one of a host of stock characters. Like the orphans, slaves, and blind stock characters of other sentimental songs (and literature), the Mason and his fraternalism show the influence of the broader culture of sentimentalism and underscore the idea that sentimentalism works on general feelings through recognizable subjects.

Historian Steven Bullock explains that “Music played a central role in New England’s Masonic activities” and situates it at a time during which public support for music was considerably haphazard.⁵³ However, Bullock goes on to write that “singing and playing formed an important part of nearly every public and private fraternal activity.”⁵⁴ The musical harmony and social harmony that are so closely aligned in these song texts illustrates the close relationship between sentimentalism and fraternalism. Historian James Kences has referred to this as “the double meaning of harmony.”⁵⁵ In

52. *The Columbian Songster and Freemason’s Pocket Companion*.

53. Steven Bullock, “‘I Sing the Mason’s Glory’: Freemasonry and Musical Life in Early New England” in *New England Music: Music in the Public Sphere, 1600-1900* (Boston University, 1996), 80.

54. Bullock, 82.

55. James Kences, “‘Village Harmony’: Music and Popular Culture in Portsmouth, New Hampshire” in *New England Music: Music in the Public Sphere, 1600-1900* (Boston University, 1996), 78.

singing together, these men sounded the meaning of their songs and of their fraternal engagement more generally.

Songs from *The I.O.O.F.—Independent Order of Odd Fellows—Harmonia: A Collection of Sentimental and Pleasing Songs* from significantly later (1835) similarly emphasize ideals of love, unity, fraternity, duty, and sympathy. This volume even includes a song that relies on the typesetting conventions of sentimental literature and poetry, namely the varied use of punctuation to set off and highlight the emotive aspects of the song. In this song which is set to the tune of “Rule Britannia,” the word “feeling” is emphasized through the use of dashes which ask us to pause on this word and think of those feelings (figure 1.3).

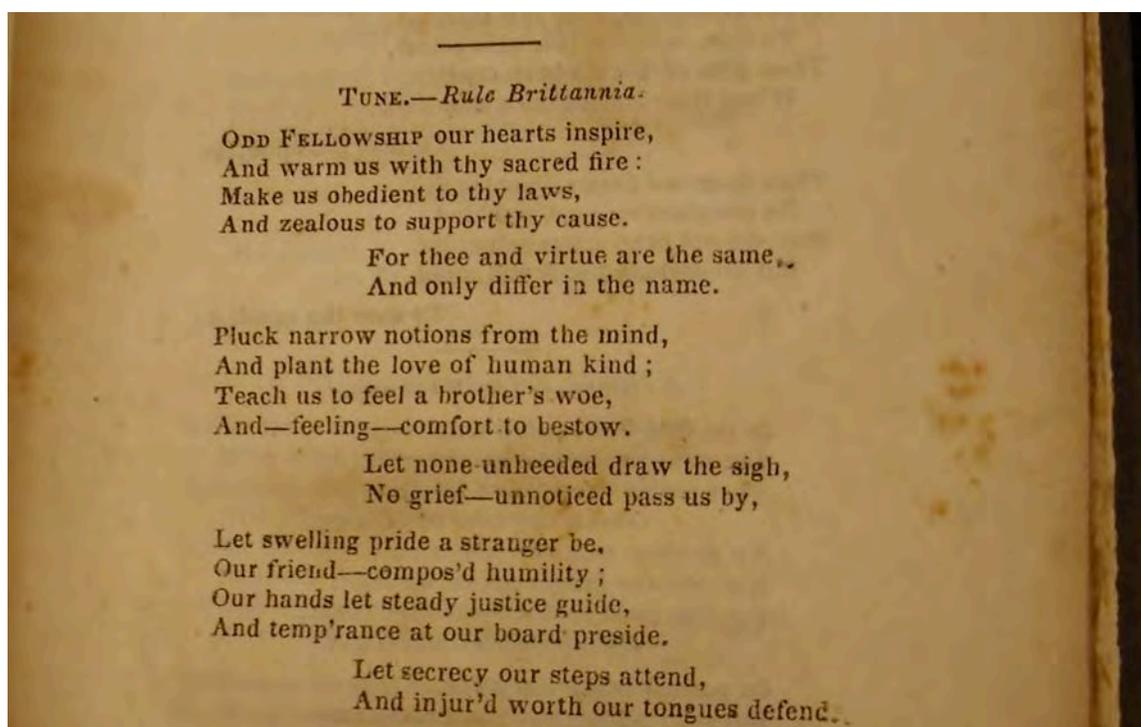


Figure 1.3: Song from *The I.O.O.F. Harmonia: A Collection of Sentimental and Pleasing Songs*, (Wheeling, VA: Printed by E. W. Newton for H. Clarke, 1835), Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

The second verse of the song reads:

Pluck narrow notions from the mind,
and plant the love of human kind;
Teach us to feel a brother's woe,
and—feeling—comfort to bestow.
Let none unheeded draw the sigh,
no grief unnoticed pass us by.⁵⁶

“Rule Britannia” frequently served as the tune for new lyrics of sentimental songs, which might seem surprising given its jaunty melody and upbeat tempo. Recall, however, that eighteenth-century sentimental songs sought to inspire feeling and fervor. Much in the same way it was used to activate patriotic feelings, “Rule Britannia” was particularly effective and affective as the vehicle for sentimental songs because it was both widely known and because of its particular musical characteristics. Furthermore, in the *I.O.O.F. Harmonia* version, both the words “feel” and “feeling” align with the high and low points in the melody in order to emphasize the significance of the emotions being conveyed. Importantly, this fraternal song also highlights the didactic aspects of sentimentalism; the song pertains not just to edification, but also specifically to the edification of one’s emotions: “Teach us to feel...” In this case, the feeling to learn is that of a brother’s woe; by feeling with him, we may be moved to bestow comfort upon him.

I am certainly not the first to observe the popularity of “Rule Britannia” as a tune for new texts; “Heart of Oak,” “Derry Down,” “Auld Lang Syne” and “Yankee Doodle” are among the other commonly referenced tunes within songsters. It was precisely the familiarity of particular song tunes that helped to inspire communities of singers—like the Masons—who came together to sing. Their flexible attitude towards song production

56. *The I.O.O.F. Harmonia*.

was characteristic of the time; as one writer for the *Euterpeiad* explained it, singers adapted tunes as suited their present needs:

I suspect the early musicians of Scotland or Ireland had very little notion of adapting the music to the words, or of conveying any definite affection of the mind. They were contented if the air was musically beautiful, and if its general expression was suited to the ballad or song to which it was sung. The art of fitting the music throughout to each particular idea expressed in the poetry, was not cultivated till modern times. Accordingly, in the old airs we find a continuous flow of melody, moving according to the simplest principles of rhythm, and evidently not much directed with a view to its adaptation to language.⁵⁷

This accommodating approach counters contemporary notation-based ideas about song, but it reminds us of the importance of participation and community.

Sentimental songs were not simply romantic and weepy songs about sentimental characters, but rather they were sentimental because they invited, inspired, and edified the interpersonal worlds of sentiments and emotion. Sentimentality was more than just the thematic of a song; it was a terrain that was being worked upon through song and men too participated in this kind of musical emotional work.

“Namby-pamby Sentimental Songs”

According to most standard literary narratives, eighteenth-century men of feeling were replaced by dying daughters and crying mothers in the nineteenth century. In music, the feminization of the sentimental song didn't begin to emerge clearly until around the mid-nineteenth century with men like John Sullivan Dwight who, in his *Journal of Music*, printed derisive references to “namby-pamby sentimental songs,” which explicitly aligned the degeneracy of such songs with both femininity and blackness. Dwight himself

57. “Musical Expression,” *Euterpeiad* (May 20, 1820).

held sentimental notions about the function and capacity of music, but in his version of gate keeping, he protested against the widespread popularity of such songs.

Music historian Charles Hamm explains that at mid century in the United States popular songs mixed freely with those from the operatic stage.⁵⁸ Lawrence Levine recounts a similar argument in his monograph, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*:

Sheet music of songs by Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti, and others sold side by side with the music of such perennial favorites as Henry Russell, the Hutchinsons, and Stephen Foster, and it is clear from the copies of this sheet music that have been preserved that the people who performed it in their parlors felt as free to pencil in alterations to the music of Mozart and Verdi as they did to the music of Stephen Foster, still one more indication that the distinctions we have learned to make were for the most part foreign to the nineteenth century. There was a consciousness in mid-nineteenth-century America of the significance of this shared culture.⁵⁹

However, not all musically minded people at this time relished the idea of a shared musical culture.

In 1852, Bostonian John Sullivan Dwight—often regarded as the “first American critic of music”—established *Dwight’s Journal of Music: A Paper of Art and Literature* which would become one of the most influential and long-running music journals in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ Levine’s study illustrates that Dwight and his journal played an influential role in disseminating ideas about music

58. Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 162-186.

59. Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 96.

60. Edward N. Waters, “John Sullivan Dwight, First American Critic of Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (January, 1935): 69-88.

criticism and appreciation as they pertained to emergent class hierarchies. Of Dwight's practical and aesthetic aims, Levine observes the following:

What he longed for was a *permanent*, independent orchestra that would epitomize and disseminate the highest musical standards. As early as 1840, Dwight had praised a concert given by The Amateur Orchestra and speculated that if it could only be induced to stay together and practice sufficiently, "We might even hope to hear one day the 'Sinfonia Eroica,' and the 'Pastoral' of Beethoven." Such an orchestra "might be but a labor of love at the outset; but it would create in time the taste which would patronize and reward it." So adamant was Dwight on the subjects of standards and taste that when, four years after the Civil War, the citizens of Boston were treated to Patrick Gilmore's sensational National Peace Jubilee, Dwight's instinct was to leave the city for the duration rather than be complicit in what he considered to be mass musical vulgarity.⁶¹

Edward Waters echoes similar observations, noting that "Dwight's life was one of material sacrifice and steadfast devotion to an artistic ideal...the [journal's] editorial policy was always uncompromising in its promotion and maintenance of the highest standards in composition, education, and performance."⁶² In some respects, Dwight was a product of his circumstances arising out of the conservatism of Boston which cultivated old music more so than new and where instrumental music also dominated over that of vocal music. Waters adds that the "ambitious program" of *Dwight's Journal* was "carried out with no concession to popular taste and demand."⁶³

Dwight used the journal to espouse his musical values, and his aesthetic paradigm sought to actively erase sentimental songs. In order to do so, however, he had to first

61. Levine, 120.

62. Edward Waters, "John Sullivan Dwight First American Critic of Music," in *Dwight's Journal of Music, A Paper of Art and Literature*, Reprint Edition (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968), viii.

63. Waters, ix.

acknowledge not only their existence, but also their popularity. In 1852, the first year of publication, *Dwight's Journal of Music* refers to “sentimental” music no less than twenty times. In several early concert reviews Dwight explains that “composers of the second order” make sentimental music. He writes: “Madame Pleyel’s second concert was a remarkable exhibition of those qualities in which she excels,--brilliance and lightness of execution (not excluding power) and exquisite taste in the rendering of sentimental music by composers of the second order.”⁶⁴ So while Madame Pleyel is deemed a successful interpreter of sentimental music, the works she performs remain second rate. A review from several months later singles out a sentimental duet:

There was a creditable tenor song by Mr. Frost, and several others now lost to our memory in the thick-coming and commingling currents of events. We could not, however, see the good of introducing the hacknied sentimental duet: ‘I’ve wandered in dreams,’ except to show its worthlessness in the company of good music.”⁶⁵

Dwight insists here that sentimental songs serve only to illuminate the greatness of good music.

Throughout the run of his publication from 1852 to 1881, Dwight maintained his position on popular music and, in particular, on the degraded status of sentimental music. An 1855 volume describes “namby-pamby sentimental ballads” as “the most superficial, trashy stuff that is in vogue.”⁶⁶ In a concert listing from a much later volume, Dwight

64. Concert Review, *Dwight's Journal of Music* (July 10, 1852).

65. Concert Review, *Dwight's Journal of Music*, (September 4, 1852).

66. “Music of the Week,” *Dwight's Journal of Music* (January 13, 1855), 118.

published the following on the fourth Annual Festival of Parish Choirs, at the Music

Hall in Boston:

The selections on the programme indicated what we presume to be the real object of these festivals, namely, to raise the artistic standard of the musical portion of the church service; to supplant the commonplace and dry, the namby-pamby, sentimental, shallow compositions which have been so much in vogue, by others of more dignity and true expression, conceived and executed in the spirit of true art as well as piety.⁶⁷

Dwight again speaks to his ideals concerning musical standards by contrasting his ideal music against the characteristics of sentimental songs. This time Dwight reveals that mere popularity contribute to the degraded status of sentimental songs; good music must be exceptional rather than commonplace. Anti-populism of this sort suffuses the critiques of much nineteenth-century literature and, as Andreas Huyssen argues, many of the contemporary biases against sentimentalism pertain precisely to the fact that sentimental works were associated with feminine traits or produced by female writers. While “sentimental” had positive attributes in the eighteenth century, the Oxford English Dictionary explains that “namby-pamby” has always been a pejorative term. It was often applied specifically to literature and referred to the weak, insipid, sentimental, effeminate, childlike, or affected traits of a work.⁶⁸ Clearly, Dwight’s addition of “namby-pamby” as a modifier for sentimental composition was not intended as a compliment.

67. *Dwight’s Journal of Music* (May 24, 1879).

68. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “namby pamby,” accessed January 20, 2012, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124916>.

In the references above, however, Dwight protests too much; it's not that everyone agreed that "namby-pamby sentimental songs" were namby-pamby, but rather, Dwight had to work very hard to convince his public—musically-interested American readers and listeners—of the universal depravity of sentimental songs *against* their widespread popularity. If Dwight inspired entire generations of critics and historians alike, it is no surprise that the songs discussed in this chapter have seldom been heard, heard of, or considered critically. Through the denigration of sentimental song, Dwight asserted the aesthetic superiority and dominance of instrumental music by older and "refined" European masters.

Dwight sought to provide uplift to the American people through a carefully cultivated musical culture; by this time the idea that America was lacking or even deplorable in its musical culture was a familiar trope. So, too, however, was the notion that music could provide a cure-all to a deplorable moral state. "Championing aesthetic education and informed listening, Dwight proposed that music—as art, science, and language of feeling ennobling and uniting people—be made widely accessible."⁶⁹ But here Dwight lays the paradox of his aesthetic bare: he did indeed uphold sentimental ideas about the function and capacities of music, but he would not tolerate such applications from the vocal music he considered of lesser value than that of the European masters. In the following passage, Dwight states his allegiance to "cultivated" musical taste plainly:

69. Ora Frishberg Saloman, "John Sullivan Dwight," *Grove Music Online*, accessed October 14, 2012, <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08449>>.

It is some fifteen years, we think, since Mr. Reed began to experiment upon our American musical taste, by publishing, from time to time, one or two choice specimens from the modern song-composers of Germany. And we remember with what avidity the “Last Greeting” and the “Passing Bell” of FRANZ SCHUBERT were then welcomed, and how this new and deeper appetite began to spread among our young music-lovers. It was the revelation of a new world of song to those who had only known English songs and ballads, sentimental love-strains with the most meagre common chord accompaniments, and so on. Meanwhile, by a variety of opportunities, we have become better acquainted, vocally and instrumentally, with the German masters, and there are many among our amateurs who do not shrink from the most difficult and picturesque accompaniments, which envelop so inseparably most of their melodic inspirations. There seems to have been a market for song after song—frequently the most complex and artistic—of Schubert, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Kalliwoda, Spohr, &c.; and now the title page of these last issues presents verily a rich and tempting catalogue,—nearly sixty in all.⁷⁰

Here, Dwight conveys a sense of sympathy for the “unfortunate people” of America who never knew that a superior musical world—with more and better chords!—was available to them.

Although Dwight speaks of “our American musical taste,” later commentators would suggest that Dwight’s biases worked directly against the cultivation of an American music and were perhaps even un-American.⁷¹ In the first retrospective of Dwight’s journal, published in Chicago in 1889, the critic writes: “Mr. Dwight’s zeal in the cause of foreign classical music has, in our judgment, led him into the error of being unable to regard with the eyes of just appreciation those musical efforts which are strictly American, and this to such an extent that he has been accused of prejudice against native talent.”⁷² As Levine has noted, “the idea that Americans, long after they declared their

70. *Dwight’s Journal* (June 26, 1852).

71. Waters, x.

72. Waters, x.

political independence, retained a colonial mentality in matters of culture and intellect is a shrewd perception that deserves serious consideration.”⁷³

Dwight’s “zeal”, however, was not just about making distinctions between American and European musics. It was also about affirming what “counted” as American. By this point in the nineteenth-century, minstrelsy was the most popular form of musical entertainment. As Eric Lott writes, “the question of whose “national” culture best expressed American life emerged around the popularity of the minstrel show...[and] comprised both a continual struggle over and an unceasing struggle within the popular.”⁷⁴

Significantly, *Dwight’s Journal of Music* appeared at precisely the moment that Stephen Foster was gaining popularity and recognition as a proponent of sentimental songs. Foster earned his reputation as a popular song composer by combining sentimental songs about young ladies with those meant for the minstrel stage. Charles Hamm explains “by 1850, Foster had published twelve minstrel songs, which quickly established themselves as staples in the minstrel show repertory, and their young composer, still in his mid-twenties, was recognized as one of the leading American composers of minstrel songs.”⁷⁵

An 1852 account published in the *Albany State Register* confirms Foster’s popularity during this time. This account, which Dwight re-published in his own journal,

73. Levine, 2.

74. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 95.

75. Hamm, 209.

emphasizes both the widespread recognition of Foster's melodies at mid-century and the ways in which they were aligned with young sentimental singers:

“Old Folks at Home,” the last negro melody, is on every body's tongue, and consequently in everybody's mouth. Pianos and guitars groan with it, night and day; sentimental young ladies sing it; sentimental young gentlemen warble it in midnight serenades; volatile young “bucks” hum it in the midst of their business and pleasures; boatmen roar it out stentorily at all times; all the bands play it; amateur flute blowers agonize over it at every spare moment; the street organs grind it out at every hour; the “singing stars” carol it on the theatrical boards, and at concerts; the chamber maid sweeps and dusts to the measured cadence of *Old Folks at Home*; the butcher's boy treats you to a strain or two of it as he hands in the steaks for dinner; the milk-man mixes it up strangely with the harsh ding-dong accompaniment of his tireless bell; there is not a “live darkey,” young or old, but can whistle, sing, dance, and play it, and throw in “Ben Bolt” by way of seasoning...⁷⁶

Not only does this account point out how very public Foster's song was, it also illustrates that the anxieties people like Dwight experienced over such popular sentimental songs were, not surprisingly, based in both class and race.

Although minstrel songs certainly overlapped with sentimental songs—namely, they employed sentimental traits including the ventriloquization of an emotional public life for the enslaved and the nostalgic romanticization of plantation life—most writers and song publishers did not conflate the two as explicitly as Dwight did.⁷⁷ An 1854 volume, for instance, equated American song with “‘negro melodies,’ or namby-pamby sentimental ditties.”⁷⁸ As Lott explains, “many commentators implicitly relied on this

76. *Albany State Register*, republished in *Dwight's Journal* (October 2, 1852).

77. George William Curtis, editor of *Putnam's Monthly*, was another exception; as Lott points out, for Curtis there was no distinction between sentimentalism and minstrelsy. Lott, 282.

78. “A Complaint on Behalf of Native Composers,” *Dwight's Journal of Music* (June 24, 1854), 94.

kind of equation in lamentations to the effect that American culture was turning out to be not only ‘questionable’ but black.”⁷⁹ But Dwight’s passage does more than just equate American song with “negro melodies”; it also equates sentimental songs and black music. In this case, Dwight’s so-called “prejudice against native talent” was also a fear over the perceived threat of the racialized Other. As Robert Nowatzki points out, Dwight actually conflated minstrel performance with African Americans in general.⁸⁰

Dwight’s race-based prejudice led him to miss and dismiss the social meanings of the songs he so despised despite the fact that many of their aims aligned with his own. Like more recent critics of sentimentalism, the enshrined value system of “great works of art” serves to write off commonplace music—that of the amateur and of the masses—and to justify the superiority of one’s own aesthetic proclivities, so often based in biases of both race and class. Dwight, like so many music historians who followed, upheld an idealized conception of an American music that sought to block out the cacophony of many more amateur American music-makers; as I discuss in chapter two, later cultural producers would go so far as to claim ownership over sentimental songs on behalf of all white Americans.

The New Comic and Sentimental Singer’s Journal; or, Music for the Million

Despite Dwight’s public contestation over the value of sentimental songs and their purported status as the most superficial and trashy of musics, sentimental songs

79. Lott, 102.

80. Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 40.

continued to proliferate at mid-century and beyond. References to sentimental songs appear in print with much greater frequency in the second half of the nineteenth century and the various contexts suggest that the genre had achieved stability. That is to say, writers seem to employ “sentimental song” as a category with a specific referent and a kind of taken for grantedness, suggesting that by this time they all agreed upon what constituted a sentimental song.

Like Dwight, male publishers of mid-nineteenth-century musical ephemera similarly contributed to the feminization of sentimental songs. As their popularity increased so too arose the sense that these were domestic songs that concerned women. Nineteenth-century American literature shared a similar trajectory. Glenn Hendler and Mary Chapman explain that,

By the middle of the nineteenth century...American sentimentality seemed to have become ensconced solely in a feminine “world of love and ritual,” in “the empire of the mother.” According to this history, as the ideology of separate spheres took hold in the early nineteenth century, the domestic realm came to be considered the locus of feeling. In the process, the culture of sentiment became less directly identified with public virtue and benevolence and more associated with women’s moral, nurturing role in the private sphere of the bourgeois family.⁸¹

Women’s magazines such as *Godey’s Lady’s Book* relied on visual culture to similarly link sentimentalism with domestic femininity.

Sentimental songs also formed an important part of the emergent mass culture and they were marketed as such. On the covers of nineteenth century street literature, sentimental song became synonymous with both “popular song” and “music for the million.” Quoting from an 1856 *Putnam’s Monthly*, Paul Charosh writes,

81. Chapman and Hendler, 3.

During the nineteenth century the term “popular song” not only referred to those actually known by many, but also was used prescriptively to identify “things which are or should be sung by the masses of people, which express all their sentiments and feelings, and consequently rank high among their solaces and enjoyments”...Thus, “popular song” refers to song in actual use by many, and also to pieces prescribed for the populace by aesthetic entrepreneurs.⁸²

Male entrepreneurs such as Henry de Marsan, Benjamin Hitchcock, Robert DeWitt, and Septimus Winner would employ the mass reproducibility of print materials to blur distinctions between public and private: sentimental songs represented at once ideals of domestic femininity and the “music for the million.”

Music ephemera, or street literature, circulated sentimental songs to a mass consumership; both the media and the physical location of the broadside publishers in New York contributed to class anxieties about the music of the million and sentimental songs. Between 1853 and 1886, a significant number of broadside publishers established themselves on Chatham Street in New York City, which was later renamed Park Row. At the time, broadside and sheet music industries were not independent from each other; Charosh writes: “Although some publishers sold only broadsides or songsters or sheet music, the division of labor among these publishers overlapped decidedly after the Civil War.”⁸³ Publishers including James Wrigley, John Andrews, Henry De Marsan, Henry Wehman, and Pauline and William Lieder all set up shop here. But the area was known

82. Paul Charosh, “Studying Nineteenth-Century Popular Song” *American Music* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1997), 461.

83. Charosh, 470.

as a slum: as James D. McCabe, Jr. put it in 1882, “Respectable people in New York avoid making purchases here, and the stranger would do well to follow their example.”⁸⁴

Henry de Marsan maintained a print shop on Chatham Street in New York from 1859 until 1878; his inventory included valentines, toy books, paper dolls, and similar paper ephemera, and his products fit broadly into the popular category of street literature.⁸⁵ In 1868, de Marsan, introduced his new journal entitled *Henry de Marsan’s New Comic and Sentimental Singer’s Journal*. De Marsan did not date his volumes, but its numbers suggest that he issued the journal on roughly a monthly basis until 1882. Charosh explains that “at various times during the run of the *Singer’s Journal*, de Marsan claimed agents at several addresses in New York City and in other cities, including Albany, Rochester, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston, New Bedford, Cincinnati, Detroit, and London (Canada).”⁸⁶

Like the songsters from earlier in the century, de Marsan sold his journal under the premise that it “contain[ed] all the most popular songs of the day.”⁸⁷ De Marsan occasionally notes the author of the song’s lyrics or tune, but more often than not this information is omitted. Unlike songsters, de Marsan’s volumes were consistently limited to only eight pages in length and the last page of each issue always featured the full score for one popular song.

84. Charosh, 469.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., 471.

87. *Henry de Marsan’s New Comic and Sentimental Singer’s Journal*, no. 66, volume 1.

De Marsan's journal title—*Henry de Marsan's New Comic and Sentimental Singer's Journal*—both emphasizes and reproduces the significance of sentimentalism in nineteenth-century America. The songs in de Marsan's journal were not the only item that he marketed as sentimental; the front page of his journal listed other ephemera for sale in his shop, or by mail order, and one could also purchase “sentimental valentines.” De Marsan's title also emphasized the specific and critical association between sentimentalism and singing—namely that song was understood as the ultimate medium of sentimental expression.

Starting with the 65th volume, de Marsan adopted an image that both reinforced the domestic setting as the space in which music occurs, and placed a woman at the centre of this musical culture. He continued to re-use this image for the journal's cover right through to the final 200th volume. The small sketch, which appears centered on the title page beneath the large bold heading, depicts a young woman seated at a square piano with a man and a woman standing around her; all look intently towards the sheet music that rests on the instrument's music stand. The sketch features two captions—one above the image and the other below—which read “Our Concert-Room” and “Songs and Music for the Million” respectively. To the right of the image reads the following: “This house, established more than 25 years, is the oldest Publishing Establishment of the kind, and the first that introduced, in the United-States, the publishing of the penny sheet Songs and Ballads, for the benefit of the million” (figure 1.4).

NUMBER 66.

VOL. I

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We take the liberty to remind our Customers,
principally those from the Country, that our place
of Business is at No 60 (not 61) Chatham Street,
Up-stairs, First Floor.

Figure 1.4. Henry de Marsan's New and Comic Sentimental Singer's Journal, Number 66, volume 1.

De Marsan understood that he was circulating texts to a community of readers with a shared aural culture; his songs were indeed “the most popular songs of the day” by virtue of their circulation. What is more, de Marsan catered to the idea of a mass public that would benefit from this inexpensive and repetitive culture; rather than the uniqueness and individualism that Dwight so championed in his journal, de Marsan’s journals and other print practices like it privilege the idea of a community of singers, who together both sing of and simultaneously enact a kind of musical and social harmony.

De Marsan wasn’t the only publisher to link material musical culture with the idea of a mass readership. In 1868, Benjamin Hitchcock, also of New York, issued his Half Dime Series; Hitchcock similarly employed the phrase “Music for the Million” in order to market his wares to a broad audience. Like de Marsan’s journal, Hitchcock employs similar imagery on the cover sheets of his series. A young woman in an elaborate Victorian gown sits at a grand piano, sheet music resting on the music stand in front of her. The image appears nestled in the folds of the floral scroll, which announces the title: “Hitchcock’s Half Dime Series of Music for the Million” (figure 1.5). Both de Marsan’s later journals and Hitchcock’s series employ imagery that marketed the music of the million as firmly ensconced in a world of domestic femininity.

Apparently inspired by Hitchcock, Septimus Winner of Philadelphia—who I’ll say more about in the subsequent section—began his own series of “Penny Music” editions in 1870; Charosh cites at least 128 titles.⁸⁸ Quoting Hitchcock, Winner explains their shared goals: “Our object is to enable all classes—rich and poor—who have a desire for music, to become possessed of the popular productions of the day at a price within the

88. Charosh, 475.

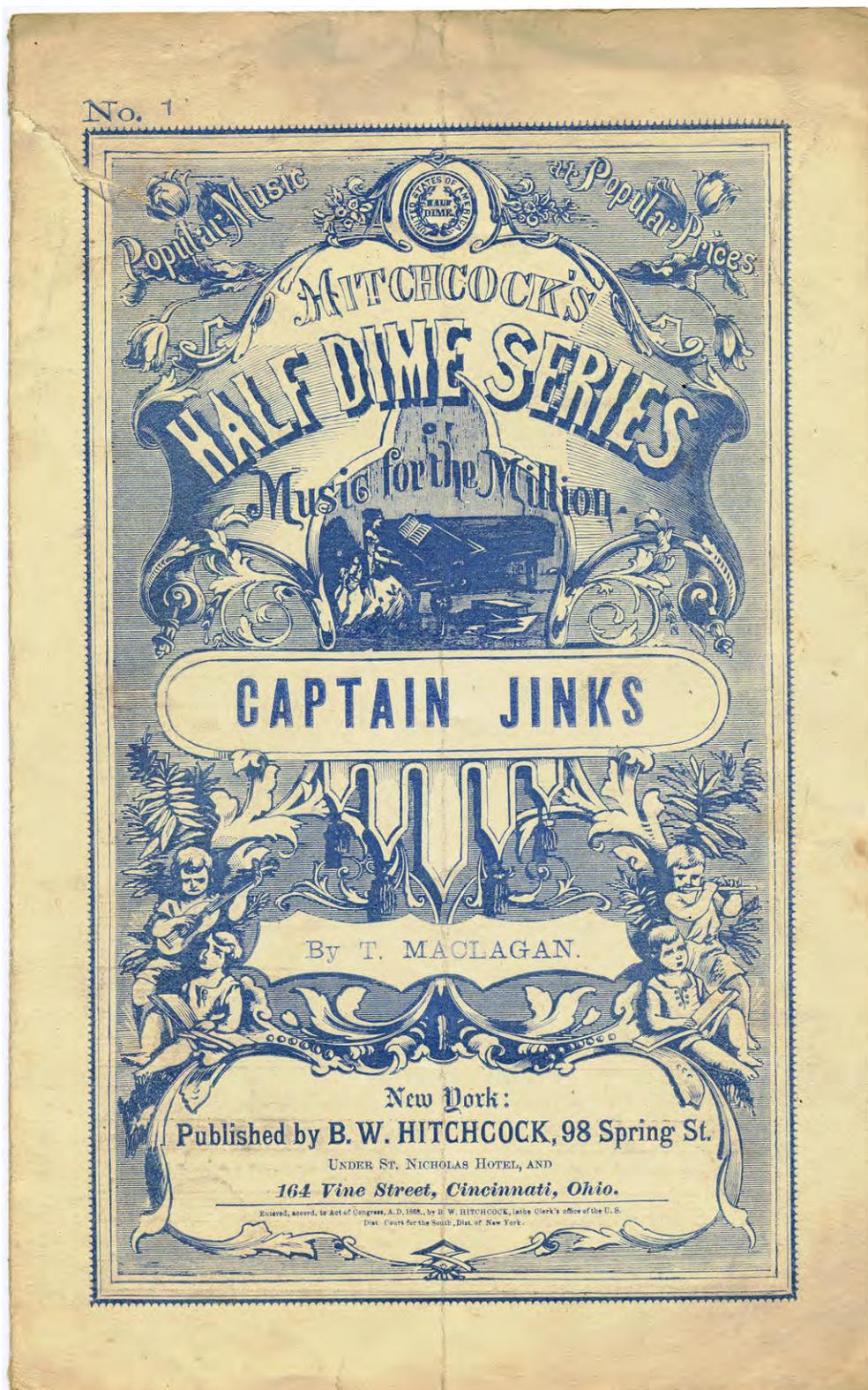


Figure 1.5. Hitchcock's Half Dime Series Music for the Million, No. 1 (1872).

reach of all.”⁸⁹ Of his own publications, he states: ‘We therefore offer our issues at one-fifth the cost of the cheapest editions ever published, and to those who patronize our establishment as regular customers, we will furnish these publications ‘without money and without price,’ at these rates we defy competition.”⁹⁰ In 1869, Robert DeWitt began to publish a similar series entitled the Half Dime series; according to Charosh, “His catalogue of 1872 lists 200 songs...of which 85 percent were classified as ‘Sentimental Songs and Ballads,’ ‘Comic and Serio-comic,’ and ‘Motto Songs.’”⁹¹

Through the use of specific imagery, De Marsan’s journal and Hitchcock’s series participated in the feminization of the sentimental song. But as Nicholas Tawa rightly points out, this music was not confined to the private domestic sphere or to female performance alone. Tawa writes:

It is important to note that songs composed by native Americans [i.e. US nationals], exceedingly rare before 1815, rose in number after 1828 and reached flood stage in the late 1840s. These works swiftly became intimates in countless households where other forms of expression had no entrance. In the 1840s and 50s, men and women from every walk of life, labor and slave to rich and mighty, enjoyed this music. While in amateur circles more women than men might have sung these songs, a considerable number of men did also perform them. Or they made up an enthusiastic audience when others sang. Moreover, it was mostly men who composed these popular compositions and performed them professionally.⁹²

Not only do these documents show men feminizing sentimental songs, they also illustrate how they aligned them with the music of the million. To borrow Andreas Huyssen’s

89. Quoted in Charosh, 475.

90. Ibid.

91. Charosh, 475.

92. Nicholas Tawa, *A Music for the Millions: Antebellum Democratic Attitudes and the Birth of American Popular Music* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1984), 2.

useful phrase, this is “mass culture as woman.” Moreover, the material manifestation of sentimental songs—as inexpensive ephemera—both democratized and cheapened their expression. Sentimental songs were thought of as cheap, not just because they manipulated emotions, but also because they were, quite literally, inexpensive.

Alice Hawthorne’s Sentimental Ballads

In the early 1850s, the Philadelphia songwriter and savvy businessman Septimus Winner (1827-1902) explicitly aligned sentimental songs with female expression when he published sentimental ballads under the pseudonym Alice Hawthorne. Winner’s piano transcriptions of instrumental music, on the other hand, appeared under his own name. By borrowing a female pseudonym, Winner participated in the gendering of sentimental songs as feminized—a process that disenfranchised women from constructing their own musical cultures and simultaneously alienated men from the emotional outlet of sentimentality. Moreover, Winner’s immense contribution to popular song, and specifically his production of “home songs” as Hawthorne in the second half of the nineteenth century further enshrined the alliance between sentimental ballads and domestic settings.

In the early 1850s, Winner borrowed his mother’s maiden name and began to publish sentimental ballads as Alice Hawthorne. Winner’s choice to use a pseudonym was not uncommon and many authors as well as composers published using an alias rather than their given names; however, the case of a man using a woman’s pseudonym proved to be simultaneously unusual and successful. Winner’s biographer, Michael Remson, writes that Winner’s “case is distinct in that he created an entire persona for

Alice Hawthorne and consistently used this pseudonym for over thirty years. ‘The Hawthorne Ballads’...were among the most popular and successful songs of their day.’⁹³

Remson goes on to explain:

As a shop owner, Winner was a keen businessman. He astutely recognized the changing role of middle-class women in antebellum America. Largely freed from the “lower-class” constraints of work, middle-class women were responsible for tending to the domestic sphere—a sphere in which women were educated in the arts and where young girls were expected to have “accomplishments” in the arts and humanities in order to attract a suitable husband. As antebellum America witnessed the growth of “parlor culture,” Winner’s stores were patronized largely by women of at least a moderate income, who were interested in purchasing instruments and music for their homes and obtaining lessons on those instruments for their children. Seizing on what he perceived to be a good opportunity, Winner began to arrange popular songs of the day—publishing his own arrangements as early as 1850.⁹⁴

The above commentary confirms that Winner recognized the viability of an emergent women’s culture and its attendant market. Winner appropriated and capitalized on a woman’s name to perform a kind of compositional ventriloquism, one that would firmly align the domestic sphere with sentimental songs in the United States.

Winner did not limit his published compositions to the Hawthorne name, but the “Hawthorne ballads” outsold compositions published under Winner’s own name by more than six to one in the first seven years of his career.⁹⁵ In fact, the contemporaneous songwriter Matthias Keller went so far as to critique Winner’s songs, comparing them to Hawthorne’s and suggesting, unwittingly, that Winner might be more successful if he

93. Remson, *The Songs of Septimus Winner* (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), ix.

94. *Ibid.*, xi.

95. *Ibid.*, xii.

wrote more like Alice Hawthorne.⁹⁶ An examination of Winner's output suggests that the songwriter reserved his own name for the title pages of instrumental works, marches and other dances, as well as songs with political or military themes, and employed the Hawthorne name for the covers of songs that made home, family, and feelings the predominant themes. In other words, Hawthorne was the obvious composer for Winner's sentimental songs.

Between 1853 and 1888, Winner published over one hundred songs under Alice Hawthorne's name. The first original song, entitled "How Sweet Are The Roses," was published in 1853. Hawthorne also took credit for "My Cottage Home," "What Is Home Without Mother," and "Listen to the Mockingbird," Winner's earliest popular songs. According to some accounts, "Listen to the Mockingbird" sold over twenty million copies in the United States and Europe.⁹⁷ Hawthorne's songs refer directly to mother and child figures, to crying or weeping, to the heart, and to interpersonal feelings of love and friendship.

Winner also used Hawthorne's name to enthusiastically participate in the nineteenth-century trend for "home songs." Initially popularized by Henry Bishop with his 1823 "Home, Sweet Home," the home song took nineteenth-century America by storm.⁹⁸ Bishop's song remained immensely popular throughout the nineteenth century: performers touring the United States sang it, including Jenny Lind, young ladies referred

96. Remson, 9.

97. *Ibid.*, 67.

98. "Home, Sweet Home" came from Bishop's ballad opera *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*, 1823.

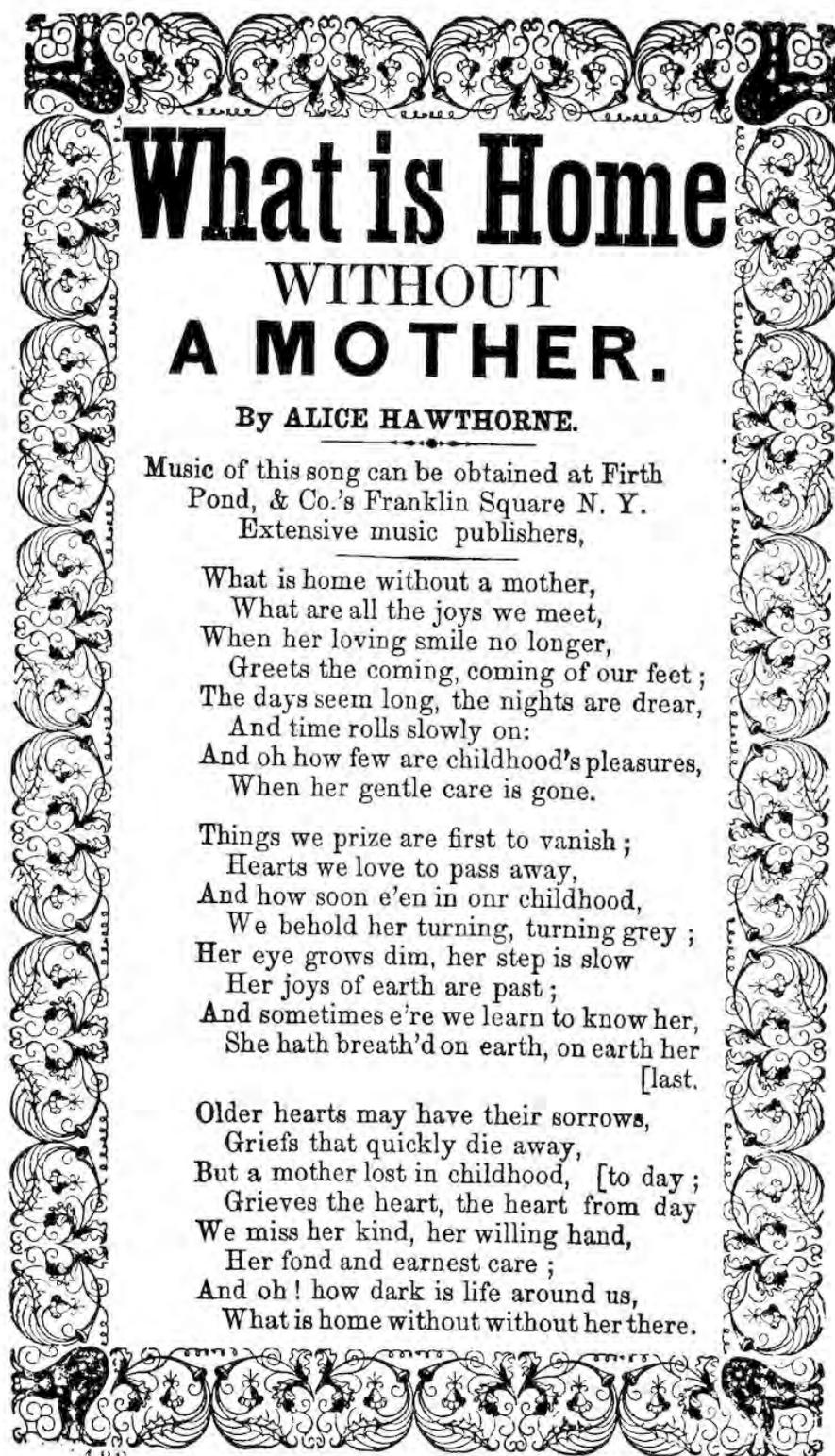
to its lyrics in diary entries, and parodies of it continued to appear in songsters until well into the second half of the nineteenth century. The song inspired a notable craze for other popular “home songs” that persisted in the United States throughout the nineteenth century. In his list of “the most popular songs in the extant collections of music” Tawa includes the following “home songs”: “Be Kind to the Loved Ones at Home” by Isaac Woodbury (1847); “Do They Miss Me at Home” by S.M. Grannis (1832); “Home Again” by Marshall Pike (1850); “My Home, My Happy Home” by George Hodson (1847); and “Old Folks at Home” by Stephen Foster (1851). To this list, I would add Foster’s “My Old Kentucky Home” (1853), “Home on the Range” with text by Brewster Higley (1873), and “I’ll Take You Home Again, Kathleen” by Thomas Westendorf (1876). Clearly, the “home song” was not just a blip on the historical record, but an important idea for nineteenth-century songwriters and their publics.

“Home! Sweet Home!” began the process of settling popular song both literally—as a domestic activity within the home—and figuratively—on the theme of home. All of the above songs, however, were penned by male songwriters who relied on nostalgia and idealism for the success of their respective “home songs.” As Sheryl Kaskowitz points out, some of them problematically romanticized the plantation, merging minstrel songs with earlier Victorian songs. In all of these cases, however, there is nothing in particular that suggests that “home songs” were gendered as feminine.

The growing significance of women’s domestic culture at this time is unquestionable, but Winner as Hawthorne, perhaps more than any other composer, fixed this relation in popular song by aligning the idea of “home” with the practice of female domesticity—music making which occurred in middle class homes. In Appendix B, I

have listed the titles of the “Hawthorne ballads” which illustrate the predominance of “home” as one of the most commonly utilized themes. Whether obliquely as in “Come, Gather ‘Round the Hearth (1854) or directly in songs including “Away From Home” (1858), “The Happiness of Home” (1855), “Hearth and Home” (1869), “Home and Friends” (1857), “Home By and By” (1874), “Home Ever Dear” (1866), “Make Yourself at Home” (1868), “My Cottage Home” (1853), “My Love to All at Home” (1869), “What Is Home without a Mother?” (1854), and “Where Mother Is We Call It Home” (1870), the preponderance of Hawthorne “home” Ballads align popular song with the idea of home during the second half of the nineteenth century as a distinctly gendered space.

Winner’s third publication as Alice Hawthorne and his first successful song, “What is Home Without a Mother?” (1854) makes the home a distinctly gendered space, turning home into the site of the sentimental ballad. Perhaps the success of the song inspired Winner to follow up with others. No doubt the song’s success owed much to the explosive and lasting popularity of Bishop’s “Home, Sweet Home” as well as the already popular other “home songs” referred to above. These songs made the home into an important site for musical and emotional work, but there is nothing in particular that suggests these other “home songs” were read as gendered. “What Is Home Without a Mother?” formalizes the relationship. Figure 1.6 shows the lyrics in full.



What is Home WITHOUT A MOTHER.

By ALICE HAWTHORNE.

Music of this song can be obtained at Firth
Pond, & Co.'s Franklin Square N. Y.
Extensive music publishers,

What is home without a mother,
What are all the joys we meet,
When her loving smile no longer,
Greets the coming, coming of our feet ;
The days seem long, the nights are drear,
And time rolls slowly on:
And oh how few are childhood's pleasures,
When her gentle care is gone.

Things we prize are first to vanish ;
Hearts we love to pass away,
And how soon e'en in our childhood,
We behold her turning, turning grey ;
Her eye grows dim, her step is slow
Her joys of earth are past ;
And sometimes e're we learn to know her,
She hath breath'd on earth, on earth her
[last.

Older hearts may have their sorrows,
Griefs that quickly die away,
But a mother lost in childhood, [to day ;
Grieves the heart, the heart from day
We miss her kind, her willing hand,
Her fond and earnest care ;
And oh ! how dark is life around us,
What is home without without her there.

Figure 1.6. Alice Hawthorne, "What Is Home Without a Mother?" American Song Sheets, Library of Congress, Rare Books and Special Collections.

“What is Home Without a Mother” laments the passing of time as it anticipates the aging and inevitable death of the family’s mother figure. Winner employs first person plural pronouns in order to implicate his readers and singers: “we” all have a mother. The song depicts this every mother as gentle and caring and refers to her “loving smile”, a physical feature that calls to mind something that can be at once specific and general. As the second verse of the song progresses, the mother ages in the present tense—“her eyes grow dim.” She breathes her last breath at the song’s conclusion. The title and the first line of the song locate the mother at the center of—and central to—the home. In so doing, the song reveals its classed presuppositions; this mother is healthy enough that we expect she will age slowly over time and she has the means and the assistance to be patient and loving with her family. In 1870, Winner as Hawthorne would again claim home as the mother’s domain in “Where Mother Is We Call It Home.”

It is tempting to want to claim Hawthorne’s success as a victory for women in the male dominated sphere of nineteenth-century music production. And perhaps by some small margin it is. However, Winner capitalized on the appropriation of a woman’s name; in one sense he acknowledges the viability and significance of a woman’s culture and market, but on the other hand, the Hawthorne ballads affix music in the home as the domain of the women’s domestic sphere in an unprecedented way that has remained largely unquestioned since the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the alignment of the domestic sphere and women’s culture has served as the very reasons for their dismissal and degradation by more recent critics. By using a female pseudonym, Winner participated in the gendering of sentimental songs as domestic and feminized—a process that denied actual women the agency of participating in the construction of their own

musical cultures and simultaneously alienated men from the emotional outlet of sentimentality.

At the opening of this chapter, Helen Kaufmann describes the crescendo that climaxed in a double fortissimo of mawkishness in the 1890s. This crescendo was deeply tied to the emergence of a vital sheet music industry by the end of the nineteenth century. Publishers like Harry Von Tilzer, Charles K. Harris, M. Witmark and Sons, Jerome Remick, and Oliver Ditson & Co. would capitalize on the *already* successful and *already* popular sentimental song. Von Tilzer and Harris's songs were usually of a more fun-loving, light-hearted variety than their moralizing predecessors from earlier in the century. Nevertheless, sentimental waltzes, sentimental ballads, and even sentimental songs with ukulele accompaniment would proliferate across the sheet music industry with the emergence of Tin Pan Alley and they would begin to work their way into the new medium of recorded sound.

What is important, however, is that these songs were an already established part of an American musical ethos, the traces of which are audible from the late eighteenth century. Songsters—as well as music journals and other trade publications, broadsides, and newspapers—illustrate the centrality of sentimentalism in nineteenth-century music culture in the United States. Perhaps it would take a hundred years or so before this music would be embraced as truly “American” by its own merits and on its own terms, but it was not without precedent.

Sentimental songs have a longer and more complicated history than has previously been suggested; their early iterations fit broadly within eighteenth-century

sensibilities and challenge the gendered assumptions that have pervaded their history. Sentimental songs did not emerge as fully formed products of women's domestic culture. Nor were the men who displayed and even made a spectacle of their feelings through song an aberration or affront to the dominant norms of masculinity; rather, they upheld and continued traditions of normative eighteenth-century British aesthetics that slowly made their way through the ephemera of United States material culture and musical practice across the nineteenth-century. Later in the nineteenth century, male entrepreneurs would contribute significantly to the feminization of the sentimental song, but this is not to suggest that sentimental men disappeared either: one only has to think of Civil War songs like "Weeping, Sad and Lonely (When This Cruel War is Over)" (1863) or the Uncle protagonist of Charles K. Harris's "After the Ball" (1892).

By the 1870s, the association between sentimental song and the domestic sphere was enshrined within American song production and profoundly feminized. In many ways, sentimental songs have been contained and constrained by this history. Ample evidence, however, points to the fact that sentimental songs resounded beyond the space of the parlor and beyond the limits of gender-specific performance. They matter because song was often heard as the most effective means through which to communicate feeling—sometimes this was spectacular and at other times it was more ordinary. Sentimental songs provided opportunities for sonorous exchanges; despite the so-called ephemerality of their sound, the echoes of these songs are audible when we take the time to listen.

CHAPTER TWO

**“SING ME THE OLD SONGS TONIGHT”:
SENTIMENTAL FOLK RADIO IN THE EARLY YEARS OF WLS’S *NATIONAL BARN DANCE***

The history of country music is a history of songs written and performed by a person who pulls subject matter from personal experience or experiences of friends and family members. Reactions, thoughts, and feelings are woven into the song. Sentimentality runs rampant. Listeners are meant to feel what the performer feels.

—Joanna Kadi

Country music has long been associated with sentimental themes. By Joanna Kadi’s account sentimentality refers to the overt—if not excessive—expression of emotion through song wherein the listener identifies her own experiences and feelings. It is not surprising that sentimentality in the context of country music would hold a meaning like that advanced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. As Bill Malone, Richard Peterson, William Ellis, and others have observed, the roots of commercial country music are entangled with the nineteenth-century genre of song identified as either sentimental ballad or sentimental song.¹

Early hillbilly performers sang the songs of their parents from a generation or more before and capitalized on the familiarity of popular sentimental songs. Diane Pecknold cites a survey conducted by Thomas A. Edison, Inc. in which phonograph owners shared their dedication to familiar old ballads, revealing the “depth of emotion that listeners attached to the tunes.”

1. See Bill C. Malone, *Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers: Southern Culture and the Roots of Country Music* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993); Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); and William C. Ellis, “The Sentimental Mother Song in American Country Music, 1923-1945” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1978), accessed January 17, 2013, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

According to the handwritten comments on the surveys, old-time music evoked “memories of home,” “Grandfather days,” and “the days of childhood.” Frequently the tunes recalled distant or departed loved ones. These sentimental tunes—what one observer uncharitably called the “sob songs of several generations ago”—were the basis of music of the early hillbilly repertoire, especially the Mid-western shows that were the genre’s first national successes. The comfort and continuity of hearth and family evoked by the pop forerunners of hillbilly offered a stark opposite to the pell-mell bustle and mobility of the jazz age, even as their availability on the radio and on record firmly identified them as products of the modern industrial order.²

Pecknold’s account importantly emphasizes the underlying emotional connection that sentimental songs provided for their listeners.

Early hillbilly performances of sentimental songs, however, were not just disseminated on record. On radio barn dances like WLS’s *National Barn Dance*, musicians including Bradley Kincaid, Gene Autry, Lulu Belle and Scotty, Linda Parker, and Grace Wilson performed a repertory of sentimental songs. Early radio proved ideal for such performances, but the medium also provoked anxieties.

This chapter considers WLS’s *National Barn Dance* as an early site in which to explore the relationship between sentimentality, radio, and rural identity. My reading of the *National Barn Dance* pushes against traditional narratives of new technologies that focus on the newness of the medium—what Lisa Gitelman refers to as the always already new bias of media studies.³ While radio certainly offered the potential to democratize content and mediatize listener communities—creating what Lauren Berlant and Jason Loviglio refer to as an intimate public—the *Barn Dance* trajectory suggests that this new

2. Diane Pecknold, *The Selling Sound: The Rise of the Country Music Industry* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 20.

3. Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006).

form of public intimacy was sustained and perpetuated by recognizable materials, including sentimental songs and print materials. The familiarity of such materials, I argue, was used to quell anxieties about the technological incursion of radio and to stave off fears about modernity and urbanization. My account listens closely to the print documents that circulated alongside the show which navigated and narrated the newly mediatized world.

The second half of this chapter builds on the work of scholars like Pecknold as well as Michael Bertrand and Derek Vaillant, who argue that rural identities were about claiming whiteness.⁴ Sentimental songs comforted listeners aligning them with tradition and the past. These songs also served to distance rural whites from urban and black America. In Pecknold's terms, these were songs of an older farm population and by the early 1920s, "nineteenth-century parlor ballads and heart songs were popularly identified as an aural counterweight to the raucous modernity of ragtime and jazz, within the music industry and among the audience."⁵ WLS producers used song to imagine a community founded on paternalistic, familial ideals and the so-called purity of rural life. Like ethnographers and folklorists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they idealized the past and romanticized mountain and southern life. Barn Dance performers and producers used sentimental songs to advance the sound of whiteness, taking

4. Michael Bertrand, "Race and Rural Identity," in *The Hayloft Gang: The Story of the National Barn Dance*, ed. Chad Berry, 130-152 (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008) and Derek Vaillant, "Sounds of Whiteness: Local Radio, Racial Formation, and Public Culture in Chicago, 1921-1935," *American Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (March, 2002): 25-66. See also Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).

5. Pecknold, 20.

ownership over sentimental repertoire on behalf of all white rural people. Kincaid and Autry in particular used the radio to reach their audiences in an intimate fashion. They sounded their whiteness using songs that had their own history of sentimentalism.

The Sentimentalization of the *National Barn Dance*

In April of 1924, Sears, the World's Largest Store (WLS), began broadcasting what would become the United States' most enduring radio barn dance show of the twentieth century.⁶ From 1924 until 1960, rural farm listeners from around the country and Canada tuned in to the *National Barn Dance* on Saturday evenings between 7:30p.m.

6. The National Barn Dance debuted on April 19th, 1924 with George Dewey Hay as host. Within eighteenth months, Hay went on to found the *Grand Ole Opry*, the most well-recognized radio barn dance, at WSM in Nashville. Country music scholarship, itself already somewhat marginalized in the broad landscape of popular music studies, has paid scant attention to the *National Barn Dance*. The show often appears as a footnote to the broader history of radio barn dances or serves as a passing reference on the way to a more sustained discussion of its stars or its better-known iteration, *The Grand Ol' Opry*. Only recently have scholars sought to refocus attention on the *National Barn Dance*. In 2008, Chad Berry compiled a companion collection entitled *The Hayloft Gang: The Story of the National Barn Dance*, with essays from radio scholars, folklorists, and historians. The essays offer historical perspectives on the show, the patriotic role it played during World War II, and its relationship to rural audiences in Illinois. See Chad Berry, ed., *The Hayloft Gang: The Story of the National Barn Dance* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008). The volume was created to accompany a documentary film of the same title. Initially released as a PBS special, the film is currently in production for DVD sales.

Country music scholar Christine McCusker, who also has an essay in the edited volume, has contributed significant work in the area of gender, paying particular attention to the women of the barn dance. Still, while the authors provide an excellent starting point the sentimental songs that were at the center of the show remain mere passing references. See Christine McCusker, "Patriarchy and the Great Depression," in *The Hayloft Gang and Lonesome Cowgirls and Honky-Tonk Angels: The Women of Radio Barn Dance* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008). Also see Stephanie Vander Wel, "The Lavender Cowboy and 'The She Buckaroo': Gene Autry, Patsy Montana, and Depression-Era Gender Roles," *The Musical Quarterly* 95, no. 2-3 (2012): 207-251.

and midnight to hear their favorite performers. WLS's *Barn Dance* drew on conventions from vaudeville stage shows, incorporating comedic skits and musical performances. The shows' performers and producers used the radio to broadcast and emulate the familiar social practices of dance parties among neighbors, family, and friends. Listeners referred to the shows' music as "old-time." They wrote letters to the station to express their praise, suggestions, and sometimes dissatisfaction—shaping the content of the show.

In 1928 at the age of 60, Burrige D. Butler, owner of the agricultural trade publication *Prairie Farmer*, purchased WLS from Sears, Roebuck for the sizeable sum of \$250,000, and a new relationship was forged between the station's identity and its attendant print culture.⁷ The radio station was a considerable addition to the print publication, which Butler had directed since 1909. As James F. Evans writes, "As a business man, Butler saw in WLS an opportunity for profit, if not directly, at least through broadened circulation for *Prairie Farmer*. However, as a patriarch Butler saw the station as a new voice for the family spirit which became more and more important to him through the years."⁸

Within a few short years of purchasing the station, Butler added an arsenal of associated print publications, the pages of which he used to develop a sustained and wholesome image for himself and for the station. The following passage comes from the

7. Thanks to that relationship we have a considerable amount of information about the early years of this particular show.

8. James F. Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS: The Burrige D. Butler Years* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 177.

opening pages of the 1932 *WLS Family Album*, a Prairie Famer publication discussed in further detail below:

Back of the microphone and the transmitter, back of the program and the business office, is the vision of service. Mr. Butler, with a great heart full of love for humanity, lives with that vision before him. You have seldom heard his voice, but day after day you have felt his vibrant spirit. ‘I’m thinking of that home—that father and mother who are trying to bring up a family of good American citizens,’ he will say when some question of policy comes up, and somehow that settles any problem. Mr. Butler wouldn’t want us to say much about him, but let us simply write that we know him as a man full of sympathy and understanding, a dreamer of great dreams, and a tireless worker for the rights of everyday folks, the family and the fireside.⁹

As this passage makes clear, Butler worked behind the scenes to advance his own reputation as a sentimental family man. He purported to believe in the possibility of “the good life” for all Americans. Note here the markers of sentimentalism: the reference to Butler as a humble “man of sympathy” who fights the good fight for “everyday folks.”

Butler held sentimental ideals about the potential of radio as a community-building medium. Early radio was an experimental medium, and—like all emergent technologies—its early history reveals that it wasn’t necessarily clear how the medium would and could be employed. The format of shows like the *Barn Dance* had not yet been codified.¹⁰ Instead of creating their broadcast world anew, radio barn dances drew on familiar conventions from live performance situations. Their participants encouraged face-to-face, real-time interactions through musical engagement.

9. *WLS Family Album* (Chicago: Prairie Farmer Publishing Company, 1932), 3.

10. The WBAP Barn Dance was the first known radio barn dance and it emerged less than a year earlier in 1923 from Forth Worth, Texas.

Butler wanted the station to extend the work done by his agricultural trade publication; he understood the two as public services intended for rural Illinois and surrounding states—or at least that’s the belief he expressed in public statements. To *Broadcast Magazine* in 1948, Butler stated: “No one can own a radio station any more than he can own a church. We can only consider it a stewardship, for which we are responsible for the people.”¹¹ In likening the radio to the church, Butler recognized radio as a powerful institution with the means to shape community. He affirms his Christian values by implying that the voice of God might speak through the radio transmitter.

Butler viewed the radio station as a means to extend his community—his “family”—of rural people. He constantly referred to neighbors and friends, using the medium to connect with his audience: “If I could meet you personally and you would say to me—I consider WLS a next door neighbor of mine making friendly calls every day extending a helpful hand at all times—I would know that my dream of radio had come true.”¹² Butler’s print publications are filled with welcoming, domestic invitations that promote his service ideals:

This book is dedicated to you, our listener—our friend. Your cheery letters encourage us; your criticisms guide us. Together we shall continue to build, in WLS, an institution of increasing service to mankind. We want you to think of us always as folks with a handshake and a smile—and remember, here at Prairie Farmer’s home, the latchstring is always out.¹³

Of course, such statements were a way to make the station and the radio seem more friendly and welcoming.

11. Burrige Butler, quoted in Evans, *WLS and Prairie Farmer*, 177.

12. Butler, quoted in Evans, *Prairie Farmer and WLS*, 178.

13. *WLS Family Album*, 1932, 2.

In 1938, Butler published the WLS Creed in which he made his views about radio more explicit:

To me radio is far more than a mere medium of entertainment. It is a God-given instrument which makes possible vital economic, educational and inspirational service to the home-loving men, women, and children of America. As long as it is our privilege to direct the destinies of WLS, we will hold sacred this trust that has been placed in our hands. No medium developed by mankind is doing more to broaden the lives of rich and poor alike than radio. When you step up to the microphone never forget this responsibility and that you are walking as a guest into all those homes beyond the microphone.¹⁴

Butler's creed celebrates the potential of radio in utopian, nationalist, and religious terms. He promotes the medium as democratic and domestic as he blurs the distinctions between public and private.

Butler's view of the potential of radio was not unique. As Michele Hilmes explains, a particular kind of sentiment about radio broadcasting was heard frequently in its first two decades: "a utopian rhetoric tied to nationalism that glorified radio's special properties and emphasized its uniquely 'American' character."¹⁵ This optimistic tone lasted for radio's first three decades, a fact that, as Hilmes points out, may be hard to believe in the face of contemporary discourses of pop culture and the media as corrupting and amoral. Jason Loviglio emphasizes the centrality of intimacy to early discussions of radio:

Accounts such as these [Saul Bellow's] emphasize radio's ritual power to transform the anonymous space of towns, cities, the nation itself into a new site of reception, a momentary extension of the private space of the family car or home. The domestic space of reception becomes more public even as feelings about its intimacy become heightened. The open doors and windows of the cars in

14. *Prairie Farmer and WLS*, 120.

15. Hilmes, 1.

Bellow's recollection, like the open doors and windows of houses in other versions, mark the site where public and private have temporarily merged to form a national community, an *intimate public*. But these accounts of shared radio reception also reinforce the notion of distinct spaces, spaces whose difference becomes most apparent in moments like these, when the listener's mobility across the lines of public and private space makes the boundaries seem clearer and more porous at the same time. Network radio in the 1930s and 1940s amplified the importance of these "blurred" social spaces; in the middle distance opening up between publicity and intimacy, radio seemed to conjure a ritual of national identity.¹⁶

Part of the transformative power of this intimate public, of course, was the belief in the betterment of humanity.

Butler believed in radio's capacity to move listeners and in the *Barn Dance's* potential to improve people's morals. But this wasn't just a matter of the medium; content would play an important role in this process. By the time Butler took over the station, the *National Barn Dance* had already reached the status of an institution. Under Butler's stewardship, the show would bolster its emphasis on rural identity, combining the new technology of radio with various layers of already familiar print media. He insisted that the show maintain its rural family values, steering clear of anything that might be interpreted as urban, including jazz. Butler conceived of the show as "a big wholesome country party" that he understood as oppositional to mainstream popular culture. In 1966, he stated, "that isn't us. That's Hollywood. People didn't drive hundreds of miles to see a girlie show. They came to see their friends on WLS, friends they have faith in and think are nice people."¹⁷

16. Jason Loviglio, *Radio's Intimate Public: Network Broadcasting and Mass-Mediated Democracy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xv.

17. *Prairie Farmer and WLS*, 229.

Despite Butler's proclamations, radio alone could not enforce the kind of values that he sought to foster. Leveraging his experience with *Prairie Farmer*, Butler reinforced connections between listeners and performers via supplemental print publications. The coordinated program of radio, print, and live performance enacted an unprecedented form of multi-media intimacy. In 1930, *Prairie Farmer* published the first volume of the WLS Family Album, a 50-odd page annual that documented the goings-on of the station. *Prairie Farmer* released a new Family Album each fall for the remaining thirty years of the show's run. The 1933 volume opens with the following salutation: "To Our Neighbors, the folks everywhere who have been so friendly and kind, who have helped us to carry out the ideals of WLS, this book is affectionately dedicated." The greeting goes on:

To know a radio station you must know the people back of it. With uncanny accuracy the voice of radio portrays the character of the people who shape its policies and build its programs. We often refer to our listeners and ourselves as the "Prairie Farmer-WLS family circle," and in this book we are bringing you an introduction to part of that circle.

The passage points out a shortcoming of radio: while those in the listener's circle may hear the character of a person through their voice, there is something lacking in not knowing what they look like. The Family Album offered up such details in the intimate fashion of a family scrapbook.

The Family Album augmented the work of the station and its programs, building intimacy between listeners, performers, and producers. Each page featured several photographs that indicate who the person is, the role they play at the station, and something personal about their character—from what kind of food they enjoy to what town or city they come from. The supporting text, written in first person plural, invites

the audience in with a “handshake and a smile.” Each subsequent volume further honed the rhetoric around family, intimacy, and sincerity. The photographs, which are laid out like the pages of a family scrapbook, aim to increase the familiarity of the voices heard over the air. Performers and producers alike are photographed with their families. Group images demonstrate the scope of live performances—from appearances at fair grounds to the thousands of people lined up outside of the Eighth Street Theater to view the live broadcast—and simultaneously reinforce the demographic composition of the show’s audiences and performers. The “sound of whiteness,” which I will discuss below, was made explicit through images—both mental and photographic.

By 1932, the demand for even more information about the station’s performers seems to have been high, as Butler added another print publication to Prairie Farmer’s line-up. *Behind the Scenes at WLS* features a colorful cover page depicting an entire family—mother, father, daughter, son, grandfather, baby girl with her doll, and their dog—all peering curiously behind a heavy black curtain (figure 2.1). All members of the family are white, thin, and gangly. They all have black hair except for the grandfather, who has none, and the littlest girl who has a crown of blonde ringlets. They wear plain, but somewhat dressed-up, grey, black, and white clothes that seem to reference the styles of 1930s rural churchgoers. The only thing we can see from their vantage point is the WLS microphone in its stand. The 47-page document states its mission from the first page:

“Some intimate glimpses of the people and programs at the Prairie Farmer Radio Station in Chicago.”¹⁸ The editors of the volume offer their greeting on the subsequent page, which reinforces the invitation to familial intimacy:

Hello Everybody!! This light-hearted little book is an answer to your thousands of questions about WLS folks. It’s only natural that you should want to know these personal things, because through the loud speaker the announcers and artists become friendly daily visitors in your household.¹⁹

Behind the Scenes at WLS promotes the idea that the stations’ performers and announcers are friends and guests who, through radio technology, have been invited and welcomed into households across the Midwest.

Sightless radiophonic performance must have been disconcerting for early listeners, as evidenced by the show’s various efforts at filling a perceived visual void. One of the first columns in *Behind the Scenes at WLS* is titled quite simply, “What They Look Like.” The editors write: “We’ve been hustling around looking at hair and eyes so we could give you these statistics.”²⁰ The ensuing table lists the names of WLS performers along with their respective hair color, eye color, height, and weight. This personal information served two purposes: 1) it inserted a mental picture of performing bodies to accompany the sound of disembodied voices and 2) it aided in constructing personal intimacy by sharing details that would often be reserved for only family and friends.

18. *Behind the Scenes at WLS* (Chicago: Prairie Farmer Publishing Company, 1932), 3.

19. *Behind the Scenes at WLS*, 4.

20. *Behind the Scenes at WLS*, 22.

Each column included in *Behind the Scenes at WLS* is written in second person in which the singular pronoun is indistinguishable from the plural. Each “you” is directed at both a collective and at an intimate singular person. While there are no extant recordings of the *National Barn Dance* from the time to confirm this, it seems likely that this mode of address would have also been used on air in order to similarly emulate a collective and personal address. That this address was made to thousands of listeners simultaneously is not incidental either; one volume of *The Family Album* goes so far as to make the connection between the print publication and the moment of broadcast by suggesting, “you may have even been listening when this photograph was snapped.”²¹ The simultaneity of experience afforded by radio was used to promote the intimacy of this particular public. Another example explains the appeal of Gene Autry to the reader: “You like Gene’s singing because he sounds so friendly and sincere, and that’s just the way he is. Everybody who works with him says he is about the most accommodating fellow in the world. So it’s no wonder you like him.”²² This dual use of “you” reinforces the intimate public that the show sought to create.

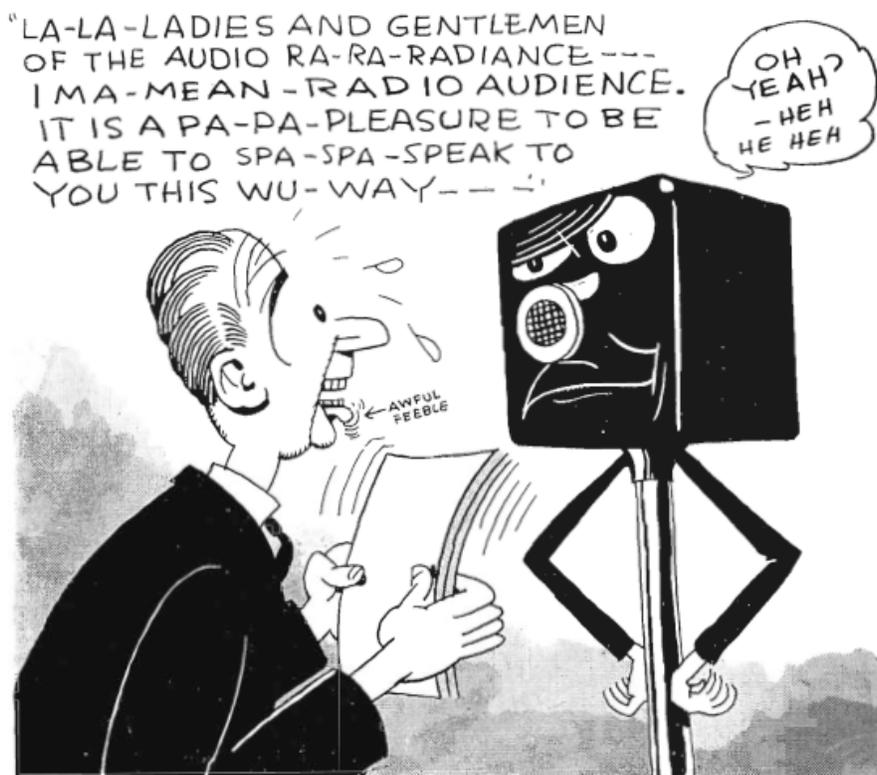
The first featured article in *Behind the Scenes* is entitled “Meet My Friend ‘Mike’” and is accompanied by the cartoon shown in figure 2.2. The cartoon depicts the anxiety experienced by those who approach the microphone for the first time. The write-up explains:

My friend Mike is one of the most attentive fellows in the world. He pays attention to everything, and you can talk or sing to him all day and he takes it all

21. *WLS Family Album*, 1933.

22. *Behind the Scenes at WLS*, 21.

in but never answers back. “How do I talk into this thing?” That’s the question we hear every time a new speaker comes into the studio to face the microphone for the first time. What we tell them is simply, “Talk as if you were in a quiet conversation with a friend.”²³



How it seems to a man addressing the microphone for the first time.

Meet My Friend “Mike”

Figure 2.2. Cartoon from *Behind the Scenes at WLS* (1932).

The overwhelming emphasis on friendliness and intimacy that pervades the pages of *Prairie Farmer*’s early print publications was an attempt to reassure people about the

23. *Behind the Scenes at WLS*, 5.

technological invasion they were about to invite into their homes with radio. As David Goodman argues radio also provoked anxieties, particularly concerning the effects it would have on public and civic life.²⁴ By using already familiar media like the scrapbook styled print media and songs from the previous centuries, radio stations like WLS showed that they were not just technocrats or proponents of modernization but that they were invested in tradition. This point required emphasis and reiteration. The radio was a means through which people actually opened their homes to voices from without—the familial and intimate rhetoric aimed to render this unfamiliar situation more comfortable. Familiar music, as I will argue, would go on to play a similarly comforting role on the *National Barn Dance*.

Music on *The National Barn Dance*

Music played an important role on the *National Barn Dance*, particularly in facilitating the kind of familial and intimate experience I have described. Producers used older and familiar repertoire as part of the project of bringing the show into the domestic space. Sentimental songs served to bring rural audiences together over shared culture thereby bridging the tensions between public and domestic, urban and rural, modern and traditional. In other words, sentimental songs were the most suitable repertoire for the sentimentalized medium of the intimate public.

It wasn't necessarily obvious, however, that music would be central in this process. Like Thomas Edison's list of suggested uses for the phonograph from the

24. David Goodman, *Radio's Civic Ambition: American Broadcasting and Democracy in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xiii.

previous century, a number of possible outcomes could have emerged pertaining to radio's use.²⁵ This shows up clearly in the *WLS Family Album* from 1933: "Music has become one of the most essential elements in radio broadcasting. Perhaps this is because its appeal is universal. It can be understood and appreciated by everyone, and it is possible sometimes to tell in music what cannot be expressed in words."²⁶ The belief in the sentimental power of music described here is announced in the same volume of the *Family Album* with a bold heading that uses the same bit of poetry as one of the nineteenth-century songsters from chapter one: "Music Hath Charms."²⁷

Not all listeners agreed on what music should serve as the soundtrack for WLS and its sentimentalized values: "There has been many an argument about what kind of music the public prefers. Some say light comedy songs; others prefer the sad old mountain ballads; others want mostly all hymns. The truth is that the radio audience consists of so many people with such varied tastes that some of them like every kind of

25. When Edison initially discovered the possibility of mechanically reproduced sound, he also wrote a list of potential uses for the technology. In other words, it was not inevitable that the phonograph would develop into an enormous industry that centered on the recording of music; the reproduction of music was but one of a long list of imagined possibilities. Edison's list, most of which have been realized, included: Letter writing, phonographic books, the teaching of elocution, reproduction of music, the "family record," music boxes and toys, clocks that announce the time to go home, preservation of language by exact reproduction, education purposes, and connection with the telephone. See Thomas Edison, "The Phonograph and Its Future," *North American Review* 126 (May-June, 1878): 527-536.

26. *WLS Family Album*, 1933, 30.

27. *WLS Family Album*, 1933, 10-11. The quote, in full, as it appears on nineteenth-century songsters is: Music has charms to soothe a savage breast / To soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak.

music.”²⁸ The *National Barn Dance* and its performers made efforts to cater to the varied tastes described above. What emerged, however, was what Derek Vaillant refers to as the “sounds of whiteness,” a point I return to below.²⁹

While we cannot know exactly what this music sounded like on air, we do know from descriptions in the *Family Albums*, the names, instruments, and repertoire of many *Barn Dance* performers, and we can hear the music as it was captured on commercial recordings from the era. We also know that at least during the show’s early years, the on-air sound of broadcasting was of higher quality than that of recordings. Writing for the *WLS Family Album* in 1933, one commentator described the technical conditions of radio broadcast:

Another thing that many people do not realize is that music for the radio must be far more precise than for the stage or an ordinary concert performance. Errors that would pass undetected on the stage would be picked up by the sensitive microphone and be glaringly evident to the radio audience. That is the reason why, at almost any hour of the day, you will find individuals or groups of singers in the WLS rehearsal rooms, working over their music.³⁰

The sensitive radio microphones described above may have highlighted mistakes, but they also facilitated the crooning style of singing that would become so popular and further reinforce the intimacy shared between listeners and performers.

Although broadcast from Chicago, the *National Barn Dance* featured many performers who had relocated for a chance to make it on the radio. As I detail below, the

28. *WLS Family Album*, 1933, 30.

29. Derek Vaillant, “Sounds of Whiteness: Local Radio, Racial Formation, and Public Culture in Chicago, 1921-1935,” *American Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (March, 2002): 25-66.

30. *WLS Family Album*, 1933, 30.

roots of these performers were fantastically romanticized for the purposes of uniting rural audiences and distinctions between them were flattened. Most of these musical acts performed as solo artists, as duos, or in small ensembles, employing fiddle, accordion, banjo, drums, clarinet, harmonica, guitar, and harmony singing. The show focused predominantly on what the performers and promoters referred to as “old-time music”—but this moniker referred to a range of musics from minstrel songs and nineteenth-century sentimental ballads to children’s songs and newly composed hillbilly hits. When the performers strayed from the “old-time” repertory—and there is evidence to suggest that they did—*Prairie Farmer* and the station’s producers heard about it through letters from listeners.³¹

Published sheet music from the era also gives us a good idea of the music heard on the *National Barn Dance*. In 1935 the M. M. Cole Publishing Co. from Chicago published a volume of sheet music entitled *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites*. The volume, compiled by John Lair, the station’s music librarian at that point, features the show’s principal song repertory and its associated performers. Its cover sports a list of songs not unlike the genre-organized songs listed on the title pages of nineteenth-century songsters: pioneer songs, southern songs, cowboy songs, fiddle tunes, sacred songs, mountain songs, and home songs. Lair’s foreword to the volume explains that the songs included were chosen based on a combination of listeners’ requests balanced with practical concerns such as the need to omit songs that were already protected under copyright or

31. Occasionally, such letters were reprinted in *Stand-By!*, another of *Prairie Farmer*’s supplemental print publications which emerged as a weekly between 1935 and 1938.

with unattainable publication rights. Lair goes on to explain that the songbook caters to the wishes and requests of *Barn Dance* listeners: “Outside of the exceptions listed above, we have religiously followed the expressed wishes of our listeners in making up this book, and the songs you’ll find between these covers are the ones you and your neighbor asked for.”³² Like other *Barn Dance* promotional materials, compliance to audience demands is highlighted as part of a rhetorical strategy of participation and belonging.

According to the songs compiled in *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites*, performers favored sentimental songs—an amalgam of nineteenth-century hits, including Thomas P. Westendorf’s “I’ll Take You Home Again, Kathleen,” H. P. Danks’s “Silver Threads Among the Gold,” and Henry Bishop’s “Home Sweet Home”; minstrel songs including “The Yellow Rose of Texas” and Stephen Foster’s “Oh, Susannah”; spirituals like “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”; anonymous traditionals such as “Bury Me Beneath the Willow”; and the John Lair originals “Take Me Back to Renfro Valley” and “Bring Me Back My Blue Eyed Boy.” The majority of these songs are steeped in sentimentality—from the performance of emotion to themes of home, family, and death. Even the comically titled faux-spiritual “Me and My Burro” by Fred Howard and Nat Vincent is sentimental: “Me an’ my Burro / Are on our last long ride / We’re headin’ for the Promised Land / Up on the Jordan’s side.” Appendix C lists all of the songs included in *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites*.

The last song included in the volume is “Home, Sweet Home,” which is listed as the “official barn dance closing song.” On the *Barn Dance*, the song was associated with

32. John Lair, ed., “Foreword,” *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites* (Chicago: M. M. Cole Publishing Company, 1935), 1.

Bill O’Conner, an Irish ballad singer, who was known for his renditions of sentimental songs. As the closing theme, “Home, Sweet Home” occupied a significant position as the last audible trace before the end of the show. A show’s director would have made such a selection carefully, knowing that the last song needed to set the appropriate farewell tone while lingering significantly in the auditor’s mind such that she will yearn to return the following week. In this case, the last line of the last song is: “Home, home, sweet, sweet home. There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home.” If there was any lingering doubt about the values promoted on the *Barn Dance*, “Home, Sweet Home” as the closing theme settled the show firmly within the domestic sphere, but made public via radio. Henry Bishop and John Howard Payne’s familiar 1823 song, which retained its popularity throughout the nineteenth century, made its return home by entering into the homes of listeners.

Promotional director George C. Biggar closes *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites* with a full-page article entitled “When the Cowbells Ring Out on Saturday Night.” In this write-up, Biggar discusses the popularity of the *National Barn Dance*, its history on air, and its relation to earlier social practices of communal dances and entertainments. Biggar makes it clear that the *Barn Dance* should appeal to people from rural communities and to those who shared similarly romantic idealizations of the past. He sets up an idealized rural space that contrasts with the city and modernity, in general:

Why is the National Barn Dance popular? That is a question that city critics—with little or no understanding of the background of American folk music and rural life—have been unable to answer. They cannot understand the happy memories that the playing of old-fashioned breakdowns, schottisches and polkas brings to the older folks. They do not comprehend the thrill that a man or woman gets upon hearing, for the first time in years, a song that grandmother used to sing.

It has not been part of their experience to take part in a happy, wholesome, unsophisticated sociable or barn dance in a rural community.³³

Biggar goes on to explain how he understands the role of music:

We folks at WLS believe that the choice of old-time songs and dance tunes on the National Barn Dance has had much to do with the success of this program. John Lair—in this splendid book—has collected many of those that have proved most popular. He has been able to do this because he has the experience and the understanding to sense the types of numbers that WLS Barn Dance listeners most enjoy. He knows that this program must have the songs that tug at the heart strings, as well as the ‘toe-ticklers.’³⁴

As Biggar explains it, music is the primary vehicle through which people experience affective identification with community, and the particular kind of music featured on the *Barn Dance* promotes rural values and identities.

The title of Biggar’s article holds particular significance for ideas about community. He explains the semiotic function of the bells on the *Barn Dance*:

Cowbells ring out announcing that the Barn Dance is on the air. Somehow cowbells fill the bill better than anything else. During the westward trek of the pioneers who built our country, the faithful family cow was not left behind. She was needed to provide wholesome milk to make staunch men and women. There were no fences in those days, so naturally the settlers kept track of ‘Bossie’ by the tinkling of the cowbell hanging from her neck.³⁵

Bells, however, were not just an idiosyncrasy in Biggar’s promotional style.

Bells permeated WLS’s print publications, serving as a visual cue to an audible signature that linked the *Barn Dance* audience to an imagined American past. As recent

33. George Biggar, “When the Cowbells Ring Out On Saturday Night,” *100 WLS Barn Favorites*, 96.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*

sound studies scholarship on bells has shown, bells play an important role in constituting community and organizing societies. Alain Corbin writes,

The rural peals of the nineteenth century, which have become for us the sound of another time, were *listened to*, and evaluated according to a system of affects that is now lost to us. They bear witness to a different relation to the world and to the sacred as well as to a different way of being inscribed in time and space, and of experiencing time and space. The reading of the auditory environment would then constitute one of the procedures involved in the construction of identities, both of individuals and of communities. Bell ringing constituted a language and founded a system of communication that has gradually broken down. It gave rhythm to forgotten modes of relating between individuals and between the living and the dead. It made possible forms of expression, now lost to us, of rejoicing and conviviality... The Romantics—Schiller, Chateaubriand, and Lamartine among them—had grasped the intense power of the bell to evoke, to impart a feeling of time passing, foster reminiscence, recover things forgotten, and to consolidate an individual's identification with a primordial auditory site.³⁶

Significantly, Corbin focuses on the role that bells played in communities and identities of the past and the powerful affective role they played in marking the passage of time.

National Barn Dance promoters understood from early on that they were reaching back into the past. They explicitly used imagery to align communal bells with the kind of audio communities being worked upon with and through radio. The cover of a souvenir program from the mid 1930s, for instance, depicts a giant cowbell that resounds with the words "NATIONAL BARN DANCE" (figure 2.3). The bell is superimposed over a microphone and signed with the names of the Barn Dance performers. In 1932, the cover of the WLS Family Album featured an oversized dinner bell, linking it to the station's appropriately titled Dinner Bell program. Similarly, the 1931 Family Album portrays a series of bells hanging on hooks with the following caption written beneath:

36. Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound & Meaning in the 19th-Century French*, trans. Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), xiv-x.

You Hear These Every Saturday Night. Probably nowhere else can be found a collection of cowbells so unique as those which you hear on the WLS Barn Dance every Saturday night. One of them traveled West in a covered wagon, nearly 100 years ago. Some have been brought from Switzerland. It's a lot of fun when we have a dignified visitor in the studio on Saturday night, to give him a couple of cowbells and ask him to help out (figure 4).³⁷

The *Barn Dance* used an old visual language to promote a new audible medium and in so doing, signaled the communities constituted by each—of both the present and the past.



Figure 2.3. *WLS National Barn Dance Souvenir Program*, author's personal collection.

37. *WLS Family Album*, 1931, 43.

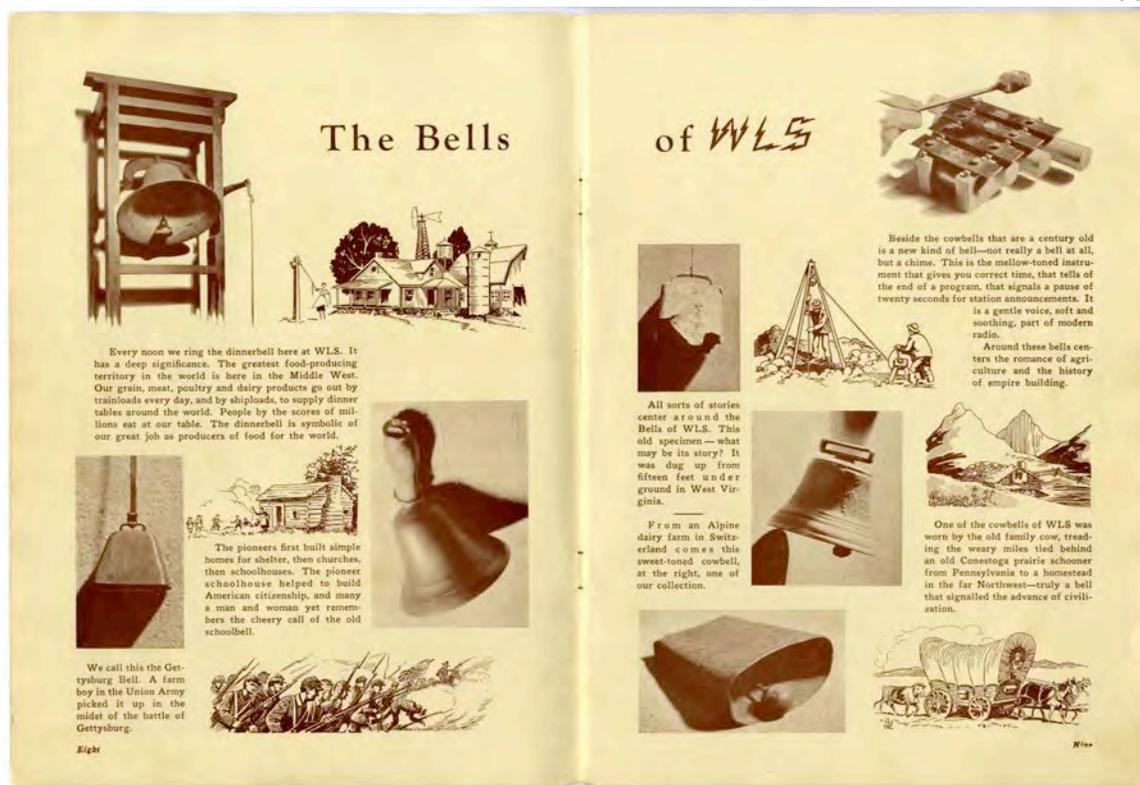


Figure 2.4. Page from *WLS Family Album* (1931), author's personal collection.

The Sound of Whiteness

Two early *Barn Dance* stars reinforced ideas about community through their respective song performances. While Gene Autry and Bradley Kincaid certainly sounded different from each other, they were both promoted as proponents an idealized rural past. Their musical backgrounds were also quite different, but the sounds they performed were similarly used as a means to endorse folk music, which importantly included sentimental ballads; the sound of those performances was promoted as the sound of whiteness.

My hearing of these sounds builds on the work of scholars like Derek Vaillant and Michael Bertrand. Vaillant argues that local radio stations in this era helped to construct meaningful on-air as well as face-to-face communities through music and cultural affairs

programs. Often based on ethnicity and/or class, these broadcasting communities “altered public culture because it linked public and private spaces into new on-air configurations that offered listeners fresh ways of mentally and physically locating themselves and others within the neighborhood, the metropolis, and the nation itself.”³⁸ Vaillant explains that the airwaves worked to validate shared languages, histories, and cultural backgrounds. He goes on to write that the radio both empowered communities and strengthened ethnic institutions, in a “display of broadcast Americanism” and it simultaneously excluded and marginalized African Americans, who were “barred from the broadcast control room prior to 1928.”³⁹ Vaillant refers to this as the “struggle over musical publics,” which originated not with radio necessarily but with musical performance. He writes,

These struggles shifted to broadcasting in the 1920s as local radio circulated to a broad range of musical styles and produced variously constituted musical “publics” of listeners who used music in part to signal and elaborate identity both within groups organized by class, ethnicity, gender, race, or sexuality, as well as across these socially constructed divides. Those with access to the airwaves remapped urban social and cultural geography and in so doing entered into a greater struggle for a voice within an urban public culture in which representations of race, ethnicity, and American identity linked and divided listeners and citizens.⁴⁰

While clearly concerned with music, Vaillant says little about what those sounds actually were. In the case of the *Barn Dance*, the musical selections and repertoire mattered very much in constituting the sounds of whiteness.

38. Vaillant, 25.

39. Ibid., 26.

40. Ibid., 27.

Michael T. Bertrand argues similarly that the *National Barn Dance* offered a means of identity formation for rural people—a way to understand who they were, which also worked by process of excluding who they were not.

The rise of radio barn dance programs in the 1920s and 1930s represented a process whereupon tradition adapted to modernity and traditionalists adopted commercial or popular culture for their own purposes. The agenda of these traditionalists included, but was not exclusive to, disassociating themselves from the Jazz Age and all that it symbolized. In implementing their design, they put forward a vision of the American past and present that emphasized morality, harmony, and community. And above all, whiteness.⁴¹

Like Pecknold, Bertrand argues that part of the traditionalist agenda was to disassociate white Americans from black expressive culture and to promote whiteness. Bertrand discusses many of the aspects of the whiteness that the *National Barn Dance* helped its listeners to imagine, including the use of popular minstrel characters, images printed in accompanying publications, and the intimacy enacted by the show's performers and promoters. However, he does not go into great detail concerning the sound of whiteness that the show constructed nor the song repertory which played such an important role in this process.

Bradley Kincaid's Sentimental Ballads

In the late 1920s, Bradley Kincaid (1895-1989) earned his reputation as a popular ballad singer on WLS's *National Barn Dance*. Between 1926 and 1930 Kincaid performed weekly on the *Barn Dance* before moving on to other radio barn dance shows across the Midwest. However, it was on the *Barn Dance* that Kincaid first marketed

41. Bertrand, 133.

himself as the “Kentucky Mountain Boy” with his “Houn’ Dog guitar,” monikers that he would continue to use in order to develop his career and image as a singer and performer. Kincaid used his position on the *National Barn Dance* to advance ideas about the purity of folk culture and specifically, his performance of sentimental ballads made audible this so-called purity of culture and sound of whiteness.

Kincaid’s biography was used to situate him as an authority on and a vessel of rural Kentucky musical culture.⁴² His songbooks constructed a persona that uniquely positioned Kincaid as having access to a culture untouched by modernity and urbanism. In later interviews, Kincaid echoed the same tropes and pushed hard to sell the romancing of the folk.

Kincaid became wise to the values that made his career. In interviews he continually referenced family and his rural lifestyle. His familiarity with older repertory, he explained, came from his family; his parents sang from shape note books and his father was particularly proficient with popular songs from the 1880s and 90s. He goes on to note that he learned “After the Ball” and “Two Little Girls in Blue” from his father and “Lord Randall,” “Fair Ellen,” and “Two Sisters” from his mother. He elaborated further:

42. Born in 1895 in Gerrard County, Kentucky, Kincaid was the fourth of nine children. His mother died at the age of thirty-nine during the birth of her tenth child. Kincaid completed up to his fifth grade education in three-month schools, which operated according to the farming schedule. By the time he was eleven, Kincaid was out of school, “knocking about”—in his words, and had gained work at a wheel shop in Louisville. It only took a few years before he realized that education was important to him; at the age of nineteen he entered Berea College where he completed his sixth, seventh, and eighth grades over the course of two years. At twenty-one, Kincaid joined the army and went overseas. Upon his return, now twenty-three, he entered high school, which he completed in three years. In school, Kincaid found love and married his music teacher, Irma Foreman. Bradley and Irma Kincaid had four children, including twin girls who they named Barbara and Aileen after Kincaid’s signature song, “Barbara Allen.”

She [his mother] knew a great many of the old English ballads, and those I learned from her. Between the two of them, my father and my mother, I learned a great many of the old-time songs—songs that a great many never were written, that were handed down from one generation to the other, by word of mouth...From her parents. They were just handed down. My father, oh, he knew no end of them. He could sit down and just sing and sing and sing these old songs that he had learned. He was raised back there up in the hills of Kentucky, back at the edge of the Cumberlands, where the boulevard dwindles down to a squirrel's path and loses itself at the foot of the giant trees, those trees. He was really what you'd call from the hills.⁴³

Even the guitar Kincaid played—his famous “‘Houn’ Dog Guitar”—took its name from his family: his father acquired it through a trade during a foxhunting trip when Kincaid was six. In *Country Music, U.S.A.*, Bill Malone and Jocelyn Neal explain that Kincaid's choice of repertory had more to do with demand than personal preference: “A fellow classmate...informed Don Malin, the WLS music director, that Kincaid also knew a lot of folksongs. Malin contacted Kincaid about doing a fifteen-minute show on WLS, and Kincaid, who had not sung folksongs for years, borrowed a guitar and began brushing up on the old songs from back home.”⁴⁴

Kincaid's reminiscences similarly romanticize the era during which people played music together, emphasizing that music formed an important part of family functions in Kentucky. Kincaid remembered,

Most families knew a few songs. I had a bunch of cousins, my mother's half-brothers of hers that lived about two miles from us. They were quite talented with

43. Bradley Kincaid, interview by Douglas B. Green, July 10, 1974, transcript, Country Music Foundation Oral History Project, Frist Library and Archive of the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, Nashville, TN. The Country Music Hall of Fame conducted two interviews with Kincaid—the first occurred in 1967 and the second, a much more extensive interview, was conducted in 1974.

44. Bill C. Malone and Jocelyn R. Neal, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, 3rd ed. (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 55.

musical instruments. They had the fiddles and the banjos and the guitars and everything. They could really fiddle up a storm. They fiddled for dances.⁴⁵

Social music making was not just limited to Kincaid's friends and family:

Well, as I said, the church became sort of a gathering place, a social place, and there are some very interesting things about it. People would join the church in the summertime, usually when they had a revival in the spring, revival meetings, and they would do what they called dancing out in the winter. The church didn't allow them to dance. You'd hear them after the dance the next day. I'm speaking now as a kid on the sidelines listening, see. The next day there'd be talking, and you'd hear one say, "Did you hear about Mary Jones? She danced out last night." She danced out of the church. If she went to that dance and danced, then her name was taken off the church list. So the only way she could get back was to quit dancing and join again.⁴⁶

But the important point is that music making did occur in everyday social interactions as a way of maintaining social and communal bonds; it was an integral part of daily life.

In 1928, Kincaid—along with WLS's station manager—recognized the potential for using radio to sell the music that was performed on air. Kincaid recalled,

As I told you, the station was owned by Sears, Roebuck and Company. That's what brought on the songbook. These songs—Sears, Roebuck always prided themselves on being able to answer every question that their customers asked or furnish everything that they wanted. That was their business. Well, people started to write in for these songs. In desperation, they called the station and said, "Look, that guy's saying songs that nobody ever heard of. Now, how can we get them? Our customers are asking for them. We want them. What are we going to do? Bye-bye."

The manager called me in in desperation and says, "Brad, what about this? Sears is asking me. They're on my back about these songs." And that culminated in this first songbook. Funny thing about that, he said, "Why don't you get out a little booklet and sell it over this air?" I said, "I'm just a college student. I don't have any money to publish any songbook." He said, "Well, you get it together, and we'll see what we can do."

I thought, well, I'd get it together, and they'd publish it and take care of the matter. So, as I told you, these songs never had been written down, most of

45. Kincaid, 1974.

46. Kincaid, 1974.

them. So I would hum the tune to my wife, and she would write down just the melody notes. Then I copied them all. I handled a typewriter pretty well. So I wrote them all out, each one on a separate sheet, on the typewriter. I think I had twenty-seven in all. I put them in a manila folder—⁴⁷

The songbooks were initially produced in limited batches, and with promotion from Sears, Roebuck, Kincaid began selling them on air for 50 cents each. By the time he left WLS, Kincaid claimed to have saved \$10,000 from the sales of the books. Throughout his career, Kincaid released a total of thirteen songbooks, but the idea emerged while he was still performing on the *Barn Dance*; his first three songbooks were published during his tenure at WLS and his years on the *Barn Dance*, and they bear the imprint of the station.

Each of Kincaid's songbooks features lengthy and descriptive front matter: commentary from radio personnel, personal notes from Kincaid to his audience, and photographs of Kincaid with his family and with the *National Barn Dance* crew in their studios. The front matter promotes Kincaid as a proponent of American tradition, preserved by the isolation of the mountains, and asserts ownership over a song tradition that allegedly belonged solely to Euro-American settlers.

The first songbook, published in 1928 and copyrighted to Kincaid, is a simple, square-shaped book with a blue cover that reads: "My Favorite Mountain Ballads and Old-Time Songs..Bradley Kincaid [As Sung Over WLS The Prairie Farmer Station] (figure 2.5).

47. Ibid.

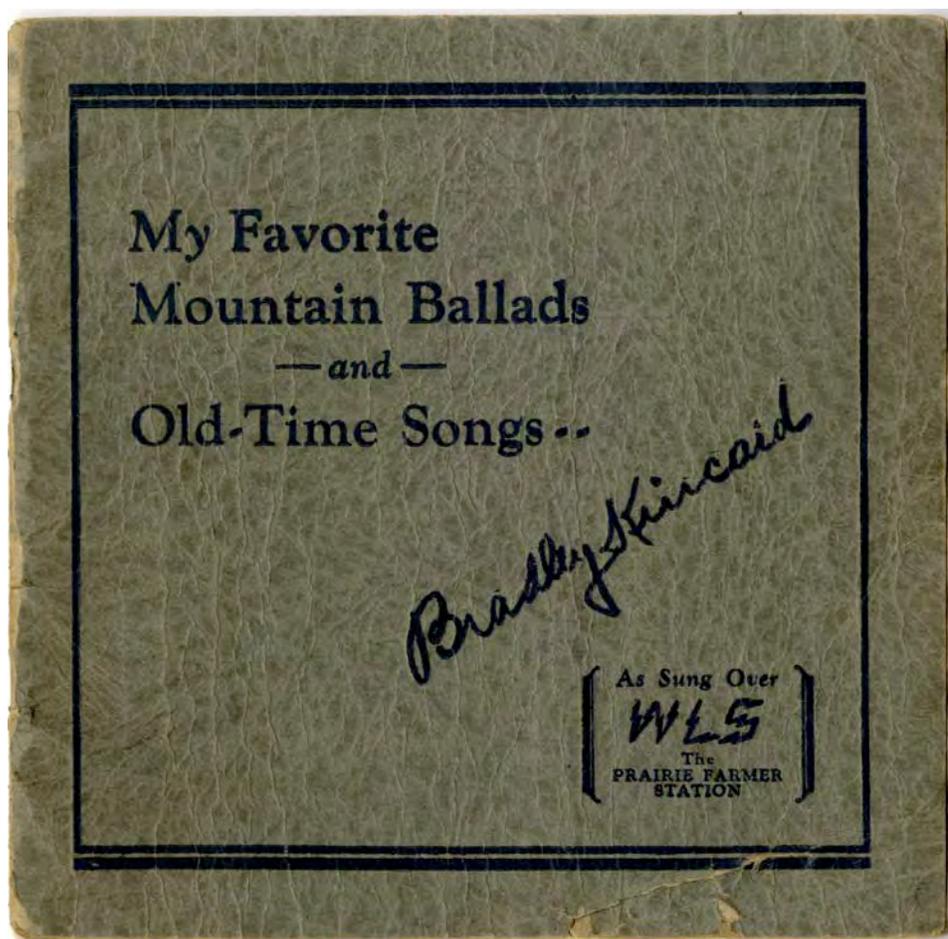


Figure 2.5. Bradley Kincaid's first songbook (1928), author's personal collection.

The foreword reads:

To those who live in the mountains this little booklet will represent a group of familiar songs. To those who live outside of the mountains it will represent the life and spirit of a people in whose veins runs the purest strain of Anglo-Saxon blood to be found anywhere in America. These mountain ballads are songs that grew out of the life and experiences of hardy Scotch, Irish, German, English and Dutch natives, who came to America because they desired freedom and the right to worship according to their own desires. They are the people who braved the unknown forests, established their crude huts and feared no one save the God whom they devoutly worshipped. It was around the hearthstones of these poor, though proud settlers that these songs were born. They are not songs that were written for commercial purposes—they were never written, but were handed down by word of mouth. They are the outbursts of hearts overflowing with emotion. Some of them are joyous and carefree; others are sad, and relate a

pathetic story of unrequited love which touches the heart of every listener. The early mountaineer knew nothing of the piano, but used the guitar, the banjo or the dulcimer for accompaniment to his songs.⁴⁸

It is unclear from the presentation in the songbook who exactly penned this foreword. But in some senses it doesn't really matter; this text becomes a part of the whole package being sold by Kincaid and the *National Barn Dance*.

Don Malin, musical director at WLS, who had encouraged Kincaid to sing the old sentimental ballads on air in the first place, offered up the following for his Preface to Kincaid's second songbook in 1929:

...The preservation of our American folk songs is a project very dear to our hearts at WLS. Opera, symphony, oratorio, chamber music—all are represented in our programs, but it is for folk songs, 'the music of the people,' that we save the greatest portion of our broadcasting day. The songs which Bradley Kincaid has collected and published in this book have come straight from the hearts of the Mountain Folk of Eastern America. In directing your attention to these folk songs, Bradley works hand in hand with WLS in one of our most cherished policies. It is a privilege to commend his Second Book of Mountain Ballads to all who love the old songs. And we say with the Englishman: "Since singing is so good a thing, I wish all men would learne to singe" (1588).⁴⁹

Here, Malin explicitly endorses Kincaid as a collector, and claims WLS's role in preservation, promotion, and tradition. Malin importantly relates the practice to the past.

For this second songbook, WLS deepened its investment in such promotional tactics by offering an introduction from John F. Smith, Professor of Rural Sociology at Berea College. Smith's introduction serves to authenticate Kincaid's songs under the scientific paradigm of collecting that was based on assumptions of racial difference and

48. Bradley Kincaid, *My Favorite Mountain Ballads and Old Time Songs* (1928), 6.

49. Don Malin, "Preface," in *Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads*, Book 2, Bradley Kincaid (1929), 4.

an investment in promoting the inherent superiority of white, European people and

the products of their expressive culture. Smith's Introduction is worth quoting at length:

In these days of made-to-order music it is refreshing to be able to hear the songs that come direct from the soil and which still lie close to the hearts of the singers. The hopes, the disappointments, and much of the life of a large portion of the people of the rural Southland are reflected in the songs which may be heard echoing back and forth among the fields and groves of that great region. Many of these songs and ballads were brought by our pioneer forefathers from their homelands across the sea, where they had long been sung as an expression of the souls of a rugged people. As soon as their strains reached the American shores they became acclimated and have ever since been intimately related to the social life of our own citizens. . . . These mountain ballads are songs that grew out of the life and experience of hardy Scotch, Irish, German, English and Dutch natives, who came to America because they desired freedom and the right to worship according to their own desires. Thus the outburst of song was generally from hearts overflowing with emotion. Some are joyous and carefree. Others are sad and relate a pathetic story which should touch the heart of every listener. This effort to preserve some of our choice folk songs in a volume which thousands can afford to purchase is to be highly commended. Both words and music are fresh from the southern hills where life is abundant and where hearts respond readily to the gentle tones that have long gladdened the lives of the people.⁵⁰

Smith merges the democratic American right to purchase with the rhetoric of purity and emotion. By Smith's account, European settlers, free from the taint of modernity, have access to an unparalleled expression of emotion thereby laying claim to the traditions of sentimental balladry writ large in the United States.

On the following page, Kincaid adds his own greeting which is addressed "To My Radio Friends":

Thousands of letters have poured into the station asking for songs that I have used in my programs, which have never been published, and thus are not available elsewhere. For the most part, the songs contained in this book are songs of the people—true American folk songs. Many of them were brought over here from England, Scotland and Ireland by our early ancestors. I get a great deal of

50. John F. Smith, "Introduction," in *Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 2*, Bradley Kincaid (1929), 5.

enjoyment out of singing them, because—in the first place, I love to sing, and in the second place, these are the songs, at least in my opinion, that are most worth singing. I hope that everyone who receives this little songbook will take it as a personal message from one who is deeply grateful for so many fine and helpful friends. Should the book find its way into the hands of those who have not heard ‘The Mountain Boy’ over WLS, I trust that it will bring to them that spirit of friendliness and good cheer which the author sincerely hopes to convey.⁵¹

Opposite from Kincaid’s address to his “radio friends” appears a photograph of Kincaid, his wife, Irma, and their twins, Barbara and Aileen.

And, before the table of contents even appears, completing an elaborate ten pages of front matter, Stephen A. Cisler, a WLS radio executive, contributes a short essay entitled “Bradley Kincaid and the Mountains.” Cisler’s essay speaks to Kincaid’s authentic Kentucky roots and his birthright to mountain traditions:

In Bradley Kincaid, our ‘Mountain Boy’ at WLS, we have a native son bringing the old songs of his people down to the lowlands. Born of native Kentuckians in Garrard county near the edge of the Blue Grass region, Bradley grew up surrounded by all the traditions and customs of mountain folk. The singing of old ballads was the main source of entertainment for the young boy of the mountains as he whiled away lonely hours on the front stoop of the little country home.⁵²

The front matter printed in Kincaid’s songbooks effectively takes ownership of the songs included therein. They are touted as the songs of the people, but it is clear that the definition of the people is a limited one.

Perhaps it is C. G. Gilbert, the station’s business manager, who offers the most over-the-top promotion for Kincaid and the *National Barn Dance*. In Kincaid’s third songbook, Gilbert writes:

51. Bradley Kincaid, “To My Radio Friends,” in *Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 2*, (1929), 6.

52. Stephen A. Cisler, “Bradley Kincaid and the Mountains,” in *Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 2*, Bradley Kincaid (1929), 8.

The mountain ballads Mr. Kincaid sings were not written for commercial purposes. The music and words burst forth from the hardy, mountain people at a time when they are happy and contented in their homes and at peace with God and the world. These songs were compiled and arranged because of the many requests from listeners all over the United States...He [Bradley] is most sincere in his work and brings you these mountain ballads that you may better understand and appreciate the homely pathos and inborn simplicity of our Southern mountaineers.⁵³

It is no small irony that the station's business manager would claim the songs as non-commercial.

In the middle of the volume, Burrige Butler interrupts with a message entitled "I Listen When Bradley Sings." Butler explains that Kincaid's "work on the radio is an inspiration to the farm boys and girls in Prairie Farmer's territory, and to the old folks as well. Bradley is helping us to further the ideals and principles on which Prairie Famer is founded."⁵⁴ Through the performance, preservation, and promotion of folk songs, Kincaid is made to stand as the moral compass of the station—a symbol of tradition with unique ties to the past.

Kincaid's songbooks bear a strong resemblance to other folk songbooks published around the same time or even earlier. Each tune features a melody line with lyrics printed below, but neither chords nor accompaniment are indicated. The songbook versions offer some idiosyncratic transcriptions with odd meters and rhythmic figures as well as key signatures that ultimately do not match Kincaid's recorded versions. Other song

53. C. G. Gilbert, "In Conclusion," in *Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 2*, Bradley Kincaid (1929), 39.

54. Burrige Butler, "I Listen When Bradley Sings," in *Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 2*, Bradley Kincaid (1929), 20.

melodies, however, seem to have been plucked directly from previously printed and widely available commercial editions.

Despite his insistence that his songs had never been written down and were in need of preservation, many collectors had indeed published Kincaid's songs by this point. In Appendix D, I have listed the songs compiled in the first three volumes of Kincaid's songbooks, published while he was at WLS and on the *Barn Dance*. The table offers a preliminary comparison with a few contemporaneously published songbooks, showing that from Kincaid's nearly one hundred songs, roughly a third of them had previously appeared in other well-known sources.⁵⁵ There is significant overlap between Kincaid's songbook tunes and those published earlier by twentieth century folklorists, including John Lomax, Cecil Sharp, Louise Pound, and Carl Sandburg, to name only a few.⁵⁶ Kincaid's folk songs from the heart of the mountain folk also included nineteenth-century commercial songs by professional songwriters: Alice Hawthorne's sentimental ballads, discussed in the first chapter, Charles K. Harris's runaway hit "After the Ball," and Thomas P. Westendorf's "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen."

55. I have no doubt that further investigation of other contemporaneously published sources would increase this percentage. Even a preliminary comparison illustrates the extent to which Kincaid's claims of originality were vastly overstated.

56. See John A. Lomax, ed., *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1910); Cecil J. Sharp and Olive Dame Campbell, eds., *English Folksongs From the Southern Appalachians* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917); Louise Pound, ed., *American Ballads and Songs* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922); and Carl Sandburg, ed., *The American Songbag* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927).

Kincaid fancied himself a folk collector. He explained that several of his teachers at Berea were interested in folk music which had sparked his own interest in collecting. He recalled,

Now, during that time I was in Berea, I got greatly interested in and gathered a lot of the old folksongs. A number of my teachers were interested in the folk music. Most of the people in Berea were from the mountains, even the teachers—not all of them, but a great many of them, who were teachers, people who had come out of the mountains, got some education at Berea, gone on to the University of Kentucky or someplace else and finished up their education and then came back to teach at Berea.

Given the interest both Kincaid and his wife expressed in folk songs, it seems unlikely that Kincaid would not have ever encountered the published versions of such songs even if he did actually learn them as they were passed down through oral tradition. Richard Peterson refers to “tradition as a renewable resource,” explaining that for record company prospectors like Fred Walker, Ralph Peer, and Art Satherley, among others, old traditional songs offered a pragmatic solution to concerns about already copyrighted materials. Of course, this would cause problems in situations when performers would claim authorship over “copyrighted older popular songs that had entered the oral tradition,” but this tactic proved to be a successful strategy to avoid paying royalties to other authors and publishers.⁵⁷

Kincaid and his teachers, however, were not the only people interested in folk culture at the time; they were a part of a cultural milieu that was reassessing its relationship to folk cultures and folkways in prominent ways. As Karl Hagstrom Miller has written, the early twentieth century was marked by a deep interest in folk song and

57. Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 34.

collecting, guided by the ethnological and folklorist paradigms that dominated this period.⁵⁸ The American Folklore Society, for instance, formed in 1888, and ethnologists including Frances Densmore and Alice Fletcher, collected the sounds and songs of American Indians in the same period. These efforts were largely part of the conviction and concern over the modernization of life and the disappearance of certain cultural forms because of this process. As Miller points out, these beliefs were founded on isolationist assumptions that presume the possibility of pure and untainted cultures.

Kincaid drew on these values to market his music to an eager public. As the above makes clear, Kincaid had absorbed the rhetoric of both isolationism and authenticity that marked early twentieth-century ethnology and folk collecting, emphasizing that the songs he sang were from the aural tradition and that his father was truly from the backwoods. Purity of blood, brave, poor, and emotional are the qualities used to describe the early singers of these songs. By this characterization, the songs themselves were not the product of commercial machinations, but rather the pure emotive expressions of the people who sang them. As Benjamin Filene writes in *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music*,

What makes the formation of America's folk canon so fascinating, though, is that just as isolated cultures became harder to define and locate in industrialized America, the notions of musical purity and primitivism took on enhanced value, even in avowedly commercial music. Twentieth-century Americans have been consistently searching for the latest incarnation of 'old-time' and 'authentic' music. Such terms may have lost their referents, but their cultural power has remained undiminished.⁵⁹

58. Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 85-120.

59. Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory and American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 3.

Of course these songs were associated with European settlers; but they were also well embedded within hybridized musical traditions, and to anoint them with purity of blood was to assert white supremacy in the realm of expressive culture. What we are meant to hear in this promotional material, which I can only assume was an important part of how Kincaid was also promoted on the air, is that Kincaid owned these traditions. In democratic American fashion, he offers his willingness to share them. They are of his people, the mountain folk, but they truly belong to all Americans of white, Anglo origins.

More than any other song, Kincaid was known for his performances of “Barbara Allen” which he reportedly performed every week on the *National Barn Dance* for each of the four years he was there. In 1927, Kincaid recorded “Barbara Allen” for Gennett Records. Interestingly, Gennett is best remembered as a jazz label, responsible for promoting artists such as Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver, and Louis Armstrong. Kincaid also recorded for Conqueror Records, a label sold exclusively through Sears, Roebuck and Company.

Kincaid’s late 1920s recordings conform to the limits of the medium, hovering at around three minutes in length. Because his ballads often had numerous verses, Kincaid had to be selective on recording. For instance, his recorded version of “Barbara Allen” has twelve verses while the songbook version has seventeen (figure 2.6). Given the popularity of his performance of the song and that the quality of radio broadcast was higher than that of sound recordings at the time, it seems likely that Kincaid would have opted to perform all of the verses on the radio.

BARBARA ALLEN

In Scarlet Town where I was born,
There was a fair maid dwelling,
Made every youth cry well away
Her name was Barbara Allen.

All in the merry month of May
When the green buds they were swelling,
Sweet William came from the Western states
And courted Barbara Allen.

It was all in the month of June,
When all things they were blooming,
Sweet William on his death bed lay
For the love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his servant to the town
Where Barbara was a dwelling,
My master is sick and sent for you
If your name is Barbara Allen.

And death is painted on his face,
And o'er his heart is stealing,
Then hasten away to comfort him,
O, lovely Barbara Allen.

So, slowly, slowly she got up
And slowly she came nigh him,
And all she said when she got there,
Young man I think you're dying.

Oh, yes I'm sick and very sick,
And death is on me dwelling,
No better, no better I never can be,
If I can't get Barbara Allen.

Oh, yes, you're sick and very sick,
And death is on you dwelling,
No better, no better, you never will be
For you can't get Barbara Allen.

Oh, don't you remember in yonder town,
When you were at the tavern,
You drank a health to the ladies all round
And slighted Barbara Allen!

Oh, yes, I remember in yonder town,
In yonder town a drinking,
I gave a health to the ladies all round,
But my heart to Barbara Allen.

As she was on her highway home,
The birds they kept a singing,
They sing so clear they seemed to say,
Hard hearted Barbara Allen.

As she was walking o'er the fields,
She heard the death bell knelling,
And every stroke did seem to say,
Hard hearted Barbara Allen.

BARBARA ALLEN (continued)

She looked to the east, she looked to the west.
She spied his corpse a-coming.
Lay down, lay down that corpse of clay
That I may look upon him.

The more she looked, the more she mourned,
Till she fell to the ground a crying,
Saying take me up and carry me home,
For I am now a dying.

O, Mother, O, Mother, go make my bed,
Go make it long and narrow,
Sweet William died for pure, pure love,
And I shall die for sorrow.

Oh, Father, O, Father, go dig my grave,
Go dig it long and narrow,
Sweet William died for me to-day
I'll die for him tomorrow.

She was buried in the old church yard,
And he was buried a-nigh her,
On William's grave there grew a red rose
On Barbara's grew a green briar.

I GAVE MY LOVE A CHERRY

I gave my love a cherry that had no stone,
I gave my love a chicken that had no bone,
I gave my love a ring that had no end,
I gave my love a baby with no cryin'!

How can there be a cherry without any stone?
How can there be a chicken that has no bone?
How can there be a ring that has no end?
How can there be a baby with no cryin'!

A cherry when it's blooming it has no stone.
A chicken when it's pippin has no bone.
A ring when it's rolling has no end.
A baby when it's sleeping has no crying.

Figure 2.6. Kincaid's seventeen verses of "Barbara Allen," in *My Favorite Mountain Ballads and Old-Time Songs* (1928), author's personal collection.

In Kincaid's hands, "Barbara Allen" features a simple guitar pattern to accompany to his solo "sweet tenor voice."⁶⁰ Kincaid's voice sounds strong without being operatic. He doesn't employ vibrato and sings in a rather narrow range. While his Southern accent is certainly discernible, it lacks the affected accentuation of other hillbilly singers of the time, such as Sara Carter's lead vocal with her nasally timbre or Jimmie Rodgers bluesy yodel. Kincaid recorded twelve verses of "Barbara Allen" for Gennett Records in 1927, and throughout he varies his melody only very slightly.

Kincaid's simple style of guitar accompaniment follows straight quarter-note patterns in an almost rigid style (figure 2.7). He does not bend the notes or allow them to reverberate and he does not syncopate his rhythmic patterns or play with rhythm. Most of the songs Kincaid sings are strophic in form, yet Kincaid doesn't seem to view the

60. Malone and Neal, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, 44.

repetitions as opportunities for expressive differences. Instead they are often relentless in their performance of sameness. Some of Kincaid's songs rely almost exclusively on tonic, subdominant, and dominant harmonies for accompaniments, while the commercial sentimental ballads utilize a more expressive harmonic pallet.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Barbara Allen" by Bradley Kincaid. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a guitar accompaniment on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first system starts with a common time signature (C) and a G major chord, followed by a 2/4 time signature and a D major chord. The lyrics are: "in scar-let town where i was born there was a fair maide". The second system starts with a 7-measure rest, then a common time signature (C) and a G major chord, followed by a 2/4 time signature and a D major chord, and ends with a common time signature (C) and a G major chord. The lyrics are: "dwel-lin' made ever-y youth cry well a-way her name was bar-bra al-len".

Figure 2.7. Transcription of Bradley Kincaid's "Barbara Allen."

Many of Kincaid's songs are in simple quadruple meter. For these, Kincaid employed a guitar strumming style now widely referred to as "Maybelling" or "Carter Strumming" after guitarist Maybelle Carter of The Carter Family. The style alternates a plucked bass note on beats one and three with strums on the treble strings on beats two and four. The bass line alternates between the root and the third or fifth of the chord. Kincaid uses each chord change as an opportunity to perform a stepwise scalar pattern that either walks down or up to the root of the subsequent chord. Because he also performed nineteenth-century hits, songs in simple triple meter also pervade Kincaid's repertory. For songs like the 1892 hit "After the Ball," Kincaid employs a similar

strumming pattern, retaining the stepwise walk up and walk down bass lines, but with two strummed chords for each bass note to facilitate the waltz rhythm (figure 2.8).

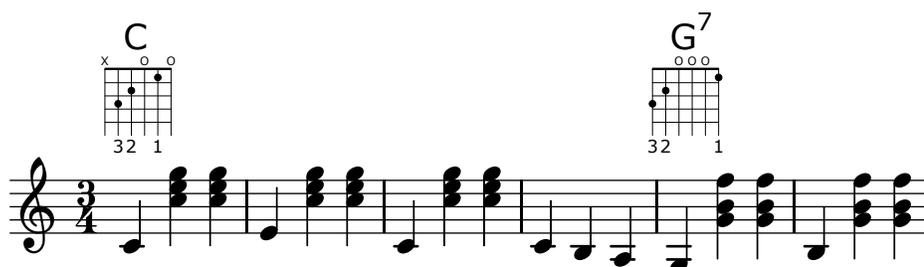


Figure 2.8. Bradley Kincaid's strumming pattern in "After the Ball."

Kincaid's recordings sound quite different from those of his early country music contemporaries. Maybelle Carter's guitar playing sounds busier than Kincaid's with swung, uneven eighth notes and syncopated rhythmic complexity, while Jimmie Rodgers offers a variety of instrumentation and illustrates the heavy influence of blues and jazz. Both Carter and Rodgers were outspoken about the influence of African American musical traditions on their music. Their histories seem in many ways not so unlike that of Kincaid, so it is striking that Kincaid was so insistent on the purity of his music. Kincaid, of course, began his performances on the *Barn Dance* a year before The Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers would have their now famous encounter with Ralph Peer at Bristol. Yet neither Rodgers nor the Carters began their careers at the moment that recording happened; they had been working as musicians for years prior, developing their respective styles, which included the influence and even instruction from musicians around them. Kincaid, on the other hand, seems to have either erased or ignored the sonic markers of African American influence in order to sell to the sound of whiteness. I am

wary here of the dangers of essentializing musical traits and musical difference; however, given the way that Kincaid promoted himself and the way he was promoted by WLS, it seems important to listen closely to what would have been heard as the sound of whiteness because of the ways in which it was marketed.

Gene Autry's Sentimental Songs

In 1932, after a couple of years of cutting discs for a variety of different record labels, Gene Autry (1907-1998) made his debut on the *National Barn Dance*. He had introduced his performing persona, “the Oklahoma Yodeling Cowboy,” on radio a few years earlier, but the *Barn Dance* is where he developed it. Like Kincaid, Autry’s biography was used to promote his rural roots. Autry was a second-generation Texan and grew up in a variety of locations around the Oklahoma-Texas border. As the eldest of four children with a mostly absent father, Autry worked several different jobs in his youth to help provide for his family. Friends and family remember Autry as a highly musical kid who even ended up touring with medicine shows during his teens. At seventeen, Autry began working as a telegrapher for the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad, where he maintained a position through the rise of his music career in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Autry was a success at WLS, which led to performances around the Midwest. Dedicated to his work, Autry quit his post at the Frisco once and for all in 1932 in order to spend his time meeting obligations in the studio and in various theaters.

Autry’s biography could just as easily be used to describe the careers of most *Barn Dance* performers, who, to borrow a phrase from Michael Ann Williams, engaged in the not wholly anti-modern process of staging tradition. Williams uses the phrase to

describe the careers of Sarah Gertrude Knott, founder of the National Folk Festival, and John Lair, who worked on WLS's *National Barn Dance*, and later created the Renfro Valley Barn Dance.⁶¹ Like other performers on the show, Autry migrated to the Chicago area to pursue success as a musician, and his success in that career was predicated on romanticizing the place he had left behind, especially in its associations with rugged individualism. In Holly George-Warren's words, "Gene Autry embraced the tools of the twentieth century to make his way in the world—cutting phonograph records, broadcasting over the radio, appearing in motion pictures and, later, television—yet he found stardom by reinventing the saga of the cowboy and the West through his music and image."⁶²

Autry's staging of tradition offers an interesting parallel to that of Kincaid: he wrote his own materials albeit very much in the sentimental tradition that Kincaid promoted. Autry was of an age that he grew up on nineteenth-century popular culture including dime novels, minstrel shows, vaudeville, and Buffalo Bill: he "merged old sensibilities with new ideas to create a persona that bridged the gap between two centuries."⁶³

Autry relied on the powerful sheet music industry to promote his star persona. By 1932 he had built up enough songwriting credits that he garnered the interest of M. M.

61. Michael Ann Williams, *Staging Tradition: John Lair and Sarah Gertrude Knott* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

62. Holly George-Warren, *Public Cowboy No. 1: The Life and Times of Gene Autry* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

63. George-Warren, 2.

Cole Publishing Co., Chicago's largest songbook publisher and the same company that compiled *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites*. M. M. Cole published *Gene Autry's Sensational Collection of Famous Original Cowboy Songs and Mountain Ballads* in 1932. Importantly, the title emphasizes Autry's repertoire and its originality. The cover of the volume boasts Autry's nickname, "The Oklahoma Yodeling Cowboy" and explains that Autry is "America's Greatest Radio and Recording Artist." The songbook features 30 big hits with words and music, guitar chords and piano accompaniment, ukulele chords, and yodel arrangements. The volume also plays up Autry's cowboy image: the cover features a drawing of Autry in his cowboy hat, neck scarf, and decorated cowboy boots (figure 2.9). He holds his Martin guitar, embossed with his own name along the neck. Standing in the middle of a field amidst steers, Autry is master of his domain. A ranch hand on horseback wields a lasso that spells out Autry's signature. Somewhat confoundingly, Autry props his foot up on a tree stump. Are we to understand Autry's music as so powerful that it fells trees? That Autry himself has mastered nature? Has Autry just chopped the tree with his own hands and fashioned a guitar from it without so much as breaking a sweat? Or, is it to show that Autry is as comfortable with the labor of music as he is with the labor of the ranch hand? A guitar or an axe; pick your tool. Regardless of which interpretation seems most apt, Autry presents himself here as of the people—the rural people of the west, or of the mountains. The specific geography seems to matter less than the implied fantasy.

No. 1

"The OKLAHOMA YODELING COWBOY"

GENE AUTRY'S

AMERICA'S GREATEST RADIO AND RECORDING ARTIST

Sensational Collection
of Famous Original
Cowboy Songs
and
Mountain Ballads

With WORDS AND MUSIC, GUITAR CHORDS
AND PIANO ACCOMPANIMENT,
UKULELE CHORDS AND
YODEL ARRANGEMENTS

Gene Autry

CONTAINS
30 BIG HITS
SUCH AS
THAT SILVER HAIR DADDY OF MINE
THE GANGSTER'S WARNING
I'LL BE THINKING OF YOU LITTLE GAL
MY OLD PAL OF YESTERDAY
WHY DON'T YOU COME
BACK TO ME
RHEUMATISM BLUES
AND 24 OTHERS

RICHIE'S
Musical Instruments Supplies
245 Arwells Av., Tol. Prov., Ill.

Published by **M.M. COLE PUBLISHING CO., Chicago**

Figure 2.9. Gene Autry's *Sensational Collection of Famous Original Cowboy Songs and Mountain Ballads* (Chicago: M. M. Cole Publishing Co., 1932), author's personal collection.

Like Kincaid's songbooks, Autry emphasized the originality of his compositions and his heartfelt gratitude to his radio listeners. Just inside the cover, the volume offers a message "To My Radio Friends," just like the address Kincaid offered his listeners only a few years earlier. Accompanied by a photo of Autry in a suit and tie, the greeting reads:

This book is my answer to the thousands of letters received, asking for my songs. Most of the numbers are my own compositions. They have never before been published. Each song was inspired by some happening, pleasant, comic or tragic, in my own life and travels. Many of them are about people whose life stories were unusual, interesting. These songs are your songs now. I hope that you will find as much pleasure in singing them as I have had in getting them ready for you.

To each and every one, who loves these cowboy and native American ballads, I dedicate this book. You tell me in your letters that you like these songs of mine, that they bring you much pleasure. It is just as true that your words of appreciation bring me much pleasure—and encouragement.

To you folks who have made this book possible, to Station WLS for its earnest cooperation, and to Anne Williams who has worked with me on this book, and announces me on Conqueror Record Time—a hearty "thank you."

GENE AUTRY

Similarly, Autry underscores a folk-like understanding of his songs: despite the fact that they were circulated on commercial recordings and sheet music—or more likely because of—Autry insists they are for the people now. Because Autry wrote or co-wrote his songs, he also makes an explicit connection between his own biography and the content of the songs.

Contemporary descriptions of Autry's performances rely on the adjectives "sincere" and "convincing." His success as a performer seems to have been predicated on an ability to be believable and truthful. These values are underscored in the song selections that Autry performed on the *Barn Dance*. Even though he had earned his early

reputation as a performer of more risqué and comic songs, his repertory on the *Barn Dance* emphasized the family values of the station and the sentimentalism of the songs.

Autry's musical influences included hillbilly artists Vernon Dalhart and Jimmie Rodgers, both of whom exhibited the influence of African American vernacular blues as well as minstrel songs. In his early recordings, Autry devoted time in the studio to making cover versions of Rodgers's blue yodels. He became recognized for his near perfect imitations of the hillbilly star who had achieved his success under the direction of Ralph Peer at Victor Records. Rodgers was known for performing cowboy ballads, sexy pop tunes, sentimental old-time songs, and down home blues, a repertoire that Autry mimicked on his early sides.⁶⁴

On air, however, Autry performed mostly Western songs and old fashioned favorites like "Home on the Range." Autry's announcer friend Ann Williams used her powers as emcee to play up Autry's buckaroo persona and romanticize his Oklahoma/Texas roots.⁶⁵ Apparently, she even suggested that Autry arrive at the studio on horseback. His other main influence came from his mentor and collaborator Jimmy Long, a colleague from the Frisco Railroad. Long taught Autry many ballads in the sentimental tradition and his own songwriting bore witness to this influence. In 1929, Autry recorded a cover version of Rodgers's "Daddy and Home," a song that undoubtedly influenced the original hit that Long and Autry recorded together in 1932,

64. Jocelyn R. Neal, s.v. "Jimmie Rodgers," *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed April 6, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2225444>.

65. George-Warren, 80.

“That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine.” George-Warren describes the repertoire with which Autry had the most success on air: “Gene rarely sang his blue yodels on the air, sticking to “Silver Haired Daddy,” cowboy folksongs, and the sentimental ballads Jimmie Long had taught him. This pleased WLS’s conservative owner Burrige Butler, although program director George Biggar later admitted to tiring of ‘Daddy.’”⁶⁶

Autry recorded “That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine” in 1932 with the song’s composer, Jimmy Long, and with Frankie Marvin and Roy Smeck on guitars. The session, which took place late in 1931, was for Art Satherley and the ARC. Apparently Satherley declared “Silver-Haired Daddy” a winner, having been “Struck by the sincerity Gene conveyed with his voice.” “Silver Haired Daddy” grabbed the attention of both Satherley and Shay, and played an important role in Autry’s rise to fame on the *National Barn Dance*. Autry described it as the song that launched his career: “Sometimes you can yank on one stitch and an entire sweater will unravel. Well, this was my stitch. Hit records, a movie career, a happy marriage, goodies and groceries all came to pass.”⁶⁷ “Silver Haired Daddy” was Autry’s first hit record; in the first month of its release sold 30,000 copies. It eventually sold 500,000 copies.⁶⁸

66. George-Warren, 81.

67. George-Warren, 78.

68. Ibid. In addition to *Gene Autry’s Sensational Collection of Cowboy Songs and Mountain Ballads*, M. M. Cole Publishing Co. also released single song sheets for “That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine” in 1932. Later versions capitalized on Autry’s success in Hollywood by boasting a collection of black and white photographs of Autry in his various cowboy film roles. These covers even play with filmic conventions; for instance, one version prominently displays “starring Gene Autry” beneath the song title. Unlike the version compiled in Autry’s collection, the song sheet offers two versions of the song:

“Silver Haired Daddy” relies on many of the songwriting conventions of Tin Pan Alley-era songwriting. The range of the melody spans the interval of a seventh and comprises mainly stepwise motion with the occasional upward leap of a major sixth. The vocal harmony, notated above the principal melody in the sheet music, mostly follows the contour of the melody, adding thirds and fourths above. The song uses primarily tonic and dominant harmonies with frequent use of the added seventh. Like many other pop songs of this era, a secondary dominant (G7) marks the climax of the chorus. The form follows a regular pattern: an eight measure instrumental introduction, followed by a sixteen bar verse and a sixteen bar chorus. Each verse and chorus is repeated one subsequent time.

Roy Smeck’s steel guitar riff opens the track. However, Smeck only executes a few notes before Frankie Marvin joins him, providing a steady strumming pattern on acoustic guitar which holds the track together rhythmically. The steel guitar adds emphatic and emotive punctuation at the ends of each phrase. Autry’s voice is slightly forward in the mix and accompanied by the harmonizations of Long’s tenor voice.

Together they sing:

In a vine covered shack in the mountains,
 Bravely fighting the battle of time
 Is a dear one who’s weathered life’s sorrows
 ‘Tis that silver haired daddy of mine.

If I could recall all the heartaches
 Dear old daddy I’ve caused you to bear
 If I could erase, those lines from your face,

one with tab for “Hawaiian Guitar Solo” and the other, arranged by Nick Manoloff, for piano, two-part vocal harmony, and ukulele chords.

And bring back the gold to your hair

If God would but grant me the power
 Just to turn back the pages of time
 I'd give all I own, if I could but atone,
 To that silver haired daddy of mine.

[Steel Guitar Solo]

I know it's too late dear old daddy,
 To repay for the sorrows and cares
 Though dear mother is waiting in heaven
 Just to comfort and solace you there.

Chorus

Drawing on the themes and conventions from nineteenth-century popular songs, the lyrics draw attention to the physical condition of the aging father described: the lines on his face and the silver in his hair. Regrettably, there is nothing that can be done to reverse either the aging process or the heartache that the protagonist has caused. The song wallows in its own resolute and unflappable resignation over the present condition.

Like so many nineteenth century hits, the song refers to mother who is already in heaven. "That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine" seems especially indebted to H. P. Danks's "Silver Threads Among the Gold" from 1873, another sentimental lament for the passage of time. Danks's song open with the following: "Darling I am growing old / Silver threads among the gold / Shine upon my brow today / Life is fading fast away." If not a direct homage to Danks's song, then it is at least by proxy via Jimmie Rodgers' "Daddy and Home," a tune that Autry himself covered in 1929. In "Daddy and Home," Autry sings: "Your hair has turned to silver / I know you're fading too / Daddy, dear ol' Daddy / I'm coming back to you." The song even features a similar pattern of chord changes to

“That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine” and it is difficult not to hear the striking similarities between the two Daddy-themed songs.

Autry and Long focused on writing their own nostalgic songs—songs in the same tradition as the nineteenth-century songs that Kincaid and other *Barn Dancers* performed. However, songs like “Silver Haired Daddy” which Autry performed on the *Barn Dance* bear a unique sonic relationship to his earlier recorded music. Unlike that earlier material and unlike his primary influence, Jimmie Rodgers, Autry succeeded with songs that smoothed over the sonic traces of black influence. “Silver Haired Daddy” maintains its steady pulse without syncopation, and Autry stays on pitch, barely bending a single note. The one significant auditory difference is that Autry’s hit featured steel guitar, which at the time was lumped into the Hawaiian guitar craze, and actually led his label to categorize the song as Native American. This case alone illustrates just how mixed up musical styles were at the time and the significant effort that labels and promoters put in to trying to tease out musical styles and musical sounds.

The *Barn Dance* used musical performance as a means to carve out and own a space for white, rural audiences. They did so by presenting romanticized rural performers who held the key to an “untainted” American past, and they were hugely successful. The reason later country music scholars have seemed almost surprised to acknowledge country music’s nineteenth century commercial roots is, in large part, precisely because these performers were so successful in taking ownership over this repertoire. Both Kincaid and Autry succeeded on the *Barn Dance* when they erased the influence of black vocality, guitar playing, and played up their mountain and country roots as the Oklahoma Cowboy and the Kentucky Mountain Boy. Their sentimental repertoire worked well with

the values that Burrige Butler sought to advance through the *Barn Dance*, and their performances facilitated the sounds of intimacy and emphasized just *who* was welcomed into such intimate bonds. Sentimentalism was at the center of early country radio, in both form and content.

On November 22, 2013, Norah Jones and Billie Joe Armstrong released a duet album entitled *Foreverly*. A tribute to the Everly Brothers, the album covers songs from the LP *Songs Our Daddy Taught Us* which the duo recorded in 1958. Many of the songs featured on Jones and Armstrong's album were also performed on the *National Barn Dance* including Autry and Long's "That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine," "Barbara Allen," and "I'm Here to Get My Baby Out of Jail" and "Kentucky," which were written by Karl Davis, one half of WLS's Karl and Harty duo.

In his recent book, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*, Simon Reynolds argues that no culture has been as addicted to its own past as we are today. The examples presented here, however, suggest that this obsession has a longer history than Reynolds would admit. Jones and Armstrong certainly repackage retro material. But there are layers to this. Their referent is the Everly brothers, who, according to the album title, performed songs that their fathers sang to them. And those songs were the songs that were so popular on shows like the *National Barn Dance*, already at least one generation removed, as I have described above. In many cases, such as "Barbara Allen," the songs they performed were much older than the generation of their parents or even grandparents. In the early twentieth century, nostalgia over old sentimental songs became so prevalent that songwriters began to have successes with songs that sentimentalized the

act of singing together as a nostalgic activity from long ago, a topic discussed in the subsequent chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER THREE

**“THE GANG THAT SANG HEART OF MY HEART”:
SOUNDING CITIZENSHIP IN MITCH MILLER’S *SING ALONG WITH MITCH***

In 1961, producer/performer Mitch Miller (1911-2010) retooled his popular sing along album format and introduced it to a televisual audience through weekly, hour-long variety show episodes on NBC. At this point, Miller had already released eleven *Sing Along with Mitch* LPs of which Columbia Records had sold an astonishing 4.5 million units.¹ This number included *Sentimental Sing Along with Mitch* (1960), an album featuring popular nineteenth-century songs like “Just Awearyin’ For You” and “Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair” as well as sentimental fare from Tin Pan Alley. On NBC’s *Sing Along with Mitch*, Miller, joined by his all-male backup chorus, plays host and invites his audience to sing along by way of subtitles while he, his gang, and often a special guest perform sentimental song repertory including minstrel songs and tributes to specific songwriters, with particular attention to the barbershop song repertory.

This chapter contributes a long overdue study of Miller’s sing along show.² Despite his incredible popularity—or perhaps because of it—Miller’s work has received little scholarly attention. In Miller’s obituary, the late great popular music scholar David

1. While this number might not read as significant today, keep in mind that c1960 any sales over 200,000 units marked a hit recording.

2. My essay is based on an extensive survey of available materials, including commercial recordings, trade newspaper discourse, interviews, bootleg copies of the episodes, and print ephemera. At times I consider specific aspects of the television show and at other times I treat Miller’s *Sing Along* as he did—as a whole enterprise. The Library of Congress recently acquired Miller’s papers as well as the *Sing Along with Mitch* kinescope episodes, but they have yet to be catalogued and remain regrettably unavailable to researchers.

Sanjek highlighted the important contributions Miller made to American popular music in the mid-twentieth century while underscoring the less than significant position he holds in narratives about that same music.³ *Sing Along with Mitch* aired at a critical time in popular music history, when tastes were shifting along with audience demographics. By featuring music from a generation or more before, the show was clearly aimed at an older audience and illustrates that a market for such sentimental engagements still existed despite what narratives about the rise of rock and roll might suggest.⁴ Historians, however, have not been particularly appreciative of Miller's work, suggesting that he "exemplified the worst in American pop."⁵

In this chapter, I revisit Miller's sing along show to examine the relationship between sentimentalism, nationalism, and Cold War redefinitions of America. Like eighteenth-century sentimental songs and nineteenth-century American patriotic songs, discussed in earlier chapters, *Sing Along with Mitch* employs song to engage cultural nationalism and ideals of democracy. Miller not only reinvigorated interest in sentimental singing; he would also go on to participate in other projects that aligned singing with national identity, including the documentary film *Keep America Singing* (1994). *Sing Along with Mitch* played an important but unacknowledged role in the dissemination of

3. David Sanjek, "Mitch Miller, 1910-2010," *Popular Music and Society* 34, no. 1 (February 2011): 113-115.

4. Here I am referring to suggestions about youth culture and its music, rock 'n' roll—namely, that it dominated cultural expression during this era.

5. Will Friedwald, *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices From Bessie Smith to Bebop and Beyond* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996), 221.

ideas about American national identity, and music served an integral role in shaping these mass cultural processes.

In a nutshell, Miller used television—and specifically, music on television—to enact what I refer to as “sounding citizenship,” a participatory experience for mass audiences which sought to unify and structure a sense of identity and to construct an American musical past. While the previous chapters of this dissertation discussed the act of singing, Mitch Miller’s show differs in that it is specifically about singing together and the constitution of communities through singing together.

“I Love to Sing Along”: Singing Along, Singing Together

Mitch Miller predicated his *Sing Along with Mitch* enterprise on a truism: people like to sing together. “The idea of an album that people could sing along to,” Miller stated in an interview, “just kept nagging at me.”⁶ Miller’s sing along format clearly struck a chord; it proved to be wildly popular, selling millions of units within a few short years, topping Billboard’s album charts, and provoking hundreds of response records. Indeed, an October 31, 1960 issue of *Billboard* magazine proclaimed that two and a half years after Miller’s first record debuted, the sing along trend was “still going strong” and that “everyone” was now in on the act: “Everybody from Bing Crosby and Guy Lombardo to the Chipmunks have sliced ‘Sing Along’ packages. ‘Sing Alongs’ are now available in Spanish, Yiddish, Italian, French, Polish and German. There are also ‘Sing Along’

6. Quoted in Craig Rosen, *The Billboard Book of Number One Albums: The Inside Story Behind Pop Music’s Blockbuster Records* (New York: Billboard Books, 1996), 19.

albums in the Sacred, Latin-American, kiddie, and even sports car field.”⁷ Despite the craze for sing alongs in their various guises, Miller’s LPs along with “Tennessee Ernie Ford’s hymn and spiritual packages” were the only recordings to make it into Billboard’s top 100 album charts. Writing for *The Washington Post* in December of 1959, Eddie Gallaher wryly commented:

Mitch Miller also found a theme in 1959 with seemingly endless variations. “Sing Along with Mitch” made its appearance in February, and proved to be the greatest thing for amateur singing since the shower bath. Since then there have been such additional volumes as “More Sing Along,” “Still More Sing Along,” “Party Sing Along,” “Folk Songs Sing Along,” “Fireside Sing Along,” and “Christmas Sing Along.” I understand that Mitch is now considering a “Sing Alone” series for hermits.⁸

A *New York Times* advertisement from 1961 (figure 3.1) highlights the “endless variation” referred to by Gallaher that yielded eleven sing along LPs before the first television show aired—the show would only further bolster the sales of the LPs. Of course Miller did not actually release a “Sing Alone” series, but Gallaher’s sardonic comment underscores the idea that singing along and singing together constructed community.

Despite its vast popularity, Miller and his sing along enterprise occupy a precarious position within narratives about the history of popular music. In many cases, he remains conspicuously absent while other accounts quickly dismiss him.

7. *Billboard* (October 31, 1960).

8. *The Washington Post* (December 27, 1959).

SING ALONG WITH MITCH ON COLUMBIA RECORDS

HAPPY TIMES!
SING ALONG WITH MITCH
Mitch Miller and the Gang

CS 8368* CL 1568
Extra Song Sheets With Each Album

SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8004* CL 1160
Tapes/2-track GCB 28/4-track CQ 329

MORE SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8043* CL 1243
Tapes/2-track GCB 37

STILL MORE SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8099* CL 1283
Tapes/2-track GCB 61

FOLK SONG SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8118* CL 1316

PARTY SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8138* CL 1331

FIRESIDE SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8184* CL 1389

SATURDAY NIGHT SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8211* CL 1414
Tapes/2-track GCB 70/4-track CQ 316

SENTIMENTAL SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8251* CL 1457

MEMORIES SING ALONG WITH MITCH
CS 8342* CL 1542
Tapes/2-track GCB 101/4-track CQ 349

SING ALONG WITH MITCH ON TV TOO!
EVERY OTHER FRIDAY NIGHT, 9-10 PM, EST
*Stereo

Figure 3.1. *New York Times* advertisement illustrating Miller's "endless variation" (February 19, 1961).

Following Miller's 2010 death at the age of 99, Jim Bessman explained that part of Miller's erasure and "bad rap" came from his anti-rock stance.⁹ Miller's work, like a lot of very popular American music of the 1950s, was eclipsed by the emergence of rock 'n' roll—both contemporarily and most especially in historical memory.¹⁰ Like the other case studies included in this dissertation, furthermore, Miller's close proximity to sentimentalism and overt displays of emotional expression in song have kept his potential scholars at bay.

Some scholars who have critiqued the overwhelming emphasis on rock music—at the expense of pop music—within popular music studies have added Miller back into the story. Elijah Wald, for example, writes about Miller along with other vastly popular artists of an era who have been systematically written out by taste-making critics and historians who privilege their own personal—and often rockist—tastes over those of a given public.¹¹ Another "alternative" popular music historian, Albin Zak, similarly

9. Miller made infamous statements, particularly to the *New Musical Express* in 1958, where he compared rock 'n' roll to baby food and denounced its conformity and mediocrity.

10. George Lipsitz makes a similar a point concerning cultural nostalgia for rock 'n' roll at the beginning of his essay entitled "Land of a Thousand Dances: Youth, Minorities, and the Rise of Rock and Roll," in *Recasting America: Culture and Politics in the Age of Cold War*, ed. Lary May (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 267.

11. In a 2004 *New York Times* article, Kelefa Sanneh describes the term rockism as the ideology and bias that continues to fuel rock critics' backlashes against pop stars. Sanneh writes, "A rockist is someone who reduces rock 'n' roll to a caricature, then uses that caricature as a weapon. Rockism means idolizing the authentic old legend (or underground hero) while mocking the latest pop star; lionizing punk while barely tolerating disco; loving the live show and hating the music video; extolling the growling performer while hating the lip-syncher" ("The Rap Against Rockism," *New York Times*, October 31, 2004).

discusses Miller.¹² Still, both Wald and Zak focus specifically on Miller's contributions as an A & R (artists and repertory) man for Columbia Records during the 1950s. While their accounts provide useful starting points and begin to trouble the now familiar rock/pop binary, there remains a rockist and masculinist bent in the way they celebrate Miller as an instrumentalist and recordist without touching on the Sing Alongs for which Miller was so well known.

Gregg Geller, another A&R executive at Columbia wrote that Miller “had his finger on the pulse of American taste—which sounds damning with faint praise, and he *was* responsible for a lot of cheesy stuff...But that was his job: to come up with hits—and he did it really well for a long time.”¹³ Geller's praise for Miller focused specifically on the sing alongs: “He was the last person to focus on the great old songs of our childhood, that we sang as kids—that kids today don't have a clue about...Stephen Foster songs, turn-of-the-century songs. He deserves credit for putting those songs on TV—and people loved it. Nobody gets to hear those songs anymore.”¹⁴ Geller's comments equate American public taste with cheesiness—so often used as a synonym for tastelessness and sentimentality. His comments underscore that Miller's Sing Along was of a bygone era

12. I am using scare quotes here for alternative popular music history to designate a genre of monographs that cropped up in the late 2000s by historians, like Wald, who sought to right a balance. They provided histories of popular music that was actually popular—or dominant—thus countering the paradoxical rockist aesthetic that had dominated popular music history for so long. Carl Wilson's study of Celine Dion entitled *Let's Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste* (Continuum, 2007) is another excellent example of an “alternative” popular music history.

13. Jim Bessman, “Rock ‘n’ Roll Aside, Mitch Miller was a Friend of Music,” *Examiner.com*, August 3, 2010, accessed June 2, 2013.

14. *Ibid.*

and, as we will see, this marked his enterprise as fundamentally sentimental. From the outset, in fact, Miller branded his enterprise as a sentimental one, thus illustrating that he, at least, understood the pervasive centrality of sentimentalism to American popular culture.

Given its precarious historical position, one might expect to find extensive and derisive vitriol directed towards the sing along enterprise in the print publications of the era—tastemakers shouting their disapproval and upholding discerning judgments about musical aesthetics. Mainstream magazines and newspaper commentators from the time, however, seem to treat Miller and the show with benign skepticism at worst. Writers certainly note the show's ubiquity—it appears bi-weekly in the television listings throughout its first season, weekly during the '62-'63 and '63-'64 seasons, and continues to show up as weekly rerun episodes right through to 1970—but outright derision remains difficult to track down.

It seems that Miller was so ordinary and everyday that he sparked little commentary or debate within the mainstream presses. Indeed, in August of 1961, James Ritch for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* opens a short piece on Miller with the following:

YOU KNOW MITCH: He's the guy that you and I [and record buyers and disk jockeys and juke box players and television viewers and bathroom baritones and singing waiters and glee clubs and barbershop quartets and frustrated tenors and music-minded drunks, in fact all of us]—Mitch Miller is the guy we sing along with.¹⁵

This kind of banal report characterizes the newspaper coverage on Miller and his sing along output during the late 1950s and early 1960s, highlighting the familiarity of mass

¹⁵ *Chicago Daily Tribune* (August 19, 1961).

musical consumption as well as Miller's ubiquity. The sing along enterprise appears to have blended seamlessly into the fabric of everyday life—and that fabric was woven from a familiar and sentimental tapestry.

Its everydayness, however, did not stop people from querying whether or not listeners actually sang along to the recordings and if it mattered:

Whether anyone actually sings along with the sing-along albums probably does not bother bearded Idea Man Miller. It is a little difficult to picture the sentimental householder warming up his woofer, dusting off his diamond needle, and joining in for an evening of moored [*sic*] music. More likely, the nation's mature citizens are merely striking back at rock 'n' roll, buying the sing-alongs because they like listening to simple, straight songs.¹⁶

Not incidentally, this commentator refers to the householder as sentimental, a point I will return to later in this chapter. While unconvinced of the actuality of singing along with Miller's albums, the critic does point up the presumed audience demographics as well as their motivations for consumption.

Miller, however, carefully considered the various aspects that might persuade people to sing along with him and the gang. "Although all of the musicians and singers featured on the album were professionals, Miller wanted the album to sound informal, so that the amateur vocalists would feel free to sing along. 'I wanted it to sound casual, yet that's the hardest thing in the world to do,' he says."¹⁷ In order to entice his record-buying public into actually singing along, Miller's successful album packages included perforated lyric sheets tucked into the LP's jacket-sleeve—multiple copies meant that all

16. *Time Magazine* 74, no. 7 (August 17, 1959), 62.

17. Rosen, *The Billboard Book of Number One Albums*, 19.

of the members of the family would be able to join in the fun.¹⁸ When he made *Christmas Sing Along with Mitch*, Miller decided to add female singers to the chorus, explaining that he “wanted to make an album for all the people to join in and sing with, or just enjoy listening to.” Miller also considered important musical characteristics in his bid for inclusiveness. As he noted, “. . .the songs had to be played at the right tempo and the right key, so people felt comfortable singing along with the record.”¹⁹

When the format moved to television, commentators similarly questioned whether audiences would actually join in and sing along. One writer for *Time* magazine comedically forecasted the success of the biweekly show in 1961 within the weekly’s television guide: “Sing Along with Mitch (NBC, 9-10 p.m.). Premiere of biweekly Mitch Miller show that promises to become the biggest, most atonal intercommunity sing in history. Color.”²⁰ This write-up focuses on the potential of the sing along, acknowledging its possible scope. Writing for the *New York Times* in April of 1960, Richard F. Shepard explained the concept of the *Sing Along with Mitch* television special to his readership: “Mitch Miller will be the host. He will try to lure the audience into joining the chorus in

18. Whether or not the people who purchased sing along albums actually did sing along is hard to say. My informal conversations suggest that some families did indeed sing along. And, all of the LPs I have looked at include detached and worn—or even missing—lyric sheets, but this does not necessarily mean they were used. I am more interested, however, in the idea that they **could** have been used if one so desired.

19. Miller, on adding women to the chorus for *Christmas Sing-Along with Mitch*, quoted in *The Billboard Book of Number One Hits*, 22.

20. *Time* 77, no.5 (January 27, 1961), 82.

thirty-five songs.”²¹ From Shepard’s perspective, Miller was going to have to make a convincing appeal towards an unwilling audience.

Importantly, and perhaps tellingly, the show’s title embeds a provocation within it: the imperative “sing along.” Miller also employed a theme song that both announced the show’s intended purpose and asked the audience to envoice their will to participate enthusiastically. “I Love to Sing Along” aimed to create a desire for singing along through the act of singing together:

Let me hear a melody,
I start to sing along,
Loud and strong,
I love to sing along.
Get me near a melody,
A simple singing song,
And I'll sing along.

One reading of the song and the title’s imperative points to the suspicion or even assumption that by 1960 in the United States, amateur singing was a lost practice from a former era. Indeed, a *Time* magazine critic from 1959 stated: “Enrico Caruso and the phonograph drove the parlor tenor to the bathtub. Now Columbia Records’ Mitch Miller is trying to lure him out from behind his shower curtain.”²² In Miller’s era, the widespread dissemination of recorded music and its attendant hi-fidelity culture along with post-war car radio culture would have likely been understood as reinforcing the demise of amateur singing along and domestic music making. Somewhat ironically, the practice would seemingly only be recovered by another technological medium.

21. Richard F. Shepard, *New York Times* (April 21, 1960).

22. *Time*, 74, no. 7 (August 17, 1959), 62.

Fears about recorded sound impacting singing traditions have a long history within popular music. The critics quoted above were certainly not the first to observe the possibility of decline in amateur singing and the problems with that decline. In a 1906 article entitled the “Menace of Mechanical Music,” John Philip Sousa famously and polemically worried what “canned music” would do to the national singing body. He asked: “When a mother can turn on the phonograph with the same ease that she applies to the electric light, will she croon her baby to slumber with sweet lullabys, or will the infant be put to sleep by machinery?”²³ Commenting sarcastically on these same implications of Miller’s sing along show, one writer for *Time* magazine asked: “Now that an evening of parlor singing can be bought at a record store, eliminating the need for any actual singing in the parlor, why not a night’s recorded conversation, eliminating the need to talk?”²⁴ By 1958 when Miller’s sing along enterprise emerged, there seems to have been a widely held idea that singing along was a quaint activity, old-fashioned and, indeed, sentimental.

Despite the widespread popularity of the sing along records of the late 1950s and early 1960s, singing along has not been a well-documented or analyzed phenomenon.²⁵

23. John Philip Sousa, “The Menace of Mechanical Music,” *Appleton’s Magazine* (1906).

24. *Time Magazine* 74, no. 7 (August 17, 1959), 62.

25. I am making a distinction between the participation of amateur singers in informal contexts and the organized performances of communal singing such as those of community choirs—while these are certainly related, I think there is productive reason to treat them as separate phenomenon. And, certainly, a longer history of singing along exists. Esther Morgan Ellis’s work documents an early media sing along format: the dime theater sing along of the 1890s. These events encouraged participants to sing along with illustrated song slides presented on the big screen; the audience sang along with the

Two recent exceptions come from a qualitative sociological study on 1960s US peace activism and a quantitative study of singing along in Northern England. In the former, Jeneve Brooks argues that “collective singing has served three critical functions in mobilizing US peace building efforts: 1) extending frames to include broader peace and justice issues; 2) strengthening cognitive liberation amongst activists; and 3) appealing to and reinforcing a wide range of activists’ emotions.”²⁶ According to Brooks’s study, the most meaningful songs for activism address themes of universality, humanity and brotherhood and the importance of “inclusive and expansive framing.”²⁷ In the latter study, Alisun Pawley and Daniel Mullensiefen coin the term “singalongability” to describe the various contextual and musical factors that influence people’s inclination to sing along in social settings.²⁸ Their study suggests that melody, the hit status of a song, and male singers are among the most enticing characteristics. The authors add that, not

chorus while a designated performer sang the verses. Songwriter and publisher, Charles K. Harris, claimed that he was the first to use song slides in order to illustrate his songs. “These were hand-coloured photographs mounted on glass and projected onto a screen, either to illustrate the story or to provide the words so that the audience could sing along; Harris often appeared as one of the song’s characters.”

26. Jeneve R. Brooks, “‘Peace, Salaam, Shalom’: Functions of Collective Singing in U.S. Peace Activism,” *Music and Arts in Action* 2, no. 2 (2010), 57. In her study, Brooks interviewed both activists and musicians (including Pete Seeger and Peter Yarrow) who emphasized that singing older songs such as abolitionist songs and Negro spirituals connected them to social movements in American history.

27. Brooks, 61.

28. Alisun Pawley and Daniel Mullensiefen, “The Science of Singing Along: A Quantitative Field Study on Sing-Along Behavior in the North of England,” *Music Perception* 30, no. 2 (2012), 129.

surprisingly, willingness to participate correlates with alcohol consumption over the course of an evening.

Both studies highlight the affective dimension of sing alongs; amongst activists they work to “forge a sense of group consciousness...collective singing reinforces respondents’ feelings of belonging to a larger community, something larger than themselves and empowers activists to believe that they can ultimately affect change.”²⁹ Pawley and Mullensiefen posit that singing along has lasted as a cultural practice amongst amateur musicians because of its potential for unifying its participants emotionally. Without wanting to downplay the salient differences between the respective contexts of each study and that of Mitch Miller’s show, it strikes me as significant that emotional unity is the thread that ties each case together. It will not be surprising to anyone who has ever participated in a mass group sing along that song and collective singing activate a range of emotional responses. It is precisely this response and energy that Mitch Miller sought to harness through his sing along enterprise. He reinvigorated the sense of community and emotional unity associated with nineteenth-century sentimental songs and musical culture in the United States through the collective performance of song on television.

29. Brooks, 65.

The Intersection of Sentiment and Nostalgia

Through imagery, dialogue, and song repertory, Miller explicitly branded his sing-along enterprise as “sentimental.”³⁰ By 1960, however, an important shift had taken place in how “sentimental” was understood. No longer the presentist, first-person phenomenon of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, explored in the first chapter of this dissertation, the sentimental had shifted to a self-consciously backwards-glancing emotion that longed for the past. This is clearly exemplified on Miller’s sing along show, which reinforced an important intersection between the sentimental and the nostalgic.

The pilot episode of *Sing Along with Mitch* aired in 1960 as a special on Ford’s Startime and featured Miller as host, his sing along gang of 25 male singers, and guest stars Leslie Uggams, Diana Trask, and The Brothers Four. The episode opens with a side portrait silhouette of Mitch Miller conducting the gang. Even though he is in shadow, Miller is clearly recognizable because of his iconic pointed beard. The shot seems purposefully to reference nineteenth-century Victorian silhouette portraiture; before the first words are spoken, the image expresses that the show trades in nostalgia and reminiscence. Miller relied on similar visual cues for the cover of the *Sentimental Sing Along with Mitch* LP, which plays on the typographical conventions of the 1890s—“gay 90s font”—to prominently spell out “sentimental” (figure 3.2).

30. A central tenet of this dissertation project is that sentimental has remained an important and persistent keyword in American popular music across the last two hundred years. This is not to suggest, however, that ideas about sentimentalism or the sense in which it has been used have remained unchanged over vast cultural and historical shifts. To the contrary, my work aims to historicize the sentimental song.

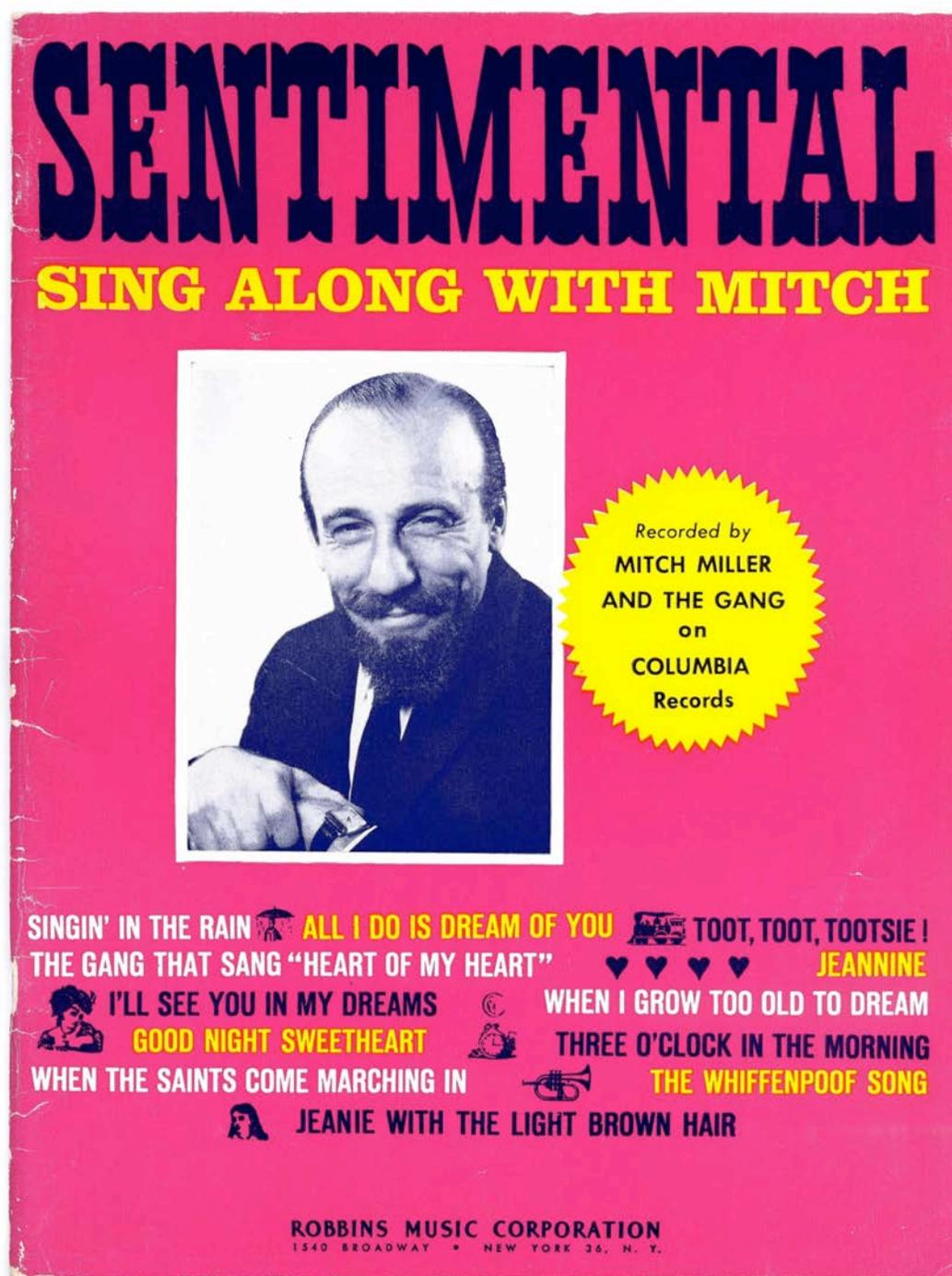


Figure 3.2. *Sentimental Sing Along with Mitch* song book, which matches the Columbia Records LP cover (1960), author's personal collection.

The shot changes and we can see the sing along gang, also in shadow, onstage; they are swaying from side to side and in four-part harmony, they sing the theme song, “I Love to Sing Along.” They are accompanied by what sounds like a ukulele band, but which cannot be seen. Slowly the light draws in, and Miller, in full view now, turns to address the camera:

Good evening. I’m Mitch Miller. Tonight we’re going to enjoy a gift our parents found worth passing along: the songs that did for them what songs ought to do. They warmed the hearts of lovers, they made burdens seem light, they’ve moistened the eyes of those far from home. When we join voices for fun, these are still the songs we turn to. I hope before this hour is up, you’ll feel the urge to add your voice to ours. And when you do, add it loud and clear!

Miller’s invitation lays bare his utilitarian approach to song—songs have work to do. If they are good songs that do their work, we will keep them in our collective memories. He doesn’t say so explicitly, but he also nods toward the idea that today’s songs—meaning those of 1960—do not successfully do their jobs of warming hearts, lightening burdens, and moistening eyes; they fail to impact their receivers through an emotional response. Like the performers on the *National Barn Dance* in the previous chapter, Miller looks to the songs of his parents. Here he uses “ours” to express that these are not just the songs his parents gave to him, but rather the songs that our collective parents gave to us. Miller uses the possessive collective pronoun to assume a shared history and invite the viewer into his worldview, which is obviously invested in a musical past—whether actual or imagined.

During brief exchanges of dialogue, Miller and his guests use “sentimental” interchangeably with “nostalgia” to describe what they are doing, the songs they sing, or how they feel. It is rare to find an example of something described as sentimental where

nostalgia is not either named explicitly or folded into the term as an inextricable and undifferentiated part of the meaning. In a 1964 episode of *Sing Along with Mitch*, starring the then-36 year old Shirley Temple, Miller and Temple exchange significant between-song-banter. Here, Temple and Miller use the adjectives “nostalgic” and “sentimental” interchangeably; it would be difficult to even articulate what the difference may have been, if there was one at all! The episode begins with the following introductory exchange between Miller and Temple:

Shirley Temple: Hi Mitch, Hi gang. Thank you for that beautiful greeting; I really appreciate it, but that’s an old song. And all those antique photographs; I hope we’re not going to spend the hour all **weepy and sentimental** for little Shirley. She was a nice little girl but that’s all ancient history.

Mitch Miller: Not to us. We love you all grown up, but we love little Shirley, too, right, gang? There’s your answer. Look! If you let us be as **sentimental** about bygone days and the old Shirley, you can be as contemporary as you like. We’ll do the old songs and you’ll do the new ones. Agreed?

ST: Agreed; I’m gonna like it here.

Miller: Here’s a song we agreed would suit us all. **Nostalgic** for us because it was a big one the year Shirley Temple made her movie debut. For Shirley, contemporary, because this song will never grow old.

Even as Miller draws on older song repertory and the Shirley Temple from the past, he emphasizes that the music is ultimately timeless, a point I’ll return to shortly. Later in the episode, Miller says to Temple:

MM: We’ve had our fun and **sentiment** for awhile so what’s your pleasure, Shirley?

ST: Anything I want?

MM: Anything you want.

ST: Well I'm feeling a bit **sentimental** myself, Mitch. My parents and my parents in law have both celebrated their golden weddings.

MM: Oh that's nice.

ST: May I sing something for them?

MM: Oh please do. We've got some soft music. Leo, little mood lighting, please. And you come over here with me.

Not only are sentimentalism and nostalgia represented as indistinguishable, but Miller also draws attention to the forms of the medium. On television, sentimentalism is linked inextricably to music; it can be conveyed through song selection and soft music, but also through visual realms with altered lighting.

Miller also refers to the nostalgia he and his singers provoke in viewers through the show and its musical selections. In a 1962 episode, he addresses his sing along audience with the following:

The act lights are dimmed on the past, the spotlights come up on the present and we're ready for you. You'll sing a lot better you know, if you remove that lump of nostalgia from your throat. Suppose we start with something bright and concentrate on the lyrics at the bottom of the screen. Don't be ashamed to give the song everything you've got. Let everybody know where you are!

Miller uses a visual metaphor to point to the different temporalities that the viewer is invited into through imaginative participation with the show. He characterized nostalgia as a physical experience: the formation of a lump in one's throat. And he suggests that his audience may be experiencing embarrassment either as a result of singing or from the emotional response engendered by the singing of familiar, old songs.

Turning back toward the gang, Miller then conducts a rousing rendition of "Heart of My Heart," a song would go on to play a significant role on the show and, in particular, in the construction of sentimental singing. I quote the lyrics here in full:

“The Gang That Sang (Heart of My Heart)”

Heart of my heart
 I love that melody
 Heart of my heart
 Bring back the memory
 When we were kids on the corner of the street
 We were rough and ready guys
 But oh how we could harmonize
 Heart of my heart
 Meant friends were dearer then
 Too bad we had to part
 I know a tear would glisten
 If once more I could listen
 To the gang that sang ‘Heart of my Heart’

“Heart of my Heart,” composed by Ben Ryan, trades on imagery of sentimental masculinity, particularly when being performed by a group of men. Significantly, the song sees fit to establish its own normative masculinity by asserting that as kids “we were rough and ready guys.” The song-within-a-song structure suggests that singing and harmonizing together brought people closer and expresses a longing for the day when that was a regular occurrence. And, finally, the idea of once more singing “Heart of My Heart” with this gang brings a tear to the eye of the protagonist. “The Gang that Sang ‘Heart of My Heart’” sentimentalizes the very act of singing through singing. As Gage Averill has pointed out, “Many of the old songs most favored by barbershoppers were already nostalgic at the time of their composition. They looked back to youth, hometowns, early courtship, family, friends and sometimes even to the ‘old quartet’ as objects of nostalgic fascination,” including the “mythic geography of the corner.”³¹

31. Gage Averill, *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 155.

Not surprisingly, “Heart of My Heart” appears on the sing along album entitled *Sentimental Sing Along with Mitch* which was released in 1960. The album similarly failed to distinguish between those songs that were nostalgic and those that were sentimental. Table 3.1 illustrates the range of dates in the repertory Miller cobbled together (shaded rows refer to Side 1 while plain rows designate songs from Side 2).

Table 3.1. Songs recorded on *Sentimental Sing Along with Mitch* (Columbia Records, 1960)

Song Title:	Composer:	Year of First Publication:
“Singin’ in the Rain”	A. Freed; N. H. Brown	1929
“All I Do Is Dream of You”	A. Freed; N. H. Brown	1934
“Toot, Toot, Tootsie!”	G. Kahn; E. Erdman; T. Fio Rito; R. King	1921
“The Gang That Sang ‘Heart of My Heart’”	Ben Ryan	1926
“Little Annie Rooney”	M. Nolan	1890
“Hello! My Baby”	Joseph E. Howard; Ida Emerson	1899
“Our Boys Will Shine Tonight”	Arr: Jimmy Carroll	
“Give My Regards to Broadway”	George M. Cohan	1904
“While Strolling Through the Park One Day”	Ed Haley Arr: Jimmy Carroll	1884
“Ida”	E. Leonard	1903
“When the Saints Come Marching In”	Arr: Jimmy Carroll	
“Jeannine (I Dream of Lilac Time)”	L. W. Gilbert; N. Shilkret	1928
“Just A-wearyin’ For You”	F. L. Stanton; C. Jacobs-Bond	1894
“I’ll See You In My Dreams”	G. Kahn; I. Jones	1924
“When I Grow Too Old to Dream”	O. Hammerstein II; S. Romberg	1934
“Jeanie With the Light Brown Hair”	Stephen Foster	1854
“Three O’Clock in the Morning”	D. Terriss; J. Robledo	1922

This was not unlike the repertory from previous and subsequent albums. The fact that one of Miller's albums was called "sentimental" does not mean the others were not, as a comparison with the selected repertory for the remaining eleven albums will show.

The Oxford English Dictionary reminds us that "nostalgia" was initially understood as an "acute longing for familiar surroundings, especially regarded as a medical condition; homesickness."³² In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym confirms the pathological origins of nostalgia, explaining that "the word was coined by the ambitious Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer in his medical dissertation in 1688."³³ Boym goes on to describe nostalgia's symptoms, quoting Hofer: "The patients acquired 'a lifeless and haggard countenance,' and 'indifference toward everything,' confusing past and present, real and imaginary events."³⁴ Despite its depathologization in more recent centuries, nostalgia has always been about time. Indeed, Boym writes, "in my view, the spread of nostalgia had to do not only with dislocation in space but also with the changing conception of time."³⁵ And, not coincidentally, sound has historically played an important role in nostalgic responses: "the music of home, whether a rustic cantilena or a pop song, is the permanent accompaniment of nostalgia—its ineffable charm that makes the nostalgic teary-eyed and tongue-tied and often clouds critical

32. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "nostalgia," accessed July 10, 2013, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128472>.

33. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books), 3.

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, 7.

reflection on the subject.”³⁶ The OED offers a secondary definition for nostalgia, which appears to be contained by and within the twentieth century, and which directly implicates sentimentalism as part of nostalgia: “Sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, especially one in an individual’s own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past.”³⁷

It would be easy to assume, based on the above descriptions of imagery, dialogue, and song repertory, that Miller and his guests used “sentimental” in a straightforward manner: to describe old, familiar songs. However, Miller does not just refer to a longing for songs that provoke nostalgia in viewers and listeners. The emotive processes by which these songs affect remain central to Miller’s understanding. Like eighteenth-century descriptions of sentimentalism, he draws attention to the bodily processes of sentiment—lumps in throats, tears in eyes—and the notion that songs ought to emotionally move their public. Singing them together is a crucial part of what makes them sentimental.

Sing Along with Mitch reads like a museum or a cabinet of American musical curiosities, placed side by side, often in medley form, but plucked out of history, and put back in place in the service of creating and selling a tradition. Miller contextualizes some of the selections on the television show, explaining the time and traditions from which they emerged; however, he aimed to have less than four minutes of dialogue per episode, which left very little time for contextualization. It meant that the words he chose were both significant and economical. The medley format afforded Miller the opportunity to

36. *Ibid.*, 4.

37. *OED*, s.v. “nostalgia.”

prepare and present the greatest number of tunes; instead of performing one sentimental song in a five minute spot, he and the gang could present three or four, thus making the most of his precious minutes both on television and on recording. Miller's sing along enterprise does not look to a particular era from which to draw its nostalgia; it is invested in a more generalizable and timeless "pastness." This reaching back into an unspecified, yet uniquely "American" past, worked to construct ideas about American identity moving forward into the present, disseminating them to a mass audience.

Cultural Nationalism; Sounding Citizenship

The United States has a long history of singing about itself. Even today, collective singing continues to figure importantly into national and patriotic events from the performance of the national anthem at various sporting events to the function of music within presidential inaugurations. The collective performance of a national anthem, for instance, can serve as an important performative ritual that unites a collective in celebratory and patriotic spirit before the start of an event. In situations like these, which range from the ordinary to the spectacular, singing together becomes an act of—or performance of—identity.³⁸

38. See Benedict Anderson, "Patriotism and Racism," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 141-154; Conrad Donakowski, *A Muse for the Masses: Ritual and Music in an Age of Democratic Revolution, 1770-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977); John Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and Sheryl Kaskowitz, *God Bless America: The Surprising History of an Iconic Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The idea of an “American music/s” (and its attendant identity/ies), however, remains a contested and underdeveloped topic within music studies and within American Studies.³⁹ Most studies of identity and culture acknowledge the fraught relationship between nation and identity and seek to examine the way that cultural nationalism and cultural imperialism have worked in the construction of various nationalisms. In their introduction to *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater*, Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor write:

We accepted from the start that ‘American’ is a formulation rather than a received truth—the very term, which we continue to use for the sake of convenience, arrogates a hemispherical designation for a single nation—so we approached our editorial task with a bias toward critique rather than acquiescence. In general, we aspired to learn something about the interaction between nationhood, as a way of establishing or articulating an identity for a people or culture, and its expression on stage. The reflexive interactions between stage, nation, culture, and constituents, especially in so multifarious a country as the United States, seemed dazzlingly complex.⁴⁰

39. Histories of music continue to be taught in a way that uses the boundaries and borders of nation states as definitorial which does important work of aligning particular musical practices with the expression of nationhood and national sentiment. For instance, we teach courses on French music; US popular music; German Romantic music; and so on. Many textbook histories similarly organize their narratives around these borders and boundaries and seldom question the ways in which music can and has moved beyond and through such boundaries, often in more fluid ways than the people who occupy any region, especially in the age of recorded sound. Some musicologists have recently turned to transatlantic studies in order to reformulate and rethink these ideas; see Glenda Goodman, “American Identities in the Musical Atlantic World,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012). The recent colloquy published in *JAMS* also addresses these issues and questions; see “Colloquy: Studying U.S. Music in the Twenty-First Century,” ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett and Carol J. Oja, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 689-719.

40. Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor, eds., *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 1.

Gainor pinpoints the period surrounding World War I as a key moment for the United States wherein important “public statements about American identity appeared frequently in print media, expressing widely diverging perspectives on the issue.” The emergence of this national consciousness related to both the arrival of immigrants in waves as well as international conflict. Gainor writes, “American identity was increasingly a question rather than an assumption; essayists, artists, politicians, and others with opinions to voice shared freely their sense of the American national character. In this writing cultural expression began to emerge as one locus of American identity; cultural production both reflected and could shape the national ethos.”⁴¹

Mason and Gainor’s collection focuses on the performance of Americanness on stage, but several of the essays have important implications for the study of American song which is not exempt from the stage, but often treated apart from theater works.

Mason explains,

The stage, then, becomes a site of this struggle, a platform where players and audience may enact conceptions of identity and community, where ‘America’ becomes both the subject and the consequence of artistic, cultural, and social negotiation. To the extent that the stage deals in representation, it offers great power, for it brings the national narrative to life, possibly reducing experience within its narrow confines of time and space, but also illuminating its complexities and contradictions.⁴²

Television offered a similar platform and in the early 1960s, Mitch Miller employed the medium to construct a powerful and widely disseminated history about American music and American identity, thus bringing “a national narrative to life” through the

41. Gainor, 8.

42. Mason, 4.

performance of song on television. Miller's approach to putting *Sing Along with Mitch* on television illuminates some important resonances between television and song as media; he appealed to song as an important facilitator and convener of national sentiment while television offered access to a collective audience, unprecedented in its size. As Lynn Spigel points out, "By 1960, almost 90 percent of American households had at least one receiver, with the average person watching approximately five hours of television each day."⁴³

For Miller, television provided a medium to reach the most number of people and to construct an experience shared in time, but not place. The television—like radio—could be mobilized to unify a national consciousness and this was particularly significant in the decades following World War II and during the years of the Cold War. As Herman S. Gray argues, "the networks adopted a discourse in which the power of the medium was thought to lie in its potential to plug each of us into the same events and viewing experience...television would form the basis for a feeling and (electronic) experience of

43. Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1. In 1961, the chairman for RCA, David Sarnoff, offered predictions on the future growth and scope of television: "Ten years hence—if vigorous foreign growth continues—there will be TV stations in virtually every nation on earth telecasting to some two hundred million receivers. An audience of a billion people might then be watching the same program at the same time, with simultaneous translation techniques making it understandable to all. In a world where nearly half of the population is illiterate, no other means of mass communication could equal television's reach and impact on the human mind." Quoted in Michael Curtin, "NBC News Documentary: 'Intelligent Interpretation' in a Cold War Context," in *NBC: America's Network*, ed. Michele Hilmes (Berkeley: University of California Press), 180.

national identification and belonging.”⁴⁴ Significantly, *Sing Along with Mitch* foregrounds its participatory angle throughout. Miller regularly breaks the frame of the performative singing spectacle in order to address the audience, who may or may not have been singing along at home. Towards the end of the pilot episode, Miller addresses the camera and his audience as the chorus once again sings the theme song, “I Love to Sing Along”:

Our chorus is working hard this hour; now how about some support! Let’s augment these 25 voices with 25 million of yours: the biggest chorus in history. The words are on us, so if you wear reading glasses, slip them on. Tenors: loud and clear! And let’s hear those sopranos and don’t you basses hold back; I need all two million of you. It’s a lovely evening wherever you are; throw open a window and let’s hear a nation singing.

These moments of direct address showcase Miller’s self-consciousness about the medium. Miller and the producers are very aware of the potential to reach a mass audience through television and suggest that through simultaneous singing along, they might accomplish national unity—and implied harmony. Miller personalizes the address a moment later when he bids the audience farewell: “Now is the hour this sing along must end. Thank you for joining voices with us. Except for a slightly flat second alto in Topeka, it was a lovely sound.” The print ephemera produced around the show similarly emphasized its participatory element. Ballantine beer, for instance, tucked song lyric pamphlets into six-packs in order to promote the television variety show. The company hoped that an alliance with the popular show would help their sales, which had gone into decline by the 1960s. They further underscored the association of the domestication of

44. Herman S. Gray, “Television and the Politics of Difference,” in *American Studies: An Anthology*, eds. Janice A. Radway, Kevin K. Gaines, Barry Shank, and Penny Von Eschen (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 433.

entertainment by distributing drink coasters, each printed with a different song's lyrics on one side and the Ballantine logo on the other (figure 3.3). Moreover, if the folks at home were indeed consuming Ballantine beer as they watched, it seems likely that their willingness to attempt participation might increase—as per Pawley and Mullensiefen's study—over the course of the show's hour long duration. In a February 1961 volume of *Time Magazine*, the television guide boasted the following listing: “Sing Along with Mitch (NBC, 9-10 p.m.). Miller's guests: Guy Mitchell, Leslie Uggams and you. Color” (emphasis mine).⁴⁵ Television, as it is presented here, is not simply a spectator sport; it's not just for watching anymore.



Figure 3.3. Ballantine beer coasters, front and back, author's own collection.

Throughout the show, Miller addressed the “nation” and relied on the rhetorical power of national belonging—a kind of belonging that we often understand as

45. *Time* 77, no. 9 (February 24, 1961), 85.

citizenship. Most definitions of citizenship describe it as an ontological condition: “to be a citizen is to belong to a given political community.”⁴⁶ One can or cannot be a citizen, you are born a citizen or not, or you are naturalized as a citizen. The language of citizenship points up the commonsenseability with which we understand the term. It is natural to be a citizen. However, other registers of citizenship call up different ideas of belonging that resound in an affective realm. I use a sonic metaphor here intentionally. To feel like a citizen offers a simile instead; it requires affective identification and is rather different from the ontological condition of being a citizen. How does one come to feel like a citizen? Who is included and who is excluded? Citizenship in the US continues to be a contested category and certainly its contested nature was amplified during the era of Miller’s show and prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964.⁴⁷

To be a member of national community is not the same as feeling like you belong to that same community. Benedict Anderson so usefully offered his idea of the “imagined community” to describe the sense of belonging that can form across barriers of space and time.⁴⁸ The newspaper importantly provided a sense of community to such readers.

46. Richard Bellamy, *Citizenship: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 52. See also, for example, Ronald Beiner, ed., *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995); Engin F. Isin and Bryan S. Turner, eds., *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (London: Sage Publications, 2002); and Lauren Berlant, “Citizenship,” in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 37-42.

47. Or, as Lauren Berlant puts it: “...the promise of U.S. citizenship to deliver sovereignty to all of its citizens has always been practiced unevenly, in contradiction with most understandings of democratic ideals” in *Keywords*, 37.

48. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2006).

Lauren Berlant more recently has taken up belonging and sentimentality as a central thematic of citizenship and US publics.⁴⁹ Radio and television have been theorized as extensions of the newspaper's capacity to imagine its community with the difference of extending across vast spaces but within the same time (broadcasting), thus marking the television as a next step in the history of media, communities, and democracy.

A process I refer to as sounding citizenship best describes Miller's appeal to national belonging through television and with song. Sounding citizenship puts Americanness on stage; it is a cultural production that both reflects and produces the nation. Sounding citizenship relies on the human voice and the double meaning of having a voice—both literally and metaphorically, politically. The process of sounding citizenship makes audible the voice of a people thereby playing a defining role in who gets to constitute the people. Sounding citizenship assumes a contractual, ritual exchange, an affirmation in front of a collective with performative resonances. Sounding citizenship works at a register that is audible, but not deafening, which is to say that it is implied and subtle, more hegemonic than explicit. Sounding citizenship does not need to say "I love America" or "America is great" but relies instead on recognizable aspects of "American" culture in order to promote itself through knowingness and shared experiences. It puts Americanness on a national stage for consumption by Americans with shared values for whom it is recognizable. Sounding citizenship is about feeling like a citizen—a simile rather than the metaphor. It relies on the resonances of the history of politics in which

49. See Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) and *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

citizens made audible their participation in historical and political processes. It assumes that there is something significant about putting into sound and into the voice, specifically, that can harness the potentiality to signal a collectivity, a community on the national level. Sounding citizenship sings a nation's subjects into feeling its own subjectivity.

At the end of every episode of *Sing Along with Mitch*, Miller and the sing along gang, flanked by their guests, collectively addressed their televisual audience. In this final scene, Miller explicitly invited home-viewers to sing along with him, the gang, and the guests. Filmed in front of a backdrop displaying all of Miller's sing along records in larger than life sized images, these finale scenes also feature song lyrics which scroll along the bottom of the screen as the stars of the show sing directly to the camera. And if members of the televisual audience had purchased Miller's sing along LPs, they were privy to the printed lyric sheets included within.

Sing Along with Mitch always closed with "Be Kind to Your Web-Footed Friends," sung to the tune of John Philip Sousa's "The Stars and Stripes Forever." As I outlined in earlier chapters, using familiar tunes to compose new songs with different lyrics hearkens back to traditions many hundreds of years old. Contrafacta, as they were referred, commonly made use of patriotic tunes for new songs. Often the rewritten songs would themselves be patriotic, but within different political contexts and times; the idea behind using familiar tunes was to drum up as much sympathy and sentiment through familiarity as possible. If people already know the tune, it is easy to fit the new words and join in.

In the case of Miller's closing theme, Sousa's tune was used to draw attention to the distinctly American traditions that Miller sought to construct. As Paul E. Bierley points out,

At the turn of the 20th century Sousa was possibly the most widely known name in music. People on both sides of the Atlantic were dancing the two-step to his *Washington Post*, bands everywhere were playing his marches, and both sheet music and recordings were selling briskly. He initially despised the phonograph, which brought him no financial return. Sales of the sheet music made him wealthy, however, and by the end of the 20th century *The Stars and Stripes Forever* had probably sold more sheet music and recordings than any other single piece ever written.⁵⁰

It is unlikely that any other American composer save perhaps Stephen Foster was as well recognized—and more importantly, owned—as an “American composer” as Sousa was. The fact that Sousa, unlike Foster, wrote expressly patriotic themed marches highlights the notion that his music would come to mark a distinctly American sound; this is precisely the spirit in which the tune is used on *Sing Along with Mitch*.

Composed in 1896, the “Stars and Stripes Forever” was an immediate success. Sousa and his band were known to perform it at nearly every concert for the next twenty-five years. If Sousa's music had at all dissipated following his death in 1932, an interest in it may have been resuscitated in 1940 when Sousa's face appeared on a commemorative stamp and then again in 1952 with 20th Century Fox's Technicolor popular feature film *Stars and Stripes Forever* which earned three Golden Globe nominations. And, in 1987, “The Stars and Stripes Forever” became the official march of the United States of America; while not relevant for its context on Miller's show, it

50. Paul E. Bierley, “Sousa, John Philip,” *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed July 1, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/26305>.

illustrates its lasting impact as an “American” song which continued both during the era of Miller’s show and well into the late years of the twentieth century. Sousa and American music are hardly distinguishable, one from the other, and this was already the case by the time that Miller’s show aired on NBC.

“Be Kind to Your Web-Footed Friends” employs the tune from the trio section of the march. The lyrics, while goofy and parodic on the surface, begin by using the imperative form of the verb to implore listeners and singers to “be kind”:

Be kind to your web-footed friends,
For a duck may be somebody’s mother,
Be kind to your friends in the swamp,
Where the weather is very, very damp.
Now you may think that this is the end,
Well it is!

The song uses familiar stock characters of sentimental repertory—animals and mothers—to sentimentalize Sousa’s march tune. It simultaneously underscores the sentimental bonds of friendship, allowing for an understated kind of participatory patriotism.

“Be Kind to Your Web-Footed Friends” was not the only patriotic song performed on *Sing Along with Mitch*, but it did hold the prominent last spot on the show and would be reiterated time and again across each episode. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Miller never released a National or Patriotic Sing Along with Mitch; sentimental nationalism was the assumed and somewhat silent thread that tied all of Miller’s performances together—televisual, recorded, or otherwise. Miller recognized the power of familiar songs. Using the recognizable materials of American sonic culture and televisual, mass cultural participation, Miller, the gang, and their audiences sounded citizenship through song.

Educating Citizens

In September of 1958 President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) into law. Largely a reaction to the launch of the Soviet Sputnik satellite, the NDEA comprised ten titles, which primarily focus on education in science, mathematics, foreign language, and technology. According to the Act, the interest in education was tied to the threat of national security and the concern—described as an “emergency”—that US citizens were not being adequately educated. The “Findings and Declaration of Policy. SEC. 101.” describes:

The Congress finds and declares that the security of the Nation requires the fullest development of the mental resources and technical skills of its young men and women. The present emergency demands that additional and more adequate educational opportunities be made available. The defense of this Nation depends upon the mastery of modern techniques developed from complex scientific principles. It depends as well upon the discovery and development of new principles, new techniques, and new knowledge.

We must increase our efforts to identify and educate more of the talent of our Nation. This requires programs that will give assurance that no student of ability will be denied an opportunity for higher education because of financial need; will correct as rapidly as possible the existing imbalances in our educational programs which have led to an insufficient proportion of our population educated in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages and trained in technology. (NDEA)

The NDEA also included a title concerning the role of media in education, offering funding for research and experimentation:

SEC. 701. In carrying out the provisions of this part the Commissioner, in cooperation with the Advisory Committee on New Educational Media (established by section 761), shall (through grants or contracts) conduct, assist, and foster research and experimentation in the development and evaluation of projects involving television, radio, motion pictures, and related media of communication which may prove of value to State or local educational agencies in the operation of their public elementary or secondary schools, and to institutions of higher education, including the development of new and more effective techniques and methods—.

The National Defense Education Act marked the first occasion since 1917 that the US government had stepped into the affairs of education on a national level. During the Cold War, the NDEA sought to provide funding to educational institutions in the United States in order to compete with the Soviet Union. In the context of this Cold War competitive spirit, public education took a front seat in national priority. Miller's sing along show can be read against this backdrop of a nation-wide conversation about education and about media. While the show itself may not have benefited from any actual NDEA funding, it participated broadly in this discourse.

Music education historian Michael Mark explains that despite the general push for education at the time, music education occupied an uncertain position. Mark goes on to explain that,

In 1961 more than half of all funds granted by large foundations were for education. The arts were included in this movement, but except for the Ford Foundation's support of the Contemporary Music Project, they were not funded generously. The persistent general attitude that the arts were a 'frill' threatened the future of music education. Music educators feared that their profession would be in danger if music was not included in the reform movement. They realized that music had to find a solid place in the curriculum.⁵¹

Clearly, music education was in flux. Throughout the Cold War era, music educators continued to pursue the need for a conversation about defining the role of music in American society. In *A Philosophy of Music Education* first printed in 1970, Bennett Reimer writes,

The profession as a whole needs a formulation, which can serve to guide the efforts of the group. The impact the profession can make on society depends in large degree on the quality of the profession's understanding of what it has to offer which might be of value to society. There is an almost desperate need for a

51. Mark, 129.

better understanding of the value of music and of the teaching and learning of music.⁵²

But even prior to Reimer's *Philosophy*, publishers and educators engaged in dialogue about the potential of music to reach young American citizens. A 1958 advertisement from the March 20th volume of *Down Beat* magazine promoted music in public schools, linking it directly to patriotism by depicting the score to "The Stars and Stripes Forever" which is overlaid with images of children playing musical instruments. The heading reads: "The Universal Language." A caricature of Sousa's mustachioed face floats beside the score. Beneath it a blurb reads:

John Philip Sousa on Music and Public Education

With the recognition that every child is capable of learning music and having his or her life enriched by it, there has come the conviction on the part of parents and educators that music should be taught in the public schools, during school hours, for school credit and at public expense.⁵³

The ad links patriotic music and its use in public education for children. At the same time, it makes Miller's ties to Sousa—recall that the closing theme song for *Sing Along with Mitch* was Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever"—explicit via music education in the public schools. Miller drew on Sousa's patriotic music and its direct ties to education within the popular imagination in order to promote his own educational agenda.

In 1961, Mitch Miller appeared in an advertisement for Lowrey Organs (figure 3.4) which ran in the *Music Educators Journal*, the trade publication of the Music Educators National Convention (MENC). MENC formed at the beginning of 1914 with

52. Quoted in Mark, 135, Bennett Reimer, *A Philosophy of Music Education*, 1970.

53. *Down Beat* (March 20, 1958), 3.

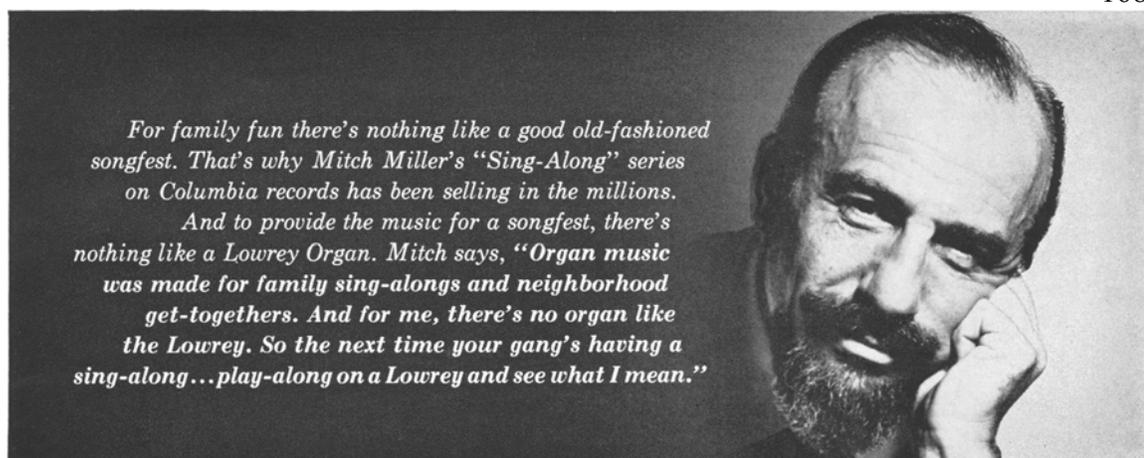


Figure 3.4. Advertisement for Lowrey Organs endorsed by Mitch Miller from *Music Educators Journal* 47, no. 5 (April-May 1961): 45.

the express purposes of aligning music making and education with the patriotic potential of musical expression. At the beginning of the Second World War, the convention stated

its collective goals of promoting “American Unity Through Music.” Following World War II, MENC continued to promote similar ideals.

Miller’s endorsement for Lowrey Organs lays bare several interrelated aspects of the sing along enterprise’s value system. First and foremost, the show sought to promote “good old-fashioned family fun.” The image depicts the white nuclear family (mom, dad, son, and daughter) around the family’s Lowrey Organ while the tag line makes a play on the title of Miller’s show and instead invites the potential purchaser to “Play Along with Mitch.” Second, the show didn’t only hope to inspire its viewers to sing along with the television, but instead sought to musically educate a public—by offering them up a model with patriotic song repertory—and motivate them to take up their own domestic music-making habits, including the purchase of home instruments. Music making via the television was an ideal site for public education, particularly in the realm of national ideology; television offered the perfect mix of democratic potential.

Miller first invited his public to participate in 1958—the same year as the National Defense Education Act—with the release of his sing along album, appropriately titled *Sing Along with Mitch* by Mitch Miller and the Gang (Columbia Records, CL 1160). For Miller, the television show presented an opportunity to engage what he knew best—music—for the purposes of educating and defining a public during an era of crisis over questions concerning both public education and national identity. Miller sought to use his role as an established musician to insert his voice into this dialogue about the role that music ought to serve in educating the public and speaking out publicly in favor of the role that music serves in a society. While the sentimental had shed some of its eighteenth and nineteenth century associations by the 1960s, didacticism and ideals of educating the

public were still implicated within it. So who was this public that *Sing Along with Mitch* simultaneously defined and hailed?

Defining Americanness

Casting choices offered one arena in which Miller and his production crew could define just who got to count as American within the frame of the show. Miller was intent on showcasing the skills of “ordinary guys”; he reports having received pressure from the network, who wanted “pretty boys” rather than the show’s “chorus of bald basses and potted tenors”⁵⁴ described by one *Time Magazine* critic. While many of the performers were indeed white, there seems to have been an effort on Miller’s part to include token ethnic groups so that the music could be presented as Americana for not just white America, but for all Americans—the ideal of the ordinary, every American. For instance, Miller was especially enthusiastic about promoting the talent of the young African American singer, Leslie Uggams. According to interviews with Miller, there were producers at NBC who were not keen to have a black singer on the show, but Miller seemed to have had little tolerance for racist attitudes. Throughout his career he had worked with and promoted artists from a variety of different backgrounds and ethnicities. For Miller, the bottom line for casting was talent and repertory.

In casting children, the show made its promotion of family values explicit. Kids frequently flanked the singers and participated with Miller in the presentation of such songs as “This Old Man” and “School Days.” Miller demonstrated his affection for

54. “Mail Order Melody,” *Time* 77, no. 10 (March 3, 1961), 66.

children openly and interacted with them in over-the-top, dramatic fashion. In some episodes, children were even featured as part of tap routines and other theatrical interludes. Their participation and televisual representation made clear that the show was about “good, old-fashioned family fun.” It also emphasized the show’s didactic aims and investment in music education. Elaine Tyler May has linked the rise in American domestic life during this period with the themes of yearning to look forward with optimism and the simultaneous anxiety provoked by the threat of nuclear war.⁵⁵ Even national figures promoted domestic ideals, championing them as American; in the so-called “kitchen debate” of 1959, then-vice-president Nixon toured Soviet Premier Khrushchev around a suburban model home, praising its wonders, efficacy and affordability, during the American National Exhibition in Moscow.

In a similar vein to his casting choices, Miller embraced a wide variety of musics many of which he subsumed under the umbrella of folk song. But Miller’s definition of folk music was a populist one and didn’t fit that of the American folk music revival whose height was concurrent with the airing of Miller’s show. In the same era folk acts including Harry Belafonte, The Kingston Trio, and Peter, Paul and Mary achieved commercial success and their records reached the top ten of Billboards album charts. But while certain ideologies circulated about what constituted folk music, Miller pushed back against the notion that the only folk musical traditions in the US were those of rural and anonymous repertoires. To make his point, Miller underscored the idea that urban, popular songs were also the songs of the people. In one episode, Miller opened with:

55. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, Rev. Ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

Not all folk songs are written by open-shirted troubadours in God's country. City-dwellers have a folk repertory, too. It's not about the moon or the stars, but the city did offer inspiration when the century was young: street criers, the tempo of traffic, even the sidewalk scenes of kids.

Miller emphasized throughout his career that the sing along albums and show used the songs that people most cared about. He would go on to include songs that listeners listed in letters addressed to him, stating simply that he selected "all the great, standard songs." But Miller's embrace of commercial repertory from across American musical traditions worked to emphasize his populist ideals about music that matched well with the medium of television.

Despite his best efforts, however, Miller's sounding citizenship was not as inclusive as he wanted to imagine. As an invitation it had potential, but other aspects of the show undermined that invitation. In particular, it is hard not to see the show as overwhelmingly, even oppressively white and male. Of all of the various interpersonal interactions displayed on the show, the most significant value system is communicated through the gendered dynamics played out between the men of the cast and the women. Each episode of *Sing Along with Mitch* features both Miller and his all-male sing along chorus. Female guests also appear, but they are treated as the exceptional moments of the show, sprinkled lightly throughout, while the sustained focus remains on Miller and his gang. Some of the medley song scenes employ female dancers, but their purpose is strictly utilitarian. They don't have speaking or singing roles, but instead serve as props, relegated to the status of "sexy ladies"; they are talked about, but do not speak themselves.

When the female guests do get to sing, they sing their own subjugation through song repertory that reinforces traditional gender roles and the patriarchal establishment. The use of such songs is not incidental in the context of the show; rather, they underpin the show's cultural work of subscribing to patriarchal family values. Some of the song repertory worked to reinforce traditional gender roles in which women were expected to be "good girls," to marry whomever they are told to, and generally behave and conform to family expectations. In contrast to the type of work that women were forced into doing during war-time, this reinscription of patriarchal norms was important and in need of reinforcement. A poignant example of this is Diana Trask's performance of "A Guy is a Guy."

In the pilot episode, guest singer Diana Trask sings the indubitably creepy "A Guy Is A Guy" which begins with stabbing, high-pitched violin sweeps that sound almost like shrieks. In the first verse, Trask sings:

I walked down the street like a good girl should
 He followed me down the street like I knew he would
 Because a guy is a guy where ever he may be
 So listen and I'll tell you what this fellow did to me.

The mostly strophic song proceeds over a series of verses that follow the same lyrical structure as above in which the guy continues to follow the protagonist and his behaviour is dismissed as simply what guys can't help but doing. We learn that the girl has never seen this boy before and so, sensibly, she protests as he follows her. When the guy asks for a goodnight kiss, he is refused by the girl, who "would have told him more except his lips got in my way." The girl's parents then have a talk and they "all agreed on the married life for me." At this point, the relatively uninteresting backing music quotes the

familiar wedding march, a musical quotation that is repeated again at the end of the song. Trask concludes with the final verse in which she sings: “I walked down the aisle like a good girl should.”

Stalking and non-consensual kisses aside, the especially disturbing part of the song is the final line of each verse in which the girl explains that this is a story of what a fellow did to her. In Trask’s voice, this utter lack of agency sounds ordinary and expected, unproblematic and unquestioned. The repetitive structure of the song works to further reinforce the normativity of the scene as if hearing it enough times makes it perfectly acceptable. A male backing chorus doubles Trask’s voice in the background, but only for the line “a guy is a guy wherever he may be.” The male echo sounds like an audible justification, as if to say: “See, the guys agree on this one.”

During the 1950s, Miller worked for Columbia Records and was largely responsible for raising the label’s profile with hit after hit as a successful A & R man. In a 1952 volume of *Billboard* magazine’s semi-regular column entitled “The Pitch From Mitch,” Miller explains that Doris Day’s version of “A Guy Is a Guy” is forthcoming on the label. Miller provokes his readers with the following:

What we’re interested in are hits—you, me, and the kids behind the mikes. So the question you want answered is ‘What’ve you got?’ The answer, boys, is ‘What do you want?’ ...Maybe something on your shoulder, right next to your ear? Something with a little s-x? There’s Doris Day in a sensational performance of *A Guy Is a Guy*. The way Doris coos the lyrics in this is enough to start steam coming out of your ears, and there’s nothing like that to call the citizens into the shops.⁵⁶

56. *Billboard* (March 8, 1952).

Here Miller makes his appeal explicitly to a young male audience by hailing the “boys” and suggesting that his role is to fulfill their desires and wants. Relying on the language of consumer citizenship that Lizabeth Cohen refers to as part of the widespread “consumers republic,” Miller titillates his assumed young, male audience.⁵⁷

Interestingly, the performance of songs like these does not fit with other young and popular female singers of the time who were working precisely to question such norms and expectations rather than unquestioningly reinforce them. The *Sing Along with Mitch* performances contrast significantly with what Jacqueline Warwick has referred to as the performance of “girlness” in 1960s girl groups.⁵⁸ Warwick’s work shows that some of the most popular girl groups did important cultural work of questioning gender norms and popularizing girl culture by expressing attitudes and ideas central to girls in this era; in effect, girl groups offered girls a stronger voice than they had previously held within popular music production. While many men did write songs for and groom these groups for performance, important women also formed their voices in the production of girl group music including Carole King, whose song “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?”

57. See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

58. See Jacqueline Warwick, *Girl Groups, Girl Culture: Popular Music and Identity in the 1960s* (New York: Routledge, 2007). *Sing Along with Mitch* aired in the middle of the period of popular music history that has been dubbed the “in between years.” The in between years span from 1958 to 1963 and refer to the era after Elvis Presley joined the army, Buddy Holly died in a plane crash with Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper, and Little Richard retired (read: the decline of rock ‘n’ roll), but prior to the British Invasion of 1963-4. The implication of the in between years is the widely held assumption that “nothing happened” in popular music in this era—nothing worth noting, according to critics anyhow. But this era was dominated by the popularity of doo-wop and girl groups and, of course, Miller’s sing alongs.

written with Gerry Goffin, earned The Shirelles a number one hit in the very same year that Trask recorded “A Guy Is a Guy.”

A perhaps even more extreme example of the “no means yes” mentality expressed through song on *Sing Along with Mitch* comes from the song “There’s Yes, Yes, In Your Eyes,” which the sing along gang performs in a 1962 episode. The song, composed by Joseph Santly with lyrics by Cliff Friend, was first recorded for Victor by Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra early in 1924. Only a few months later, the vocal group, Peerless Quartet, made a cut of the song, also for Victor. And, in the 1950s, both Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra recorded the song with some success. The lyrics for the chorus of “There’s Yes, Yes In Your Eyes” are as follows:

Your lips tell me no, no
 But there’s yes, yes in your eyes
 I’ve been missing your kissing
 Just because I wasn’t wise

I’ll stop my scheming and dreaming
 ‘Cuz I realize
 Your lips tell me no, no
 But there’s yes, yes in your eyes

Come over here, honey
 I’m not going to hurt you
 Let me talk to you

The fact that this particular song was performed by Miller and his all-male chorus only amplifies the unnerving lines of the lyrics. While some girl groups were attempting to work out gender roles and sexual freedom in song, others, including the performers on *Sing Along with Mitch*, were reconstituting what were presented as family values through song repertory.

* * *

In a 2002 special volume of the journal *Popular Music*, guest editors Keith Negus and John Street wrote: “television has been conspicuously neglected in studies of popular music, and music has been notably absent from most accounts of television.”⁵⁹ So far as I am aware, no other study of Mitch Miller’s sing along enterprise exists. But my goal is not simply to address this conspicuous absence; rather, I hope to have illustrated the ways in which music on television at this time played a significant role in shaping ideas of American identity during an era of upheaval.

Miller used the two important and parallel inventions of home entertainment—the television and the LP—as his media. He seemed to really believe that his televisual audience actually did sing along with him and the gang; Miller explained that his idiosyncratic conducting style—as can be seen on the show—was not at all how he would conduct a chorus. The style he developed was specific to the show and he intended for it to keep the beat for the at-home audience. For Miller the point of the show was to make “contact with the listener at home.”⁶⁰ Television offered the possibility of extending the domestication of entertainment. While hi-fi stereophonic sound equipment of the era boasted qualities such as “concert hall realism” that “Puts you in the center of sound” (Davega Hi-Fi Store advertisement, 1958), thus highlighting its intended use in the home, television brought both an implied and a literal collective of singers into the home for domestic consumption.

59. Keith Negus and John Street, eds., “Music and Television,” special issue of *Popular Music* 21, no. 2 (2002), 245.

60. Mitch Miller, Archive of American Television Interview, accessed July 30, 2013, <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/mitch-miller>.

Importantly, Miller also chose the barbershop chorus and much of its American repertory to construct this experience. Gage Averill explains,

In barbershop lingo, the major tonic triad is ‘home’ or ‘home base.’ The progress of barbershop songs is referred to as the ‘harmonic highway,’ with important chords being called ‘signposts,’ or ‘road maps,’ and with harmonic digressions being called ‘side trips.’ Barbershoppers are certainly not the only musical practitioners who use home and travel imagery in discussing harmonic progressions, but they are perhaps among the most self-conscious in employing this metaphor. With barbershop harmony conceived as a trip away from—and back to—home, a certain redundancy emerges between syntactics and semantics, or between sound structure and its extramusical associations.⁶¹

Perhaps the sing along was Miller’s effort to stave off the anesthetizing effects of television that critics of the time worried over. If Miller could get audiences to actually sing along with him and the gang, there would be a greater sense of involvement and investment, and that it was a musical engagement with American musical history mattered very much to Miller. However, its location in the home meant that Miller relied on the medium to create a kind of televisual sentimentalism in which people were united sympathetically across a national network of private American, middle-class homes.

While many critics have dismissed Miller’s work as meaningless or trivial, it is worth considering the value systems through which he has been written out of popular music history. As one critic wrote: “you know Mitch.” Miller facilitated a sense of belonging that was perhaps lacking at that particular moment. It was, of course, practiced unevenly, but for him, it was important to offer Americans a sense of their own musical history and to value their own musical pasts. The widespread consumption of *Sing Along with Mitch* marks it as more rather than less significant for its participation in selling traditions, sounding citizenship, and the experience of music in everyday life.

61. Averill, 162.

CHAPTER FOUR

“SILLY LOVE SONGS”: SENTIMENTALITY AND 1970s SOFT ROCK

In 1976, Paul McCartney sang: “You’d think that people would have had enough of silly love songs, but I look around me and I see it isn’t so. Some people want to fill the world with silly love songs, and what’s wrong with that? I’d like to know.” Critic Jason Elias observes, “Paul McCartney seemed to be addressing critics with one of his most accomplished and playful songs. By the early ‘70s, as a solo act McCartney became even more skillful with pop and with songs with love as the primary subject matter.”¹ But why was the rock love song in need of defense against critics? Credited to both Paul and Linda, the McCartneys’ reflective look at the status of “love songs” within popular music reached number one on the Billboard charts and helped to bolster the “monster success” of Wing’s fifth album, *Wings at the Speed of Sound* (1976). Not only did the song spend five consecutive weeks at the top of the Billboard Hot 100, it also reached number one on the Easy Listening charts, and it was the number one song of Billboard’s year-end chart in 1976.

Writing for *Melody Maker*, Chris Welch offered a begrudging prediction about the preordained commercial success of “Silly Love Songs”:

A mysterious sound that might have come from the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and a *Dr Who* episode introduces the marching, almost Philly-sound of “Silly Love Songs”, which will probably dominate the singles chart by next June. Here brass and strings join Paul’s clean, clear vocals, as he imbues in the old phrase “I

1. Jason Elias, “Silly Love Songs Review,” accessed January 20, 2014, <http://www.allmusic.com/song/silly-love-songs-mt0011696511>.

love you” a disarming innocence, as if contemplating the mystery of love for the first time.²

Barbara Charone, writing for *Sounds*, suggests that “Silly Love Songs” was the only successful thing about *Wings at the Speed of Sound*:

There is one genuine chunk of inspiration on the entire album. “Silly Love Songs” contains well-thought-out productions and arrangement, a musical tease wrapped around an infectious melody. It is the type of thing McCartney does best, building cleverly on the song with expertise. Ten more “Silly Love Songs” and *Wings At The Speed Of Sound* could have been a triumph.³

In an interview for *Sounds*, Linda McCartney explains that the less-than-enthusiastic critical reception of Paul’s music links directly to perceptions about his masculinity:

“Family man?” Linda questions all those who complain about Paul’s’ domestic status. “Most people are family people. That’s not soft. Every man must have a home especially if you come from a big family like Paul’s. There’s nothing wrong with a family life.” Yet much of Wings’ criticism stems from these family roots. On tour, they travelled around Britain on a mobile coach taking their three children with them. Just because the McCartney’s do not indulge in public displays of rock ‘n’ roll excess, does not make them less worthy than Led Zeppelin.⁴

Linda understands that Paul was interpreted against the yardstick of rock’s authenticity.

The image of the pop icon as a domesticated family man feminized him in relation to hard rockers and their fabled lifestyles of excess, sexual dominance, and promiscuity.

2. Chris Welch, “Wings: *Wings at the Speed of Sound* (Capitol),” *Melody Maker* (March, 27, 1976), accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/wings-wings-at-the-speed-of-sound-capitol->.

3. Barbara Charone, “Wings: *Wings at the Speed of Sound*,” *Sounds* (March 27, 1976), accessed January 3, 2014, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/wings-iwings-at-the-speed-of-soundi-parlophone>.

4. Barbara Charone, “Interview: Linda McCartney, Silly Love Songs,” *Sounds* (April 3, 1976), accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/linda-mccartney-silly-love-songs>.

This might explain why in 1976 Paul McCartney thought the rock love song needed defense. “Silly Love Songs” illustrates important tensions around the focus of my fourth chapter: the extremely successful soft rock of the 1970s. This chapter differs from my first three chapters in two significant ways. First, the music I consider here was not marketed as sentimental; however, as I take up, several critics did make this connection, using it as a point of scorn. Furthermore, this music was described as “soft rock” and placed in contradistinction to “hard rock.” Returning to the concerns of my first case study, I am interested in the sentimental masculinity presented by soft rockers. Second, this is the only chapter that discusses a case study during the era of rock criticism, an indelibly influential development in the history of popular music. Arguably, all of my case studies have been impacted by this profoundly powerful discourse, as popular music studies grew up precisely in this era.

This chapter reads soft rock against the powerful backdrop of the rock formation and its attendant ideology. I argue that the hegemonic masculinity of rock shaped both the narratives about and interpretations of soft rock. As R. W. Connell writes, “Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable.”⁵ Soft rock’s masculinity was contested because it offered a competition vision to rock’s hegemonic masculinity—that of the “new man.” But the new man’s masculinity was not monolithic either. Using hermeneutic vignettes, this chapter theorizes several distinct types of “new men” presented in 1970s

5. R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 76.

music, showing how they intersect with race and sexuality. These interpretations illustrate the diversity of perspectives in some of the most popular songs of the decade.

Soft Rock as a Historical Category

Soft rock emerged on the heels of art rock and flourished in the face of hard rock. Artists including Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, The Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Jackson Browne, James Taylor, Carole King, Fleetwood Mac, the Steve Miller Band, the Doobie Brothers, Little Feat, America, Paul McCartney and Wings, Hall & Oates, Elton John, Rod Stewart, and the Bee Gees have all been lumped together and referred to as part of this genre. During the 1970s, these artists topped the Billboard charts—both the Hot 100 and Easy Listening charts—successfully sold albums and toured, and were phenomenally popular. A cursory survey of rock histories, however, suggests that soft rock was little more than an aberrant blip on the face of a much larger and much more important phenomenon: rock.

Soft rock has often been thought of as an industry term—a manufactured genre created by industry moguls. Critic Stephen Holden defines it as such: “A term invented in the early 1970s to describe acoustic folk-rock and other tuneful, soothing types of popular music that use electric instruments.”⁶ The term, however, appeared in print as early as 1967 where it was used to describe a variety of different artists, including the Mamas and the Papas and Buffalo Springfield. An analysis of the emergence of the term “soft rock” in criticism shows how the genre’s formation was shaped by rock ideology.

6. Stephen Holden, s.v. “soft rock,” *Grove Music Online*.

One of the first groups to invite the appellation “soft rock” was Poco, a group that formed when Buffalo Springfield broke up in the late 1960s. Writing a review for the *New York Times* in August of 1969, Mike Jahn explains:

The group is typical of the rock bands that experiment in country music in that its music is much less stark than that of the real country bands. Its singing is much fuller and sweeter, and more polished than that of most pure-country groups. It also, unfortunately, has less bite. Though this may not be the intention, Poco’s singing creates an easy-listening country music, less bare and ornery than that of such people as Buck Owens and His Buckaroos, and easier on ears accustomed to the soft rock tradition of Los Angeles groups.⁷

This short paragraph covers some significant soft rock terrain. Importantly, Jahn makes the geographical link between soft rock and Los Angeles, the city that would become strongly associated with the soft sound of singer-songwriters like Carole King and James Taylor and bands like Bread. It is also interesting to note that in 1969 Jahn refers to Los Angeles as the home of an already established “soft rock tradition,” suggesting that the genre has a longer history than is often suggested. Lastly, Jahn makes a distinction between real country bands and the country-inspired sounds of soft rock groups like Poco.⁸ Country music, as I explored in the second chapter of this dissertation, has long held associations with both sentimentalism and sentimental songs. For many critics, the “soft” of soft rock was linked to the influence of country music.

For Jahn and for many writers soft rock was part of geographical formation—emerging from artists working in Southern California—like King and Taylor, who

7. Mike Jahn, “Poco: The Pavilion, Flushing Meadows Park, Queens, New York” *New York Times* (August 25, 1969).

8. Poco’s Jim Messina would go on to form Loggins and Messina, one of the most noted soft rock duos of the early 1970s, with Kenny Loggins.

worked on each other's records and contributed to this overall breezy musical sound.

For some writers, particular intimate venues played an equally important role in the formation of this genre. Writing for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1971, Robert Hilburn explains,

Ever since Elton John became a star in a single night last year at the Troubadour, the West Hollywood club has become, quite likely, the most important showcase of contemporary folk and soft rock talent in the nation. Every time a new, promising act opens, there is an enormous record/concert industry attention directed at it. The recipient of that attention this week is Mark/Almond, a soft rock-jazz outfit from England that records for Blue Thumb.⁹

Later in March, Hilburn would again align the Troubadour with soft rock: “There is no way, we all knew, that gentle James Taylor, the guiding light of the whole ‘soft rock’ movement, could be as rewarding in the large, impersonal confines of the 9,100-seat Anaheim Convention Center as he was at the small, intimate Troubadour, right?”¹⁰ Like nineteenth-century parlor song, soft rock was imagined as music for intimate spaces. Despite its wide popularity and circulation, it was not totally at ease in the public sphere.

Reviews from the late 1960s make plain the newness of the genre, often clarifying the term by offering defining characteristics or qualifications. For instance, in a 1970 *New York Times* review/interview on Carole King, Grace Lichtenstein explains: “The music is what Carole refers to as ‘soft rock’—a jazz-based acoustic sound with heavy

9. Robert Hilburn, “Jerry Lewis Opens Run at Cesars,” *Los Angeles Times* (March 13, 1971), C9.

10. Robert Hilburn, “Taylor’s Rock in Big Arena Test,” *Los Angeles Times*, (March 23, 1971), D1.

emphasis on lyrics.”¹¹ Here the qualification “what Carole refers to as” highlights the shaky and unfamiliar terrain of soft rock’s status as a genre, and yet the definition seems important enough that Lichtenstein includes it. At the same time Lichtenstein places the responsibility of definition onto the musician, and King’s definition is indeed quite far from how we tend to understand soft rock today.

Despite the fact that soft rock dominated the airwaves, Billboard charts, and musical discourse of the 1970s, little has been written about the genre.¹² *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Rock History* includes one chapter on soft rock entitled “The Softer Side of Rock.” The chapter features a short introduction in which Rob Patterson offers a characterization that locates the genre historically:

With the end of the Vietnam War and the subsiding of the social changes and occasional chaos of the 1960s, American music audiences were ripe for music that was relaxing and reassuring. Soft rock provided an ideal antidote with its

11. Grace Lichtenstein, “Carole King Steps Into the Limelight,” *New York Times* (November 29, 1970), 149.

12. The only monograph I have located on the subject is a popular press book by musicians Don and Jeff Breithaupt entitled *Precious and Few: Pop Music in the Early 70s*. A handful of popular press biographies on individual artists have proved useful, but don’t address the genre specifically. Olivia Carter Mather is author of the only academic article on the subject. In “Taking It Easy in the Sunbelt: The Eagle’s and Country Rock’s Regionalism,” Mather explores the links between country rock and soft rock. And, Mitchell Morris’s recent monograph *The Persistence of Sentiment: Display and Feeling in Popular Music of the 1970s* focuses on artists that were equally popular, but not understood as part of soft rock—with the exception of The Carpenters. In fact, the term “soft rock” doesn’t appear once in Morris’s book.

By contrast, rock—without qualification—or hard rock, more specifically, occupies a vast section of the library’s shelf space and article after article takes on the subject of rock’s rebellion, subversion, and general badassery. The majority of rock textbooks do not include anything about soft rock. On the other hand, thousands of sheet music books boast the titles of the artists considered herein, illustrating their popularity among listeners and amateur players while their covers seem to proudly boast the title of soft rock.

personal and largely apolitical themes and musical accents on melody, harmony, and gentler rhythms. The prevalence of roots-music styles within country and folk also influenced soft rock and added to its sentimental sound.¹³

Patterson's characterization of soft rock summarizes some of the most typical descriptions used by critics. Other adjectives used to describe the music and its effects include palatable, digestible, easy, and smooth. Of particular note is his emphasis on the sentimental sound of the genre, which I return to in the latter half of this chapter. Patterson divides the rest of his chapter into three sections: "the California Sound," "Country-Rock," and "British Rock Goes Pop Again"—none of which seem surprising given the descriptions already offered above.

William Echard, like Patterson, offers a retrospective account of the genre's boundaries. In his monograph on Neil Young, Echard writes:

By soft rock, I mean music which is clearly tailored to a mass market through its intermediate tempos, intermediate dynamics, high production values, pop-like emphasis of melodic hooks and themes of romance, and aggressive marketing. Soft rock is, like garage rock, a fuzzy category at best. It can be applied to any music which displays connections to a form of rock but which is explicitly commercial and which downplays the elements of rock music sometimes perceived as abrasive. In the early 1970s, the term had a fairly precise referent in groups like the Eagles, who were perceived by many critics to be deliberately backing away from the radicalism of the 1960s rock music toward a more adult easy-listening style. However, the lines are easily blurred.¹⁴

13. Rob Patterson, "The Softer Side of Rock" in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Rock History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 88.

14. William Echard, *Neil Young and the Poetics of Energy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 50.

Echard goes on to elaborate on the fuzziness of the genre, particularly in reference to Young's music, noting "for example, CSNY is considered soft rock by some listeners, but folk music by others."¹⁵

Echard similarly emphasizes the discursive aspects of genre formation in soft rock when he writes:

Soft rock is perhaps best understood as the union of (1) a particular set of stylistic and generic features with (2) the ascription by listeners of a primarily commercial intent. There are a number of qualities which might cause a listener to invoke the term: high production values, perceived lack of emotional intensity, perceived use of pop formulas, perceived avoidance of controversial or potentially difficult material in lyrics or music, and a clear marketing strategy aimed at a broad and perhaps older demographic. "Soft" is in many instances almost an accusation, not terribly different from "selling out."¹⁶

As Echard highlights, one of the main points of contention was the genre's commercial viability.

In 1971, for instance, Frank Zappa dismissed soft rock as a passing craze, emphasizing the commerciality and trendiness of the genre. In an interview with Tom Zito, Zappa stated:

There are times when a certain type of musical event will trigger a reaction and make something happen, but shortly after that reaction has occurred it's all fed back into the music in the form of producers deciding that's what's in season and then everything begins to sound like that one event. I don't see any rock 'n' roll developments. I see commercial trends. You may be hearing more singer songwriters, but that doesn't mean more of them exist. It means that's what the commercial trend is. There's still tons of bands that play like Cream. And they're all still trying to get record contracts. They don't believe in soft rock 'n' roll. It's

15. Echard, 50.

16. Ibid., 51.

just that soft rock ‘n’ roll is selling right now, or somebody decided it was time to sell soft rock ‘n’ roll.¹⁷

Zappa joins the chorus of critics quoted above in dismissing soft rock according to its transgressions against rock values. Soft rock is superficial, overly polished, commercial, and self-absorbed. But to dismiss the genre as irrelevant and nothing more than a passing craze fails to recognize the significance that many millions of listeners heard in this music. Furthermore, to overlook it as so many scholars have already, privileges the perspective of critics and the ideology of the rock formation, which has wielded an incredible discursive power over popular music discourse.

Rock Historiography

In the last two decades, a handful of authors have tackled issues pertinent to rock historiography and interrogated the central values of the rock formation. Influenced at least to some extent by musicology’s investment in historiography, popular music scholars including Mark Mazullo, Motti Regev, and Keir Keightley have—to borrow Keightley’s apt phrase—reconsidered rock.

As these scholars have argued, rock ideology has profoundly shaped narratives about that same music as well as the narratives of subsequent popular musics.¹⁸

According to Keightley, rock has not only been interpreted as serious, as youth music, as

17. Tom Zito, “‘The Mad Mother’: Intellectual Ham: ‘I don’t see any rock ‘n’ roll...’” *The Washington Post* (June 13, 1971), K1.

18. See also Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock ‘n’ Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Carl Wilson, *Let’s Talk About Love: A Journey to the End of Taste* (London: Continuum Press, 2007).

authentic, and as rebellious, it has also packaged itself in these ways. Keightley seeks to challenge the dominant narratives of rock, countering “the rebellious and countercultural identity that rock ideology affirms for its fans and musicians.”¹⁹ He writes:

Once rock broke the symbolic link between mass culture and mindless conformity, it became possible to build new distinctions within and upon the terrain of the popular, to express oppositional sensibilities via commercial, mass mediated culture. Rock helped to reorder the relationship between dominant and dominated cultures, producing something that was simultaneously marginal and mainstream, anti-mass and mass, subordinate and dominant.²⁰

Keightley helpfully outlines the paradoxes of rock ideology. For my purposes, the rock formation’s privileging of rebelliousness and countercultural identity creates a problem for the history of soft rock; as some of the passages quoted above illustrate, soft rock was heard as antithetical to such values.

Motti Regev has similarly discussed the construction of rock’s authenticity, reading it as the latest expression of the autonomous art ideal. Regev rehearses the same ideals of rebellion and subversion as a means through which to promote aesthetic genius as well as seriousness in popular music. One of the aspects of authenticity that Regev highlights is the rock group. He writes:

The rock group, as a self-contained creative unit, became the prototypical creative entity in rock music during the 1960s. The ideal type of the group contains four to six musicians who compose the music, write lyrics, play and sing. Later on, when

19. Keir Keightley, “Reconsidering Rock,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 141.

20. Keightley, 141.

the role of the musical producer had gained an aura of creativity as well, many groups became producers of their own records.²¹

This particular investment is relevant to my discussion because of the fact that many soft rock artists moved around, contributed to each other's albums, and generally did not stay committed to one particular rock band lineup. Many soft rockers also covered songs of their peers instead of writing their own, thereby eschewing the ideals of autonomous genius and personal authenticity. Moreover, soft rock reviews highlight the variety of influences that were understood as feeding into soft rock—from country and folk to jazz and soul. Not only did these artists work promiscuously—moving from one session to the next and performing each other's songs—they were stylistically promiscuous as well. By rockist standards of authenticity, soft rockers simply could not live up. These transgressions of rock ideology worked to feminize the genre.

Regev also notes the significance of historical consciousness for rock musicians and critics:

Punk musicians assumed the task of bringing back to rock the type of harsh rebellion, rough sound, musical simplicity and—mostly in Britain—direct reference in the lyrics to social issues (unemployment, inter-racial relations) which they thought were lost. Punk signaled a maturing of a historical self-consciousness among rock musicians and critics regarding their art. It was the first time that a “new generation” of musicians had emerged whose claim for recognition lay within the context of rock and was based on a heretical break with the previous generation (unlike the “sixties” musicians whose attitude to the rock ‘n’ roll “pioneers” was a more orthodox one).²²

21. Motti Regev, “Producing Artistic Value: The Case of Rock Music,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (February, 1994), 92.

22. Regev, 94.

It is no coincidence that punk rock features so heavily in narratives about rock in the 1970s while soft rock barely gets a mention.

In an article concerning rock historiography and Greil Marcus's *Mystery Train*, Mark Mazullo examines the important role that 1970s writers played in the construction of rock and its ideologies. In the pages of publications such as *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock 'n' Roll* (1976), these writers "manufactured an uninterrupted narrative of rock's trajectory of social and political dissent."²³ Mazullo compares Marcus to earlier generations of literary scholars who argued for the exceptional character of American culture, using their respective art forms as representative of a general national identity. Mazullo offers a lengthy but ultimately useful characterization of the crisis experienced by 1970s rock writers:

In the 1970s, many countercultural intellectuals considered rock music to be experiencing a time of pivotal crisis. Thus it was argued that the "authentic" style of the mid-to-late 1960s was fighting a losing battle on several fronts. Many iconic rock stars from this period had recently died—most from an excess of drugs and alcohol. New genres and styles were challenging the hegemony of the 1960s rock sound: the work of such singer-songwriters as Carole King, James Taylor, and Carly Simon; the art rock or progressive rock movements; the increasingly threatening sounds of disco; and so on. In addition, rock's former bastions had been disgraced after the violent eruptions at the Altamont music festival in the summer of 1969 and the decline of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district into slum conditions. Finally, and most disturbingly to this group, rock's so-called antiestablishment message was being challenged by what was thought to be a large-scale disavowal of the political sphere on the part of young people across the country.²⁴

23. Mark Mazullo, "Fans and Critics: Greil Marcus's 'Mystery Train' as Rock 'n' Roll History," *The Musical Quarterly* 81, no. 2 (Summer, 1997), 148.

24. Mazullo, 148.

Mazullo points out that the production of historical accounts was one means through which those invested in the upheaval and alternative projects of the 1960s could continue to pursue social and political expression. Furthermore, “In the 1970s the proponents of the new institutionalized narrative—mainly middle-class adolescents, rock fans, now turned older—asserted that rock was keeping alive the only representation of democracy left in the ‘silent seventies,’ when the establishment’s warped democratic ideal was holding the nation hypnotized.”²⁵

Soft rock was always read in relation to rock—even by those who didn’t disparage the genre for its relative softness. Tom Phillips writing for the *New York Times*, for instance, offered the following observation: “Rock ‘n’ roll music is getting louder and louder, as anyone who’s been to a concert by the Cream or the Jefferson Airplane can tell you. At the same time, it’s also getting softer. More and more new groups and established stars are turning away from strict reliance on the heavy backbeat and the 7-foot speaker system, and finding they can speak sweetly and say a lot.”²⁶ Phillips attributes the origins of the sounds of soft rock to the success of the Mamas and the Papas hit “California Dreamin’” from the previous year. The Carole King review by Grace Lichtenstein cited above similarly compares King’s *Tapestry* (1971) to rock. “The songs contain no drug fantasies, the barest of politics, only a hint of ideas that filter through rock’s ‘now’ lyrics. Instead, they are about boys and girls, lost youth, growing up.”²⁷ Soft rock was constantly

25. Mazullo, 162.

26. Tom Phillips, “Rock Speaks Sweetly Now,” *New York Times* (December 17, 1967), 130.

27. Ibid.

measured against the yardstick of rock's authenticity, even if somewhat defensively by critics who were open to the genre's innovations.

The emergence of sock rock also led critics to attempt to tease out distinctions between the hard and soft elements of rock. In a *Washington Post* article from September 20, 1970, Tom Zito offers some defining characteristics in an article entitled "Soft and Hard Rock Sounds." Zito writes: "One of the problems in talking about soft versus hard rock is the generic nature of the terms. There's no set formula by which a piece of music can be categorized one way or the other." Zito goes on to explain that hard rock does have some defining traits and these include: high level of amplification and use of distortion, explosive and substantial drumming, and bass lines that feature counterpoint. "But hard rock is much more than all this. It's a quality of sound that in the end escapes definition. To understand it you really have to listen to different styles of rock." Zito lists The Grateful Dead, The Who, Led Zeppelin, Jeff Beck, and The Jimi Hendrix Experience as exemplars of hard rock while The Beatles' *Rubber Soul* and The Incredible String Band stand in for soft rock. Like Mike Jahn cited above, Zito links softness with country. Writing of The James Gang *Rides Again*, he explains: "One side consists of hard, Led Zeppelinesque rock, while the other is softer and more countrified." Later in the article, Zito suggests that "smooth vocals" are a hallmark of the soft rock genre.

Soft rock provided a challenge to dominant rock values and their self-conscious histories. Prior to the emergence of "soft rock," rock didn't need "hard" tacked on in front as a point of clarification. It was understood as already hard. As Keightley points out,

...It is significant that rock culture celebrates two highly male-dominated periods (fifties rock 'n' roll, British Invasion) as its foundational moments. An important part of rock's taste war against the mass mainstream is conducted in gendered terms, so that 'soft,' 'sentimental,' or 'pretty' become synonyms for insignificance, terms of dismissal, while 'hard,' 'tough,' or 'muscular' become descriptions of high praise for popular music. Even the increasing acceptance of the term 'rock' rather than 'rock 'n' roll' in the mid-1960s is tied to this opposition: by excising the trivial 'n' roll,' and proudly holding up the naturally hard 'rock,' rock culture could express its seriousness and its maturity in implicitly masculine language.²⁸

Soft rock, then, presented a seeming paradox in terminology. How could rock also be soft? Softness was strongly associated with the pop music that had been dismissed as trivial in the face of rock. The contradictory pairing of "soft" and "rock" created problems for the genre, both critically and historically.

Rock, Gender, and Sexuality

It is uncontroversial to state that in the 1960s rock was a male dominated form. As Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie have explained, "in general, popular music's images, values, and sentiments are male products."²⁹ Norma Coates confirms this point in the opening sentence of her dissertation: "rock music is masculine."³⁰ Coates goes on to clarify, "this is not an essential quality of rock music, but rather a discursive construction that runs so deep and with so many hidden tributaries that it takes on the appearance of

28. Keightley, 117.

29. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, "Rock and Sexuality" in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 374.

30. Norma Coates, "It's a Man's, Man's World: Television and the Masculinization of Rock Discourse and Culture" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2002), 2.

immanence or of some original state.”³¹ Coates’ dissertation argues that television played a significant role in the masculinization of rock, a construction that has had “fiercely tenacious staying power”: “Without the visual jolt of television, rock and roll might not have had the widespread social and cultural impact that it did, and might not have become a permanent part of the cultural landscape and a signifier of youthfulness, rebelliousness and a host of other ‘oppositional’ qualities.”³²

Coates summarizes the place of rock in the cultural imaginary where it is always placed in contrast to feminized forms of music:

Rock has been characterized as phallic by popular, male academic, and feminist critics alike, in both celebratory and derogatory manners, an interpretation that owes much to written discourse about rock in the mid-to-late 1960s, in the popular as well as the emergent rock press of the era. This discourse characterized rock as transgressive male culture, placing female performers, fans, and “feminized” types of music in a subordinate position to male rock artists and their followers. It also became a “whitened” form, displacing the many African American artists so popular during rock and roll’s early years. The image of the transgressive white male rocker then took on a life of its own, claiming a place in the popular imaginary as the “truth” about rock. There it has stayed, despite rock’s increasing lack of relevance, especially to young people and despite the visual and musical evidence that rock is not the sole purview of young white men, and in fact has never been so in practice.³³

Coates’s sense that rock continues to signify “youthful rebellion, difference and transcendence from the rigors of everyday life” is no less the common sense of the term in 2014 than it was in 2002 during the time of her writing.³⁴

31. Coates, 2.

32. Ibid., 3.

33. Ibid., 7.

34. Ibid., 11. Coates is certainly not the only feminist scholar to bring attention to this issue. Feminist writers including Gillian Gaar and Lucy O’Brien as well as critics

In their landmark essay “Rock and Sexuality,” Frith and McRobbie make explicit the connection between gender and the performance of sexuality in rock music. The authors contrast cock rock—“music making in which performance is an explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality”—with teeny bop. They write, “Cock rock shows are explicitly about male sexual performance (which may explain why so few girls go to them—the musicians are acting out a sexual iconography which in many ways is unfamiliar, frightening, and distasteful to girls who are educated into understanding sex as something nice, soft, loving, and private).”³⁵

Unlike cock rock, teeny bop offers a different presentation of sexuality: “What is needed is not so much someone to screw as a sensitive and sympathetic soulmate, someone to support and nourish the incompetent male adolescent as he grows up...it is men who are soft, romantic, easily hurt, loyal, and anxious to find a true love who fulfills their definition of what female sexuality should be about.”³⁶ According to Frith and McRobbie, “Girls are encouraged from all directions to interpret their sexuality in terms of romance, to give priority to notions of love, feeling, commitment, the moment of bliss. In endorsing these values girls prepare themselves for their lives as wives and mothers, where the same notions take on different labels—sacrifice, service, and fidelity.”³⁷

Evelyn McDonnell and Ann Powers have called out the male-centric canon of rock and popular musics and sought to redress this gender imbalance which marks music studies and historiography more broadly.

35. Frith and McRobbie, 374.

36. *Ibid.*, 375.

37. *Ibid.*, 379.

Importantly, the authors clarify what might be understood as gender essentialism:

Of course male sex is no more “naturally” wild and uncontrollable than feminine sexuality is passive, meek, and sensitive. Both are ideological constructs, but there is a crucial difference in the way the ideologies and the musics work. Cock rock allows for direct physical and psychological expressions of sexuality; pop in contrast is about romance, about female crushes and emotional affairs. Pop songs aimed at the female audience deny or repress sexuality... Ideologies of love are multimedia products, and teenage girls have little choice but to interpret their sexual feelings in terms of romance—few alternative readings are available.³⁸

While the essay doesn't directly discuss soft rock, many of the characteristics they ascribe to teeny bop similarly apply. The primary difference pertains to the fact that teeny bop is youth music while soft rock is aimed at adult listeners.

One of Frith and McRobbie's more important points is that “masculinity in rock is not determined by one all-embracing definition.”³⁹ Certainly, this is true. However, by the 1970s the way the rock formation referenced rock and interpreted soft rock presented rock masculinity as hegemonic. The simplistic binary of soft versus hard rock undermined the multiplicity of sentimental masculinities represented by soft rockers. Just as “hard rock” served as a metonym for “cock rock” so too did “soft rock” stand in for “soft cock rock.” Instead of rearticulating, as critics have, a monolithic genre of wimpy, impotent whining men, the following section reinterprets some of the most popular songs of the 1970s—songs that were described as soft rock and that reached the top of the Billboard Hot 100 and Easy Listening charts. There are certainly similarities between the songs considered herein, but I think the differences offer a broader perspective. Using a

38. Frith and McRobbie, 380.

39. *Ibid.*, 375.

series of hermeneutic vignettes which illustrate the complex variety of masculinities in 1970s soft rock, I theorize four versions of the “new man” as performed by soft rockers.

The New Men

The 1970s, according to masculinities scholars, were the age of the “new man.” Emerging as a response to feminism and the women’s movement, the new man “has been described conflictingly as pro-feminist, narcissistic, anti-sexist, self-absorbed and sexually ambivalent.”⁴⁰ The new man was “nurturing,” “caring,” “sharing,” and “in tune with the demands of feminism and women in general.”⁴¹ According to some scholars, the new man was an archetype created by the media when “faced with the problem of how to sell ‘soft’ products and lifestyles to men without simultaneously threatening the traditional bases of hegemonic masculinity.”⁴² The new man was in touch with his inner self, and he was sensitive, compassionate, and family focused.⁴³ In a word: he was sentimental.

The new man was implicated in the music of the era, too. Soft rockers performed versions of sentimental masculinity with specific musical traits. As Freya Jarman-Ivens

40. Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 137.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff Hearn, and R. W. Connell (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005), 281.

43. *Postfeminist Masculinities*, 120.

and Ian Biddle write, “Sonic gestures *become* codified, having gendered meanings ascribed to them over a period of time and generated through discursive networks, and those meanings are mutable according to the cultural, historical, and musical context of those gestures, and the subsequent contexts into which they are constantly reinscribed.”⁴⁴ As the authors write, musical masculinities “operate as one of the dominant sites for the working through of masculine identities and, in particular, might be said to be the primary site at which vernacular masculinities are rhetoricized.”⁴⁵ But new sentimental men were not monolithic either. The second part of this chapter theorizes four types of soft rock sentimentalism: the platonic man, the sensitive man, the minstrel man, and the sincere pop man, all of which represent musical manifestations of the new man.

The Platonic Man

In 1971 James Taylor recorded “You’ve Got a Friend,” written by Carole King, for his third album *Mud Slide Slim*. In the same year, he also recorded a version for King’s *Tapestry* which was released that same year. Taylor’s recording garnered a Grammy for Best Male Pop Vocal Performance while King was awarded with Song of the Year. Taylor’s version also spent a week at the top of the Easy Listening chart. In 1971, the song was surrounded on the charts by other soft rock hits like “It’s Too Late” by Carole King, “How Can You Mend a Broken Heart” by the Bee Gees, and “Maggie May” by Rod Stewart.

44. Ian Biddle and Freya Jarman-Ivens, “Introduction: Oh Boy! Making Masculinity in Popular Music,” in *Oh Boy!: Masculinities and Popular Music*, ed. Freya Jarman-Ivens (New York: Routledge, 2007), 10-11.

45. Biddle and Jarman-Ivens, 15.

In 1971, Robert Hilburn wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*:

In discussing Taylor, it is important to recognize the sociological importance of his music. Like the others dealing in the introspective, soft rock music of today, Taylor provides a reassuring reaction to the turbulent music of the late 1960s. Rather than offer the defiance and alarm of the acid and hard rock of the 1960s, Taylor's music offers a more sympathetic reassurance. He has gone through many of the same problems and tensions as members of his audience, several of his songs suggest, and he shares his feelings: "I've seen fire and I've seen rain...I've seen lonely days when I could not find a friend..." His music is soft rather than loud, personal rather than collective, therapeutic rather than disturbing.⁴⁶

Hilburn is one of a few critics, and notably this is for a newspaper rather than a rock journal, who seems to take this music and its popular appeal seriously; yet he cannot help but to frame his discussion in comparative terms as a response to 1960s hard rock. Hilburn significantly emphasizes Taylor's prominent displays of emotion and feelings. The other traits Hilburn ascribes to Taylor—soft, nurturing, and apolitical—play into the perceived femininity of the genre.

Taylor's rendition of "You've Got a Friend" features two tracks of acoustic guitar, conga, Taylor's reedy voice, and sparse percussion. In the chorus, Taylor is accompanied by Carole King, Joni Mitchell, Kate Taylor, and Peter Asher who harmonize his vocal line as they sing:

You just call out my name
 And you know wherever I am
 I'll come running to see you again
 Winter, spring, summer or fall
 All you have to do is call
 And I'll be there
 You've got a friend

46. Robert Hilburn, "Soothing Sounds in Taylor Album," *Los Angeles Times* (April 25 1971), T40.

“You’ve Got a Friend” relies on the seasons to convey changes in emotional registers. Similarly, it uses the nature-laden imagery of sky, clouds, and winds to describe the protagonist’s emotional state. This imagery resurfaces in the chorus when Taylor states that he will be there no matter what the season—we can interpret this statement both literally and metaphorically.

The sparsely orchestrated song utterly lacks any sort of support in the bass registers. Furthermore, the brushes on the drums remove any potential for a driving rhythmic charge as they perform a literal rhythmic softness. In an unfavorable review Robert Christgau writes:

If even his admirers acknowledge that his music has lost some of its drive (*lost some of its drive?*), then even a sworn enemy can admit that he’s capable of interesting songs and intricate music. Having squandered most of the songs on his big success, he’s concentrating on the intricate music—the lyrics are more onanistic than ever, escapist as a matter of conscious thematic decision. From what? you well may wonder. From success, poor fella.⁴⁷

Unsurprisingly, Christgau relies on a sexual adjective to describe Taylor’s lyrics. I can only assume he refers to song’s lines “you need a helping hand” and “close your eyes and think of me” when he claims the lyrics as masturbatory, a reinterpretation that seems gratuitous. And yet his assessment that this music lacks drive remains apt. In fact, Taylor performs not just the lack of drive, but the *loss* of drive: the song gradually slows down as it unfolds. Starting at roughly 100 b.p.m., the song unwinds; by the time it concludes, we are at a steady 92 b.p.m.

47. Robert Christgau, “Consumer Guide Review,” accessed February 15, 2014, http://www.robertchristgau.com/get_artist.php?name=James+Taylor.

This is not music that increases the heart rate; in fact, it might actually decrease it. Nor does it reach below the waist with its lack of the bass spectrum. Nor should it: this is an intentional compositional choice rather than a failure of masculinity. Written in the first person, this song about friendship lacks any gender specific pronouns. Perhaps rock critics like Christgau heard Taylor singing to a female protagonist and would have preferred that he turn the song into an anthem of sexual conquest. Instead, Taylor's performance of King's song endorses dependability, emotional support, and the possibility of platonic friendship. Rather than asking if this is what it sounds like to pleasure yourself, we might hear it as the musical enactment of calming down a friend in need.

The Sensitive Man

While male musicians like Taylor performed platonic compassion, most sensitive men weren't all that different from other heterosexual men and they too wanted sex. But instead of asserting their sexual desires through dominance and aggression as cock rockers had done, sensitive men expressed their desires in an understated way. Bread's 1970 hit "Make It With You" presents a tender and caring lover while Paul McCartney and Wings's "My Love" boasts in the least boastful way.

In 1970 Bread recorded "Make It With You" for their second album, *On the Waters*. The song went to number one on the Billboard Hot 100 and peaked at number four on the Easy Listening chart. Writing for Allmusic guide, critic Stephen Thomas Erlewine explains that "Bread broke big with their second album, thanks to David Gates' sentimental soft pop classic, 'Make It With You'—the song that set the standard for

sensitive mellow pop ballads for the '70s and for years to come."⁴⁸ Here, Erlewine attributes the band's success to this sentimental single and notes the lasting impact it had on the 1970s mellow music scene.

Writing for *Rolling Stone*, Michael Azzerad offers some retrospective observations about the band: "Bread virtually invented soft rock in the early Seventies, and the group's biggest hits—"Make It With You," "Baby I'm-a Want You" and "Everything I Own"—remain staples on lite-rock radio."⁴⁹ Azerrad's piece includes comments from Bread's bassist, Larry Knechtel, who apparently was not especially comfortable with the band's mellow sound: "Whenever somebody in the back of the hall would yell, '*Boogie*', I'd feel damn miserable," he says, "because I knew there was no way that this band was gonna get up and boogie."⁵⁰ Knechtel's account highlights the bodily experience of Bread's music. This is not music for dancing; at best, it's for swaying. Most videos of the band performing "Make It With You" in the '70s are highly static wherein the band moves only just enough to create the mellow sounds they produce.

In 1973, writing for *Creem*, Robot A. Hull came out in defense of the band. In the process, however, he did not hesitate to call into question the masculinity of Bread and

48. Stephen Thomas Erlewine, "Bread Review," accessed January 10, 2014, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/on-the-waters-mw0000644869>.

49. Michael Azerrad, "Bread," *Rolling Stone* (August 10 1989), accessed December 15, 2013, Bread/1989/Michael Azerrad/Rolling Stone/Bread/10/02/2014 18:10:41/<http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bread>.

50. Ibid.

bands like them. At the same time he fired off expletives as a means of establishing his own masculinity:

This is it, this is it, this is it! The wimps rule; there's no doubt about it. AM critters like Steely Dan and King Harvest and Christie and the Rowan Brothers and even your old standard favorites like the Hollies and the Guess Who have nothing, absolutely nuttin', in comparison with this shimmering tribe. Bread beats 'em all. Yet, it's a shame that heavy-metal snobbery has overlooked such craftsmen. Like, if Uriah Heep or Argent or Nitzinger gets a hit, it's OK, but if Bread makes the top o' the charts, it's just yukky and "Commercial Bullshit." Well, you fuckers, that ain't so, cause Bread is entitled to a little fame and glory with all the hits they've had under their belt. I don't give a shit what people say – if a group has had several hits, well, then they must have something.⁵¹

Aligning the dominant sound of the "wimps" with AM radio, Hull points out the hypocrisy of the rock formation and more specifically that of heavy metal snobbery when it comes to ideas about commercial success versus selling out. Hull's backhanded compliment aimed at Bread—"the wimps rule"—reinforces the already perceived femininity of the bands he lists.

Later in the article, Hull writes:

However, Bread ain't simply novelty music or a brand of bubblegum humming. The lead vocalist can sing, the production is professional, but most important, the band rocks. I'm not kidding...Agreed, tho [*sic*.], Bread can be fairly sappy at times. Side one combines all the mush appeal of syrupy Buffalo Springfield and the sugary tears of Helen Reddy, but this really shouldn't prove to [*sic*] discouraging. I mean, the songs are still awfully goddamn pretty and they're so catchy that you'll find yourself singing along in no time.⁵²

Hull doesn't just claim Bread as rock; instead, he puts the compliment into active terms by stating that "the band rocks," which he qualifies with adjectives including sappy,

51. Robot A. Hull, "Bread: The Best of Bread," *Creem* (June 1973), accessed January 3, 2014, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/bread-the-best-of-bread>.

52. *Ibid.*

mushy, and tearful. Hull seems well aware that his suggestions and interpretation might sound oxymoronic to *Creem* readers.

“Make It With You” opens with a strummed acoustic guitar, which establishes the purposefully slow common meter at approximately 84 b.p.m. It is quickly followed by the entrance of the bass guitar and a clean and warm sounding electric guitar that interjects simple and occasional chords. The drums are played with a light touch and the kick drum is almost entirely absent from the mix; because the drums have little bass in them, we experience a sense of space. Singer David Gates’s mellow voice enters the texture at the same time as the kit drum in the fifth measure [0:12]. He sings:

Hey have you ever tried
Really reaching out for the other side?
I may be climbing on rainbows
But baby here goes.

Dreams there for those who sleep
Life is for us to keep
And if you’re wondering what this song is leading to
I want to make it with you.
I really think that we could make it, girl.

At the end of this last line, strings enter the texture and underpin the song’s lush arrangement for the remaining two minutes of the song. The twangy sound of the Telecaster guitar offers a counterpoint to the smoothness of the strings.

Example 4.1: “Make It With You,” melismatic melody of the verse.

In the first two lines of each verse, Gates sings melismatically on the first words of the phrase, emphasizing words such as “dreams,” “life,” and “love” through embellishment (Example 1). His use of “girl” at the end of the phrase affirms his heterosexual address. And, he relies on a song-reflexive strategy—“and if you’re wondering what this song is leading to”—in order to simultaneously address his personal and his collective audience. This works to also highlight the contrived situation of the album track performance.

Ambiguity intentionally underpins the song’s refrain: “make it with you.” When Gates sings “I’d like to make it with you” it seems like a clear reference to having sex with the woman to whom he sings. However, he then adds, “I really think that we can make it, girl” which sounds much more like “we have a shot in this relationship.” Gates’s tender singing style and emphatic references to images including “rainbows,” “dreams,” and “love” contribute to the tender tone of the song. But it also seems like he is playing to an idea about female fantasies of a partner who is sensitive and caring. “I’d Like to Make It With You” allows for an openness of interpretation such that even if he is saying “let’s go to bed together,” he is saying it in such a nice way that it might just appeal to his female listeners. If the way one performs music is an analogue for sex, “Make It With You” offers up a sensitive and tender lover who knows how to delicately handle his instruments.

Also a song of romantic love, “My Love” (1973) was released as the second track of Paul McCartney & Wings’ album *Red Rose Speedway*. The song is credited to both Paul and Linda McCartney and reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100. It also remained at number one on the Easy Listening charts for three weeks. “My Love” is the

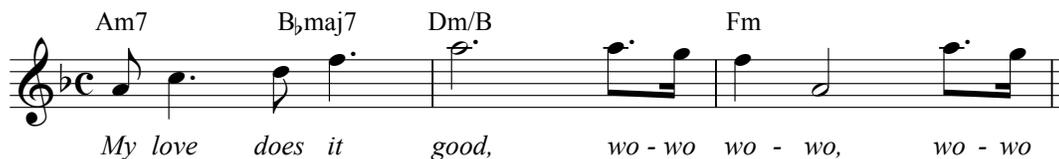
only song discussed in detail here that features an electric guitar solo. Although the slow tempo of the song at only 60 b.p.m. may undermine the perceived power of the solo, it works to situate the song within the trajectory of rock. And it is meant to illustrate that a love song can also rock.

In July of 1973, Lenny Kaye reviewed *Red Rose Speedway* for *Rolling Stone*. Of “My Love,” Kaye writes that the song “relies on its success (both as single and album cut) not through the mushiness of its sentiments, or the superfluous prettiness of its melody...but in its constant attention to unconcealed repetition. A look at the lyric sheet reveals a staggering amount of ‘My Love’s’ and ‘Wo-Wo’s’ shoved in nearly every line, and if the song appears to be somehow more than it actually is, chalk one up for McCartney’s supervisory care.”⁵³

The song, which was reportedly written about Linda, repeatedly foregrounds McCartney’s vocal climax at the top of his melodic line on the word “good”: “My love does it good” (Example 2). McCartney then exhales and descends on a series of vocables as Kaye points out. Musically, the climax is interesting—supported by the vi chord while McCartney hangs onto his high note for a full three beats—but semantically “good” offers the most banal climax. It is no wonder that McCartney’s masculinity was in question. What rock critic wants a “good” climax when you could have one that transcends semantic meaning such as the orgasmic interlude in Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love”?

53. Lenny Kaye, “Paul McCartney: *Red Rose Speedway*,” *Rolling Stone* (July 5, 1973), accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/paul-mccartney-red-rose-speedway>.

McCartney’s “My Love” offers up a comparatively mundane version of sexuality in which the world of this couple’s love is predictable: “And when I go away / I know my heart can stay with my love / It’s understood.” This is not to suggest that there is anything wrong with the inevitability of McCartney’s love; it does, however, make it easier to understand how and why rock critics and the rock formation would have heard the song as utterly lacking. For many listeners, however, “My Love” may have afforded a version of security in love—“good” sex after all is better than none at all.



Example 4.2: Paul McCartney’s vocal climax in “My Love.”

Kenny Loggins recorded “Whenever I Call You Friend” for his 1978 album *Nightwatch*. This was Loggins’s second solo album as well as his highest charting album to date on the Billboard 200. Loggins co-wrote “Whenever I Call You Friend” with his friend Melissa Manchester and recorded the song with Stevie Nicks. It peaked at number five on the Billboard Hot 100 and number nine on the Adult Contemporary chart.

“Whenever I Call You Friend” offers another example of a sensitive guy song. What differs, however, is that this is the only song discussed here that features a male-female duet. Loggins and Nicks perform a kind of musical cooperation symbolizing the sensitive man’s understanding of a relationship as an equal partnership, which can only be deepened through having a lover who is also your friend.

The track opens with a compelling four bar, four-part male vocal harmonization on non-semantic “oohs” and “aahhs,” establishing the slow and purposeful tempo of the first two verses. The introduction enacts vocal harmony to metaphorically represent the cooperation and camaraderie that underlies the relationship of the song’s subject. The fact that all men sing this intro reinforces the idea that the song and its message address men. These singers continue to offer their vocal support throughout the song.

Following the harmonized introduction, Loggins sings: “Whenever I call you ‘friend’ / I begin to think I understand / Anywhere we are / You and I have always been / Forever and ever.” Significantly, the first line belongs to Loggins. Using the concept of infinity, the song redefines the experience of true love, which is equated here with the affective bonds of friendship. Nicks chimes in during the second verse, harmonizing with Loggins: “I see myself within your eyes / And that’s all I need to show me why / Everything I do / Always take me home to you.” Through their duet, the singing partners domesticate their love, situating it as a place of belonging, a home.

The tempo doubles just in time for the chorus when an active disco-influenced bass line kicks in while eighth notes are tapped away on the drum kit. Together Nicks and Loggins sing:

Sweet love’s showin’ us a heavenly light
 I’ve never seen such a beautiful sight
 See love glowing on us every night
 I know forever we’ll be doing it.

Shifting the song to a dance number also creates an affective shift; this is now music that makes our bodies want to move. Like Bread’s “Make It with You,” the song offers some

ambiguity about whether the protagonists refer to love making or love feelings or both. But in the last two iterations of the chorus, Loggins and Nicks further emphasize the possibility of sex by repeating the line “doing it.” “Whenever I Call You Friend” exploits the characteristics of disco-based dance music to underscore its bodily message.

“Whenever I Call You Friend,” “My Love, and “Make It With You” lack the aggression and even brutality of other rock sex songs; this is part of their power and appeal. They are not, however, asexual as I have illustrated. The fact that their performance of sexuality is subtle enough that it might even be missed or overlooked was enough for critics to dismiss them as impotent. And yet it is precisely this trait that would have rendered such songs appealing to listeners tired of the misogyny and brutality of other sexual rock songs. This is not to suggest that such soft rock was women’s music. Many soft rockers still performed the same insistent male heterosexual desire, if in a more sensitive way. Some even asked permission. But these were still male-dominated songs in a male-dominated industry. In many ways, such performances of desire fixed female sexuality by presuming to know what women want.

The Minstrel Man

Soft rockers presented an unequivocally heterosexual and white version of the new man, but race factored importantly into the interpretations of these masculinities. Some soft rockers relied on racialized stereotypes to reference blackness while others inhabited musical styles including r & b and soul to re-blacken the sound of rock. At the time the still segregated music industry permitted white rockers to claim the “rock” of

“soft rock” while black artists like Stevie Wonder were referred to not as “soft rock” but instead by the racialized categories of soul or r & b.

“Black Water” was the fourth track on *What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits*, the Doobie Brothers fourth studio album, recorded in 1974. Patrick Simmons, the song’s author, is featured on lead vocals in this Cajun fiddle inspired song, which was reportedly influenced by a visit to New Orleans. “Black Water” made it to number one on the Billboard Hot 100 in March of 1975. Produced by Ted Templeman, who is known for his soft rock studio work, but who also went on to produce hard rock legends like Van Halen, the album eventually reached multi-platinum status. This nostalgic ode to the south appropriates fiddle and acoustic blues guitar to connote its geographical aspirations while its middle section a cappella breakdown sets it somewhat apart from other soft rockers.

The song opens with wind chimes to suggest its locale on the front porch of someone’s southern home. The easy-go-lucky attitude featured throughout is exemplified in the following verse:

Well, if it rains, I don’t care, don’t make no difference to me;
 Just take that street car that’s goin’ up town.
 Yeah, I’d like to hear some funky Dixieland
 And dance a honky tonk,
 And I’ll be buyin’ ev’rybody drinks all ‘roun’.

The song expresses nostalgia for a mythical and happy past. The song shares in the sentimentalism of nineteenth century plantation songs that project a fantasy of the south where everything is easy and peaceful. Long swipes on the harp in the opening measures illustrate a certain degree of self-consciousness about the fantasy. Wayne Robbins writing

for *Creem* explained that “Simmons’ ‘Black Water’ was pastoral and soothing, and relatively sophisticated.”⁵⁴

In an interview for *BAM* in 1979, Dave Zimmer asked Doobie Brother’s guitarist Tom Johnston how the band felt about being on AM radio. Johnston replied: “Well, I don’t think anybody gave a damn. It meant we were doing well. We got a lot of FM airplay, too. We didn’t consider ourselves an AM band, by any means. We didn’t try and aim our songs in that direction at all. We just wrote songs. That was it. There was never any *concept*.”⁵⁵ The reply suggests that the division between AM and FM radio was less of a concern for some artists than perhaps for fans who identified with one over the other. The band also described their efforts on *What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits* as an exploration and expansion in new directions, working with guests like the Memphis Horns. Zimmer asked Johnston specifically about “Black Water” and if the band was surprised when it became a hit. “Yeah, everybody was. The album had been out for a while when they re-released ‘Nobody’, a single off the very first album! I don’t know why. Then ‘Black Water’ broke and killed it. I don’t remember how well that *album* was doing. I wasn’t paying any attention. We were on the road all the time, anyway.”⁵⁶

54. Wayne Robins, “Doobie Brothers: The Reward of Facelessness,” *Creem* (December 1975), accessed January 2, 2014, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/doobie-brothers-the-reward-of-facelessness>.

55. Dave Zimmer.

56. Dave Zimmer, “Tom Johnston: The Former Doobie Still Listens to the Music,” *BAM* (October 19, 1979), accessed January 2, 2014, <http://www.rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/tom-johnston-the-former-doobie-still-listens-to-the-music>.

The song's chorus situates it geographically: "Old black water, keep on rolling/Mississippi moon won't you keep on shining on me" and concludes with the line: "I ain't got no worries/Cause I ain't in no hurry." Using familiar stereotypes of southern life, the song places ease as its central thematic; as with the Eagles, critics interpreted this ease as an abandonment of the political engagement and virility of 1960s rock. The vision of a life without difficulty or challenge—however fantastical—was heard as impotent. Ironically, the band relied on a politically charged racial and musical stereotype to enact a lack of political engagement.

In 1976, the Philadelphia duo Hall & Oates finally scored a top ten hit with the single "Sara Smile" from their fourth studio album entitled *Daryl Hall and John Oates* (1975). The song is a love ballad addressed to Sara Allen, Daryl Hall's girlfriend and sometimes writing partner. Writing for *Allmusic Guide*, Stewart Mason describes the song: "Set to a simple electric piano-based arrangement and featuring Hall's blue-eyed soul lead vocals and Oates' effortless harmonies, "Sara Smile" blends two of the primary sounds of 1976, the weightless smoothness of Philly soul and the mellowness of soft rock, cannily making a single that sounded appropriate on multiple radio formats."

Like other 1970s soft rock songs, the lyrics feature images of sunshine and warmth to describe the love of the protagonist. It is written in the first person and addresses the object of affection by her name. Its lush string arrangement makes it sound like hits from earlier in the decade and discussed earlier in this chapter. Hall sings: "When I feel cold you warm me / And when I feel I can't go on / You come and hold me / It's you and me forever." In this song—and others—Hall plays the sensitive man, unafraid to own his emotions and show his vulnerability in love. Like many nineteenth-

century sentimental songs that exemplified a similar kind of sentimental masculinity, “Sara Smile” uses the beloved’s name in the song’s title. It was precisely this portrayal of sentimental masculinity that would lead some critics to dismiss the duo’s music.

In a 1981 review of *Private Eyes*—the duo’s tenth studio album—Richard Riegel writing for *Creem* opened with the following backhanded compliment:

I gotta hand it to these guys. Just a few years back, if the merest snatch of any of their biggies—“She’s Gone” was the agony-of-agonies *worst* of the lot, but “Sara Smile” wasn’t far behind—slunk out of my car radio, my middle finger rammed into the pushbuttons with blinding speed, furiously seeking out any headon-collision rock’n’roll left on the dial. I felt like smashing my hand right through the speaker, grabbing Hall & Oates by their scrawny white necks and screaming, “Of course she’s *gone*, you jerks! She already went clear through menopause, just waiting for you snails to cough up the rest of that lame and halt song!”

Riegel’s complaints about the duo referring to the slow tempo of both “Sara Smile” and “She’s Gone,” but he also highlights Hall & Oates whiteness and what he later refers to in the review as their “abject wimpiness,” a trait Riegel sees as characterizing early 1970s popular music.

Riegel then goes on to situate his new found appreciation for Hall & Oates, explaining that they must have changed with the release of *Private Eyes* rather than any contradiction or shifts in his own taste. For Riegel, rock ought to have rhythm and beat and “propulsive energy”; rock vocals should be “direct and headlong or not at all.” The standards by which Riegel measures Hall & Oates are not surprising; he adheres clearly to the kinds of aesthetics Keightley outlines that we would expect from the rock formation.

Hall & Oates are unique on this list because of the fact that they were geographically removed from many soft rockers; they did, however, record several of

their albums in the soft rock capital of Los Angeles. But Philadelphia was where they initially developed their sound and they describe absorbing the influences of black musicians with whom they played at clubs.

“Blue-eyed soul,” the moniker used to describe Hall & Oates, refers directly to the racialized interpretation of their music. The fact that the term soft rock is not attributed to describe any similar black artists of the 1970s highlights the still racially segregated state of radio and the music industry in this period. However, as artists like Hall & Oates illustrate, there was significant cross over between actual gigging musicians in cities like Philadelphia. This is an old story in music history: industry categories rarely reflect the lived experiences of actual musicians and listeners.

In a 1983 *Los Angeles Times* article entitled “Black Radio Crosses the Color Line,” Terry Atkinson highlights the musical segregation that characterized the industry. Atkinson describes the “new” order of cross-over as “one of the healthiest trends in modern pop” in which “several black-oriented stations around the country are playing records by white artists.”⁵⁷ Atkinson explains that musicians like Hall & Oates, Michael McDonald, and Kenny Loggins were getting airplay on such stations. He is also careful to explain that this was not an equal or reciprocal relationship: “For those who value musical and cultural interaction, this “color blind” approach is especially encouraging during a time when traditional rock stations are reluctant to play records by black artists, even rock-oriented ones.”⁵⁸ As white musicians, Hall & Oates were clearly afforded a

57. Terry Atkinson, “Black Radio Crosses the Color Line,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 10, 1983), W56.

58. *Ibid.*

fluidity of genre that their black contemporaries were far less likely to experience.

And, at the same time, for some critics, the pinnacle of authenticity was black music—think blues revival—which meant that “blue-eyed soul” would always be heard as a pale imitation.

The Sincere Pop Man

Although referred to as soft rockers, artists like Harry Nilsson and Terry Jacks bore little relationship to the sonic world of rock. Instead their music relied on the conventions of pop music from the first half of the twentieth century: they used traditional pop forms, close-miking techniques to convey intimacy, and lyrics in which they wore their emotions on their sleeves. Like the crooners before them, sincere pop men like Nilsson and like Jacks proved “especially attractive to female audiences because of their lack of sexual aggressiveness”; as a consequence, “crooners were demonized as effeminate and pathological.”⁵⁹

In 1971, Harry Nilsson recorded Badfinger’s “Without You” for his seventh album entitled *Nilsson Schmilsson*. Nilsson’s cover of “Without You” stayed at number one on the Billboard Hot 100 for four weeks early in 1972 and spent five weeks at the top of the Easy Listening charts. In a review of John Denver, critic Mick Houghton compares Denver to Nilsson, explaining that “Nilsson is an interesting case. His albums meet the same formula as Denver’s—heavily romantic, sentimental, often pit against lush arrangements, and at most gentle Beatlish type rockers—but Nilsson has a stylistic and

59. Coates, 24.

emotional intensity that he brings to bear in his singing.”⁶⁰ Here, Houghton lays bare his intended meaning of sentimental: in this case it is understood as the romantic love described above. And yet he distinguishes Nilsson for the intensity of his performance which we are to read as contradictory to the sentimental vehicle through which it reaches us: the romantic love song. For Houghton then sentimental might be best understood as a synonym for insincerely romantic. Later on in the article, Houghton clarifies this by stating, “I’m sure John Denver didn’t simply jump on the ecological bandwagon or cultivate that kind of broad-based appeal disingenuously. His concerns are genuine; his feeling and sincerity are genuine but what has happened of late, markedly on the recent albums *Back Home Again* and *Windsong*, is that he has become too bland and too mawkish and over sentimental.”⁶¹

Nilsson’s “Without You” opens with the sound of a piano that chimes out a sparse quarter note texture and establishes the slow 4/4 tempo at approximately 64 b.p.m. Nilsson’s voice enters after not even two full bars of piano accompaniment; he is close-miked and his voice sounds both fragile and secure at the same time. As Simon Frith notes, “the microphone’s importance was not that it enabled people to sing loudly but that it let them be soft.”⁶² Nilsson sings:

No, I can’t forget this evening
 Or your face as you were leaving
 But I guess that’s just the way the story goes

60. Mick Houghton, “John Denver: What’s The Poor Guy Evern Done?” *Sounds* (April 3, 1976).

61. *Ibid.*

62. Frith, 97.

You always smile but in your eyes your sorrow shows
 Yes, it shows

The plodding of the piano enacts Nilsson's resignation over this lost love. Exploiting the 32 bar song form, Nilsson executes a modified AABA (AABABB'). For the A section or the first eight measures, he is accompanied by only the piano which supports the lyrics transcribed above. At the reiteration of the A section, strings enter, filling out the texture with long whole notes. Finally, at the chorus, the drums enter offering their full rhythmic support while freeing the strings to work in a more percussive way. This additive approach to texture works to build both the complexity of the music as well as the density of Nilsson's psychological pain.

For the first four measures of the refrain, or B section, Nilsson sings in roughly the same register as the A section (D3 to D4); for the next four measures, he launches up the octave to repeat the line, straining as he does so, and here his voice is double-tracked, helping us to understand the depth of emotion he is experiencing. It is too much feeling for one voice alone to carry:

I can't live if living is without you
 I can't live, I can't give any more
 Can't live if living is without you
 I can't give, I can't give any more

Singing in the first person, Nilsson conveys the pain of his experience. He's in a double bind and his hands are tied—the humanity and rawness of his anguish feel and sound real.

Nilsson's "Without You" is undeniably a song about romantic love, as Houghton points out above. But it is also about a willingness to bare vulnerability in love and to access painfully tender feelings in a way that many hard rockers did not. Nilsson

performs musical heartache in a way that makes the heart ache; as he strains vocally we experience with him the full extent of his loss.

Terry Jacks's "Seasons in Sun," which was released in December of 1973, takes a turn towards the existential. Jacks's adaptation of this Jacques Brel song charted early in 1974 when it spent three weeks at number one on Billboard's Hot 100 and one week at the top of the Easy Listening charts. "Seasons in the Sun" sold more than ten million physical copies worldwide, a record that fewer than forty all-time singles have achieved. Jacks is the only Canadian included in this discussion and, unlike the other artists considered herein, he is best described as a one hit wonder.

In 2006, CNN published an article entitled "The Worst Songs of All Time, Part II." The list places "Seasons in the Sun" as the number five worst song of all time. Included in the write up are descriptions from CNN.com users: "'A melody you couldn't play for your dog combined with inane lyrics' (Chris K.); 'An all-time piece of dreck' (Darrell); 'Having to listen to it is a season in hell' (Bonnie D.)."⁶³ Despite its massive success and its concern with themes of time, "Seasons in the Sun" has not withstood the test of time.

The song begins with an out of tune solo electric guitar riff that warbles its way into the song. Jacks begins by singing, "Goodbye to you my trusted friend," which establishes the song's status as a lament. We hear a discernible lisp in which he emphasizes his esses: "skinned our hearts and skinned our knees." Jacks's juvenile vocal delivery plays into the imagery of the song; it is underpinned by a steady stream of eighth

63. Todd Leopold, "The Worst Songs of All Time, Part II," accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/SHOWBIZ/Music/04/25/worst.songs/index.html>.

note chords played on a high-pitched organ. Jacks’s song features many of the same aspects as other soft rock songs discussed here—from the backup chorus and strings to the strummed acoustic guitar and clearly discernable lyrics.

“Season’s in the Sun” also uses some of the same imagery as other soft rockers, relying on nature—hills, trees, birds, sky, and spring—as signs of life to contrast with the tone of this farewell song. The choice of past tense verbs allows the song to dwell nostalgically in the past and to convey the impending end of its protagonist:

We had joy, we had fun
 We had seasons in the sun
 But the hills that we climbed
 Were just seasons out of time

We had joy, we had fun
 We had seasons in the sun
 But the wine and the song
 Like the seasons have all gone.

“Seasons in the Sun” relies on several key changes to amplify the intensity of this chorus and its message. Walter Everett refers to such key changes, which are commonly heard in rock and pop ballads, as “truck driver modulations.”⁶⁴ The relatively short song employs a remarkable three such modulations in the latter half of the song—potentially part of the reason the song has been criticized as one of the worst rock songs ever written.

Modulations like these are often heard as a cheap device for emotional manipulation.

This song progresses through a series of starts and stops—a relatively unique strategy for such a short song—making it seem like the longest 3.5 minutes you’ve ever heard. Such

64. Walter Everett, “The Beatles as Composers: The Genesis of Abbey Road, Side Two” in *Concert Music, Rock, and Jazz since 1945: Essays and Analytical Studies*, ed. Elizabeth West Marvin and Richard Hermann (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 172–228.

starts and stops render the song a tease while its climaxes through modulation make it sound facile or even fake.

Jacks uses these devices, however, to perform his existential crisis. He offers a tender reflection on the fragility of life; the song opens a space in which listeners were reminded to not take life for granted. Like the moralizing tale told in Harry Chapin's "Cats in the Cradle," which was also a hit in 1974, "Seasons in the Sun" prompts its listeners to reconsider their own lives while they still can. Instead of inviting the listener into a few moments of Dionysian pleasure and excess attributed to rock, the song asks us to reflect more seriously on the bigger questions in life. What a drag.

In 1979, Dan Fogelberg released "Longer" on his sixth album *Phoenix*. Late in '79, "Longer" was released as a single, peaking at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 and reaching number one on the Adult Contemporary chart early in 1980. "Longer" is Fogelberg's highest-charting hit and it's the song he joked, "put me on the elevators." It features strummed acoustic guitar, a lush string arrangement, Fogelberg's soft, tenor voice, and somewhat surprisingly a flugelhorn solo by Jerry Hey. Lacking drums and bass, the song remains in the upper to mid ranges. Fogelberg's vocals have been described as angelic which is supported by the song's slow tempo and use of harp on this track.

Using a series of "longer than" statements, Fogelberg compares the duration of his love to various phenomenon in the natural world:

Longer than there've been fishes
 In the ocean
 Higher than any bird ever flew
 Longer than there've been stars
 Up in the heavens

I've been in love with you.

Fogelberg's hyperbolic comparisons bring love into a different kind of time scale: instead of describing the love of his life (time), this love extends to a geologic time scale, the significance of which is its universality.

Surely it is this kind of excess that led some critics to accuse Fogelberg of sentimentalism. Writing a review for the *New York Times* in 1981, critic Stephen Holden explained Fogelberg's soft rock influences:

Dan Fogelberg, the Colorado-based singer, composer and multi-instrumentalist who packed Byrne Arena on Tuesday, has gradually developed into one of the two or three most popular soft-rock artists in America, and his moon-June-spoon style longsong, "Longer," is something of a modern standard. Mr. Fogelberg bases his sound, which often features thick vocal harmonies and mixes acoustic and electric instrumentation, on Crosby, Stills and Nash and the Eagles, but throws in some light classical touches as well...Mr. Fogelberg's songs are filled with choked emotion and greeting-card diction. They epitomize sentimental kitsch posing as "art."⁶⁵

The comparison here to greeting cards is apt. The kinds of statements that artists like Fogelberg and his soft rock contemporaries made were in many ways attempts to universalize the experience of falling and/or being in love. Through nature, these artists extended the bounds of their experiences and opened a space for others to share in this experience.

In an essay simply titled "Pop Music," Simon Frith speaks to the universality to which musicians like Fogelberg aspired. Recognizing the emotional potential of such clichés or greeting card sentiments, Frith writes:

65. Stephen Holden, "Pop: Dan Fogelberg Sings," *New York Times* (October 22, 1981), C15.

Pop is not an art but a craft. It is not about realizing individual visions or making us see the world in new ways but about providing popular tunes and clichés in which to express commonplace feelings—love, loss, jealousy. But to work pop must do this in sufficiently individualised ways to appeal to us as individual listeners. And the secret here lies in the pop singers’ ability to appeal to us directly, to lay their personality on a song such that we can make it our song too.⁶⁶

In particular, Frith offers the example of the ballad to describe the kinds of bonds formed through song:

Although rock was a musical form that defined itself against pop, the ballad remained central to its appeal. And if jazz performers had used ballads’ melodic familiarity as the basis of improvisation—transforming a standard pop song into something quite different—rock musicians (following the Beatles’ lead with “Yesterday”) wrote their own ballads but used them in familiar pop ways to bind their audiences into an emotional community.⁶⁷

It is no accident that what Frith describes comes from a section on sentimental song. The important part to remember is that sentimental song is not only about romantic love expressed in overwrought clichés; it is about a performance of emotion that assumes there are feelings that are experienced by humans broadly—this may mean feelings about romantic love, but it might also mean feelings about friendship or other relationships, about life and death, and about sex.

66. Simon Frith, “Pop Music,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw, and John Street (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 96.

67. Frith, 100.

Soft Rock Sentimentalism

In 1977 critic John Rockwell published an article in the *New York Times* entitled “Sentiment Stages a Comeback in the Pop World.” Rockwell opens the piece with the following:

Just a few years ago, it looked as if rock-and-roll might displace all other forms of American popular music. The very term “middle-of-the-road” music took on a certain irony, in that the performers those words referred to—“adult-pop” stylists of the Shirley Bassey-Tony Bennett-Frank Sinatra sort—sold relatively poorly. They may have occupied the middle of the road stylistically, but in commercial terms the rock stars in their limousines hogged the center line. Now all that has changed, and dramatically. Rock still sells, but today artists like Debby Boone, Carly Simon, Barry Manilow and Barbra Streisand top the sales charts with ever-greater frequency. The liveliest new ratings successes in radio are being won by soft rock or “mellow rock” or “beautiful music” stations that appeal unashamedly to lovers of middle-of-the-road, adult-pop music. Sometimes the formats are freshened with a little rock flavor, but the essence is old-fashioned sentiment.⁶⁸

Like his contemporaries, Rockwell reads soft rock through a comparison with other forms of rock music. Significantly, he understands it as old-fashioned because of its overt sentiment.

Rockwell’s article paints a vivid picture of the 1970s pop music landscape, arguing that a shift in tastes has occurred—from youthful, rebellious musics to soft and sentimental adult music. Like other writers of the time, he defines his terms: middle of the road “is popular music that stresses tunes over rhythm and comfortable harmonies and arrangements over abrasiveness. It focuses single-mindedly on love, as opposed to drug experiences or politics. And it dwells lovingly on sentiment, which its critics would

68. John Rockwell, “Sentiment Stages a Comeback in the Pop World,” *New York Times* (December 18, 1977), 97.

call sentimentality.”⁶⁹ For Rockwell, among others, the shift in taste signifies a lack: this music is heard as markedly non-political and non-rebellious.

Rockwell is interested in a historical narrative, too, but his is a much longer history than offered by most. He argues that the roots of sentimental adult music lie between the two world wars with crooners such as Bing Crosby and big band arrangements. According to Rockwell’s narrative, 1960s rock and roll threatened to wipe out middle of the road music. He explains:

...record executives like Clive Davis at Columbia dismissed Mitch Miller and the other middle-of-the-road staples and replaced them with a horde of hairy rockers. Even then, however, softer, more sentimental forms of rock and other music co-existed with the harsher rock—one need only consider the slicker folk revivalists or the doo-wop harmonizing of the street-corner groups, both black and white, or the falsetto crooning of people like Frankie Valli and Smokey Robinson—or even the love songs of the Beatles themselves. By the 1970s, with the reassertion of soft rock and other forms of hip mellowness, we find executives like Mr. Davis not only signing rockers like the Kinks and Patti Smith on his Arista label, but promoting Mr. Manilow up the charts.”

Acknowledging that historically hard and soft musics did not preclude one another, but instead co-existed on the charts, Rockwell’s account highlights the complexity of the 1970s musical landscape. Ultimately, Rockwell decides that the sentimentality of the 1970s was a response to the “radical innovation” of the 1960s—a “part of the cyclical pattern in which American society oscillates between progression and conservation.”⁷⁰ Importantly, Rockwell adds, “That may also mean a lessened receptivity by the white American majority in the energy and the implied threat of black music.”⁷¹

69. Rockwell, 97.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

In a later article, Rockwell extends his narrative even further back, explaining that middle of the road has always been the most popular of musics. He writes: “But far and away the most popular form of music of all, surpassing even disco, is soft rock, the mellow sound, middle-of-the-road, or whatever you want to call the latest manifestations of what’s *always* been most popular with mass American audiences.”⁷² Here, Rockwell equates mass audiences with a mellow sound; unlike throngs of angry protestors who lift their voices in dissent, this undifferentiated mass has been lulled into complacency by music that somehow projects the same values. He writes:

But Billy Joel’s overtly, soporily sentimental ballad, “Just the Way You Are,” won the record and song-of-the-year awards, Barry Manilow was top pop male vocalist, and the soft-rock trend prevailed all down the Grammy line. And on their new album (which has just reached No. 1), the Bee Gees offer as much syrup as disco spice. This is nothing new. Americans have always been suckers for a sweet song, back to the days of the sentimental Victorian ballad (“After the Ball”) and before. There has been an undeniable shift in our culture over the past 25 years toward harder, more exciting dance music, and the best rock and disco (rock, especially) is part of that shift. But it was no accident that the best-loved of all rock groups was the Beatles in general and Paul McCartney in particular who reduced rock to bouncy pop and leavened its rigor with the weepy ballad. And for every one of Elvis Presley’s ‘Hound Dog’s,’ there were two or three ‘Love Me Tender’s.’”⁷³

Here, Rockwell reaches back, like I have, to the Victorian sentimental ballad.

Rockwell’s account contrasts rock with middle-of-the-road, suggesting that the two represent the distinction between art and entertainment, respectively. For its detractors, soft rock threatens to lull its listeners into accepting the status quo and it comes across as less sincere. The persistent references to the soothing and comforting

72. Rockwell, “The Disco Drum-Beating in Perspective,” *New York Times* (February 25, 1979), D16.

73. *Ibid.*

qualities of soft rock reinforce its distinction from hard rock; instead of agitate, soft rock pacifies its listeners. The pacification of its audience not only proved to be antithetical to the ideologies of the rock formation, but also aligned soft rock with a long history of sentimental music, understood writ large as trivial.

More importantly, however, one of the repercussions of aligning soft rock with older music was to eschew its particular kind of sexuality. As I have illustrated above, part of what soft rockers offered was a version not of asexuality, but of a safer and gentler sexuality. Instead of Dionysian excess and instant gratification, this was about a different kind of pleasure in love. But for critics invested in the ideals of rock culture, the perceived lack could not be overlooked. The “soft” of soft rock in this context suggests that the music was heard as flaccid or even impotent.

Through slower tempos, strumming guitars, lush string orchestrations, and romantic/pastoral imagery, 1970s soft rockers offered different versions of masculinity in music. It is no surprise that this kind of sentimentality would have appealed to women in the face of the misogyny, aggression, and even violence of hard rock. But it also afforded men a different form of white, homosociality that allowed for being in touch with one’s emotions and feelings. I hope to have illustrated that the sentimentality of sentimental soft rock was not monolithic; the multiplicity of feelings expressed—from partnership and the affective bonds of friendship to romantic love and sexuality—offered contested and competing performances of masculinity. The most popular of popular songs of this decade were not all “silly love songs.”

EPILOGUE

In September of 2009, the Fox Network premiered a new series: *Glee*. The now widely successful television show and multi-media phenomenon is currently in its fifth season with a sixth season already scheduled. Unlike the other case studies in this dissertation, *Glee* does not brand itself as “sentimental,” nor is the term heard frequently on the show. But this hasn’t stopped viewers from making the link and interpreting the show in this way. “Gleeks,” the self-described community of *Glee* fans, describe the show as sentimental and it’s not difficult to understand why. One blogger, for instance, recaps the season finale with a post entitled “A Very, Very, VERY Sentimental Journey.”¹ Another on fanfiction.net, a fiction site for user-generated content, posted a *Glee* story entitled “Get a Sentimental Feeling.”² By way of conclusion I offer some preliminary observations about *Glee*’s particular brand of sentimentalism, which uses songs with inspirational lyrics to enact self-actualization and self-improvement.

Like its sentimental precursors, *Glee* emphasizes didacticism: it’s set in a high school and the narrative of each episode centers on a lesson taught by *Glee* club director and Spanish teacher, Mr. Will Schuester (Matthew Morrison). Will’s debut scene in the pilot episode frames his emotional relationship to—and nostalgia for—the *Glee* club. Will pulls into the parking lot in a blue Honda with its muffler trailing on the ground,

1. Julie, “A Very, Very, VERY Sentimental Journey—A Recap of *Glee*’s Season Finale ‘Journey,’” *TV Recappers Anonymous Blog*, June 9, 2010, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://tvrecappersanonymous.wordpress.com/2010/06/09/a-very-very-very-sentimental-journey-a-recap-of-glees-season-finale-journey/>.

2. Nicalyse, “Get a Sentimental Feeling,” *FanFiction Blog*, December 15, 2011, accessed March 15, 2014, <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/7639569/1/Get-a-Sentimental-Feeling>.

demonstrating his financial hardship, while a close-up on his license plate lets us know that we're in Ohio. As he enters the building and walks down the hallway, Will pauses at an impressive trophy case just under large lettering on the wall that spells out: William McKinley High School. The camera zooms in on a trophy within the case that reads: "1993 Show Choir Championships William McKinley High School First Place" and then pans to a memorial plaque featuring the image of a serious-looking woman and the inscription: "Lillian Adler, 1937-1997. 'By its very definition, Glee is about opening yourself up to joy.'" From the very beginning, *Glee* foregrounds the emotional potential of high-school musicking.

Will concerns himself with the emotional well-being of his students. In the teacher's lounge, we learn from a conversation between Will and guidance counselor, Emma Pillsbury (Jayma Mays), that the Glee club teacher has been fired. Will then negotiates with Principle Figgins (Iqbal Theba) about taking over:

Will: I'd like to take over Glee club.

Figgins: You want to captain the Titanic, too?

Will: I think I can make it great again. There is no joy in these kids; they **feel** invisible. That's why every one of them has a myspace page.³

Figgins explains that the school can no longer afford to fund the club, but if Will pays \$60 per month out of pocket they can continue. Showing his commitment to Glee by literally putting his money where his mouth is, Will agrees, ponies up, and renames the group the New Directions.

3. *Glee*, season 1, episode 1, "Pilot," directed by Ryan Murphy, aired September 2, 2009, on Fox, accessed February 10, 2014, www.netflix.com.

Like nineteenth-century literature and sentimental songs, *Glee* uses stock characters to express its themes of social hierarchy and belonging—or lack thereof. The cast divides loosely into two factions. The Glee kids signify the lowest rung in the social order. They comprises a group of young, minority misfits—African American, Asian, gay, bisexual, and disabled characters—as defined by normative ideas of race, sexuality, and ability, and each Glee club character represents a twenty-first century downtrodden stereotype: Artie Abrams (Kevin McHale) is the white, guitar-playing, paraplegic nerd in a wheelchair; Rachel Berry (Lea Michele), the bookish Jewish girl, idolizes Barbara Streisand—she is also the adopted daughter of two gay dads; Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer) is the fiendishly fashionable gay son of a white, working class auto mechanic; Tina Cohen-Chang (Jenna Ushkowitz) is the Asian student who, in the first season, dresses in goth fashion and fakes a lisp; and Mercedes Jones (Amber Riley) is the full-figured, African American diva-in-training.

The football players and cheerleaders, on the other hand, represent the most popular kids in the school; they run the show and wield all of the social power. The popular kids show their contempt for the Glee kids by bullying them: they insult them with harsh words, they throw frozen slushies in their faces, toss them in garbage dumpsters, and lock them inside portapotties. But the popular kids are not without problems either and they too represent different teen stereotypes. Quinn Fabray (Dianna Agron), the school's mean girl and captain of both the Cheerios and the celibacy club, ends up pregnant in the first season. Santana Lopez (Naya Rivera), the Latina cheerleader, who is exceptionally mean, spews harsh insults in every which direction. In later seasons, Santana comes out as a lesbian and admits that she is in love with her best

friend and fellow cheerleader, Brittany S. Pierce (Heather Morris). Brittany stands in as the show's comedic dumb blonde with a vivid imagination; her cat, Lord Tubbington, often conspires against her. Early in the show, all three cheerleaders are enlisted by Coach Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch) to join the New Directions as spies with the goal of taking down the Glee club from within. Quinn has an ulterior motive because her boyfriend, Finn, has joined Glee and she suspects he is interested in Rachel, the New Direction's star singer. Finn Hudson (Cory Monteith), the star quarterback, is the fatherless son of a single mom with an awesome voice. His best friend Noah Puckerman (Mark Salling), the school's bad boy football player and part-time pool cleaner, is a womanizer with an eye for older women.

The unpopular and very talented Rachel Berry projects the ethos that shapes *Glee* throughout its seasons: Glee club is a place where people who don't otherwise fit in not only belong, but where they can show they are something special. After his initial auditions, Will has yielded only five members for the newly formed Glee club. Rachel worries that the New Directions will fail:

Will: You changed out of your costume...

Rachel: I'm tired of being laughed at.

Will: You're the best kid in there, Rachel. It comes with a price.

Rachel: Look, I know I'm just a sophomore, but I can feel the clock ticking away, and I don't want to leave high school with nothing to show for it.

Will: You get great grades, you're a fantastic singer...

Rachel: Everybody hates me.

Will: You think Glee club is going to change that?

Rachel: Being great at something is going to change it. Being a part of something special makes you special, right?⁴
 Concerned for Rachel and for the success of the club, Will takes Rachel's plea for belonging seriously.

Throughout the episode, Will tries to recruit more new members. He takes the advice of Emma, the guidance counselor, who suggests that he go after the more popular kids to raise the club's profile: "Kids are going to do what they think is cool, which is not always who they are. You just need to find a way to get them out of their boxes...they follow the leader."⁵ Will attempts to conscript both cheerleaders and football players. He runs into resistance, however, from Coach Sue who explains to him: "Okay, so what you're doing right now is called blurring the lines. High school is a caste system; kids fall into certain slots. Your jocks and your popular kids, up in the penthouse. The invisibles and the kids playing live action druids and trolls out in the forest, bottom floor."⁶ When Will asks where the Glee kids lie, Sue responds with: "sub-basement."⁷ Will isn't willing to give up so easily, but Sue warns him: "If you really care about these kids, you'll leave well enough alone. Children like to know where they stand. So let your little Glee kids have their little club. But don't pretend that any of them are something they're not."⁸

The opening scene of the pilot episode sets up the tough and berating character of Coach Sue Sylvester. It also establishes the power and prowess of the McKinley High

4. *Glee*, "Pilot."

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

cheerleading squad. To the soundtrack of a synthesized techno beat, the Cheerios perform an impressive routine of cartwheels, back flips, and human pyramids. Following their extraordinary performance, Coach Sue frowns sternly and barks at the team through a megaphone: “You think this is hard? Try being water boarded...that’s hard.”⁹

On *Glee*, Coach Sue represents the anti-sentimental; she serves as a foil to the sentimentality of the other characters which is most often expressed in song. Despite the fact that *Glee* is a musical show, Sue rarely sings which serves to illustrate the difficulty she has accessing her emotions. Sue wreaks havoc on the school: she insults the Glee kids and Mr. Schuester, hurling feminized pejoratives at them all the while acting out her violent temper. She storms around the school, looking for new ways to undermine the Glee club and all it represents. Sue is competitive, a bitter bully, and does all she can to disguise her emotions.

Much of the music performed by the *Glee* cast hearkens back to the sentimental soft rock of the 1970s and the power ballads of the 1980s. Journey forms their signature repertoire, but they also perform a version of “Silly Love Songs.” For Finn Hudson, the star quarterback, music is about the expression of feeling. Outside of the locker room, Will overhears Finn singing REO Speedwagon’s “Can’t Fight This Feeling” in the shower. Far from incidental, the song choice puts Finn’s emotional life on display: he feels caught between two worlds. He loves singing, but he knows that football players aren’t supposed to be caught dead with the Glee dorks. In a dark and desperate moment, Will tricks Finn into joining the Glee club. A flashback to Finn’s childhood reveals that he sang Journey’s “Lovin’ Touchin’ Squeezin’ with his mom’s rocker boyfriend, who

9. *Glee*, “Pilot.”

told him he had a real voice. The scene significantly shows young Finn singing along with the line: “You make me weep and wanna die/Just when you said we’d try.” In the voice-over, Finn says: “That was the first time I really **heard** music; man, it really set my soul on fire.”¹⁰ In a later episode, Finn’s girlfriend says to him: “We are in line to be the most popular kids in the school over the next couple of years. Prom king and queen, homecoming court royalty. I am NOT giving up on those shiny crowns just so you can **express** yourself!”¹¹

For Will, the difficulties of high school are a microcosm of the larger world, in which he now struggles between doing work that he loves and providing economic security for his family. Following his efforts to expand the Glee club, Will learns that he is going to become a father. Will’s demanding wife, Terri (Jessalyn Gilsig), coerces him to take another job, explaining that he won’t be able to support a family on a teacher’s salary. He breaks the news of his resignation to the Glee kids: “This isn’t about you guys. Being an adult is about having to make difficult choices. It’s not like high school and sometimes you have to give up the things that you love. Oneday you guys are going to grow up and understand that.”¹² With his eyes closed, and visibly moved, Will tells the group: “I have **loved** being your teacher.”¹³ He swallows hard on the lump in his throat and turns to leave the room.

10. *Glee*, “Pilot.”

11. *Glee*, season 1, episode 2, “Showmance,” directed by Ryan Murphy, aired September 9, 2009, on Fox, accessed February 10, 2014, www.netflix.com.

12. *Glee*, “Pilot.”

13. *Ibid.*

Tears spill from the eyes and stain the cheeks of cast members in almost every episode—often the tears are directly linked to musical expression and the camera focuses our attention on these moments of emotional performance. An early episode shows Emma having a frank chat with Rachel after Emma finds her trying to force herself to throw up in the bathroom. After Rachel explains that she failed at bulimia, Emma says they need to talk about the feelings that led her to try. Rachel responds by asking Emma, “Have you ever liked someone so much you just want to lock yourself in your room, turn on sad music and cry?”¹⁴ As their discussion unfolds, Emma’s married crush Will is visible in the hallway. The shot flashes to a mascara streaked Emma sitting in her car while rain pours down on the windshield. Emma bawls as she sings along to Eric Carmen’s “All By Myself.”

Finn knows his place in the social order: he struggles between his true feelings and his desire to fit in. After he learns of Mr. Schuester’s resignation, Finn first feels relieved that he can quit Glee and go back to football without being teased by his teammates. His best friend Puck greets him on the field with: “Welcome back to the world of the normal.”¹⁵ A few minutes later, Finn hears a noise coming from the edge of the football field and goes to investigate. He discovers that his teammates have locked Artie in a portapotty and are getting ready to tip the thing. When Finn arrives, Puck offers him the first roll. Instead, Finn unlocks the door and helps Artie out. Puck is horrified and

14. *Glee*, “Showmance.”

15. *Glee*, “Pilot.”

says, “I can’t believe you’re helping out this loser.”¹⁶ Finn answers with a monologue about how they are all losers—everyone in their school and in their town. And then he declares, “I’m not afraid of being called a loser because I can accept that that’s what I am. But I am afraid of turning my back on something that actually made me happy for the first time in my sorry life.”¹⁷ Finn goes back to Glee and apologies for quitting. He explains that he used to think that Glee club was “the lamest thing on earth.”¹⁸ But he has realized that “We’re all here for the same reason: because we want to be good at something.”¹⁹ Like Rachel, Finn understands that Glee club is his chance to be part of a unique community.

Inside the rehearsal hall, Rachel and Finn work on some scales together. When Finn says he needs a break, Rachel announces that she has prepared a snack for them. Off to the side, we see a picnic blanket with pillows on top and a wicker picnic basket. They sit down together in this clearly designed romantic setting. Finn compliments Rachel on her singing. She asks if he really thinks she is good. He answers:

Well, when I first joined I thought you were kind of insane, I mean, you talk a lot more than you should, and to be honest with you, I looked under the bed and made sure that you weren’t hanging out under there. But then I heard you sing. I don’t know how to say this, but you touched something in me. Right here [points to his chest].²⁰

16. *Glee*, “Pilot.”

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Glee*, “Showmance.”

Rachel corrects him by moving his hand to show him that his heart is on the other side of his chest. Finn, as stand-in for the dumb jock, shows that he is not exempt from feelings despite pressure from his peers to act as if he is—to be the tough guy.

Importantly, it is the power of Rachel's voice and her song that allow Finn to open up to his feelings. He has not yet found the words to express them: "I don't know how to say this." But through singing with the Glee club, Finn finds a way to communicate his feelings. He says in song what he cannot say in words.

Emma helps Will to access his feelings and remember his true passion for music. She explains that she had done some research and found a tape in the library of the 1993 team at nationals. She has a laptop with her, which she opens up and turns towards him, and then asks if Will knows who it is on screen. She answers for him:

Emma: That's you, happier than I've ever seen you.

Will: That was the greatest moment of my life.

Emma: Why?

Will: Because I loved what I was doing. I knew before we were half way through with that number that we were going to win. [Sighs, twice] And being a part of that, [swallows hard] in that moment, I knew who I was in the world [bordering on tears, big sigh.] And you know the only time I've felt that way since then was when Terry told me I was going to be a father...no. No, I need to provide for my family.

Emma: But provide what exactly? The understanding that money is the most important thing? Or the idea that the only life worth living is one that you're really passionate about, Will?²¹

Will walks out of the room and down the hallway, but stops in his tracks; the sound of a song drifts out of the auditorium. As he approaches, Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'"

21. *Glee*, "Pilot."

swells to the foreground of the sound stage. The Glee club has re-assembled under their own volition and choreographed a routine which they now rehearse. A close-up on Will shows him standing at the top of the auditorium stairs, glassy-eyed and filled with pride. He listens as they perform the song better than anything they've done before. When they finish, he applauds, and tells them it's a nine, but that they will need a ten to win regionals. The students ask if this means he is going to stay, and he replies that it would kill him to see them win nationals without him.

Glee celebrates the success of the underdog, offering an optimistic can-do message in a polished package that requires the suspension of disbelief. *Glee's* musical performances are rarely believable. A band—or even an orchestra!—always appears miraculously at the exact moment the singers need it and the musicians always seem to know exactly what to play without any direction or cues. The students seldom rehearse in a way that looks or sounds anything like an actual rehearsal; instead, they perform note-perfect arrangements and fully choreographed complex dance routines on the spot. Lavish props, sets, and costumes appear out of thin air, which are especially notable because of the show's constant references to budget cuts to the art. And, one of the major points of contention pertains to the show's prominent use of auto tune on the singer's voices.

Despite all of this, songs aren't just the backdrop or the soundtrack for *Glee*: they are at the center of the drama and it is through the lesson of song that the characters are able to work through and work on their feelings about different issues. Journey's "Don't Stop Believin,'" in particular, takes on a central role in the show. The New Directions sing it in competition and later, in season four, Rachel decides to perform it for her first

Broadway callback in New York. “Don’t Stop Believin’” narrates the quest of a man and a woman who stand in generically for every person who searches to find their place in life. The lyrics present loneliness and the pursuit of love and acceptance as the timeless themes of the human condition. While the narrative of the verses does not particularly apply for high school aged kids, the *Glee* kids appropriate the song for its aspirational quality. Importantly, two of the song’s most significant lines pertain precisely to emotions. The pre-chorus suggests that we are all “livin’ just to find emotion.”²² And, in its final chorus, the song optimistically implores its listeners: “Don’t stop believin’ / Hold on to that feeling.”²³ Through the performance of emotion in song—joy, sadness, loneliness, and the quest for belonging—*Glee* implores us to hold onto our feelings.

From the outset, the show has been mostly well received; following its debut, it ranked in the top ten of several critics’ year-end lists. Writing for *Time* at the end of 2009, James Poniewozik rated the show at number 8 on his Top Ten TV Series of the year. Poniewozik explains:

Consistency is overrated. This musical-comedy-drama about a misfit high school show choir in Lima, Ohio, succeeds where *Viva Laughlin* and other small-screen musicals have failed, but it also shows the genre’s challenges. Some of its story lines (especially the fake pregnancy of the choir director’s wife) are distractingly implausible. But when *Glee* works—which is often—it is transcendent, tear-jerking and thrilling like nothing else on TV. It takes a gay kid, minority kids, jocks and nerds and explodes their stereotypes, channeling high school’s heightened emotions through joyous pop music. It can be a mess, but it’s what great TV should be: reckless, ambitious, heart-on-its-sleeve and,

22. Journey, “Don’t Stop Believin,’” by Jonathan Cain, Steve Perry, and Neal Schon, released on *Escape*, August 1981.

23. *Ibid.*

thanks especially to Jane Lynch as drill-sergeant cheerleading coach Sue Sylvester, gaspingly funny. When it hits its high notes, nothing else matters.²⁴

Poniewozik emphasizes the emotional content that is foregrounded throughout the show—its comedy balances with sentimentality. Ken Tucker, writing for *Entertainment Weekly*, describes *Glee* as “Hands down the year’s most novel show” and “its least likely success.”²⁵ He writes:

Before this musical-comedy high school saga, the musical TV series pretty much started and stopped with 1990’s *Cop Rock*. And before I saw *Glee*, there were two things I dreaded: “Don’t Stop Believin’” and *American Idol*-style vocalizing. But the series caught me up in its swaggering cleverness, and in the way it dealt with issues of sexuality with an original blend of sensitivity and irreverence.²⁶

Tucker similarly focuses on the way that the show handles difficult topics and emotional issues.

Since its debut, the series and its performers have been nominated for many awards, including Golden Globe awards, Primetime Emmy awards, and Teen Choice awards.²⁷ Its big win in 2010 was the Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series—Musical or Comedy, an award it earned again in 2011. In his acceptance speech at the 2010 Golden Globe Awards ceremony, the show’s creator and executive producer, Ryan Murphy stated: “This show is about a lot of things; it’s about the importance of arts

24. James Poniewozik, “Top 10 TV Series: No. 8: *Glee*,” *Time*, December 8, 2009, accessed March 1, 2014, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1945379_1944142_1944160,00.html.

25. Ken Tucker, “10 Best TV Series of 2009: Ken Tucker’s Picks,” *Entertainment Weekly*, December 28, 2009, accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.ew.com/ew/gallery/0,,20326356_20331616,00.html#20717633.

26. *Ibid.*

27. This extensive list is chronicled exhaustively on IMDb, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1327801/awards>.

education. And this is for anybody...[interrupted by applause]...thank you. And this [waves award] is for anybody and everybody who got a wedgie in high school.”²⁸ Chris Colfer, who plays Kurt Hummel, echoed similar sentiments in 2011 when he won the Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actor in a TV Series, Mini-Series, or TV Movie. A stunned Colfer dedicated his award “most importantly, to all the amazing kids that watch our show and the kids that our show celebrates who are constantly told ‘no’ by the people in their environments, by bullies at school, that they can’t be who they are, or have what they want because of who they are...well, screw that, kids!”²⁹ And Jane Lynch, who won the Golden Globe for Best Supporting Actress, also in 2011, stated: “I think the great thing about *Glee* for me, anyway, the greatest thrill is that I get these 14 year old kids coming up to me, vibrating out of their bodies, saying how **happy** *Glee* makes them...”³⁰

In the most general sense, *Glee* offers what people want: validation of their feelings and experiences. It does this work through popular song. *Glee* foregrounds music as a social experience. It promotes song as a powerful tool for unifying people, and singing together offers the kind of harmony we all seek. The power of each character lies in their voice, which allows them to both transcend social difficulties and access positions

28. Ryan Murphy, acceptance speech, 67th *Golden Globe Awards*, aired January 17, 2010, on NBC, accessed March 30, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TNkarQDOKs>.

29. Chris Colfer, acceptance speech, 68th *Golden Globe Awards*, aired January 16, 2011, on NBC, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qDf1b1CLJo>.

30. Jane Lynch, acceptance speech, 68th *Golden Globe Awards*, aired January 16, 2011, on NBC, accessed March 30, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ce7V_dc5Xc.

of power otherwise unattainable. The club forms a community of singers, who use song to work through difficult and emotional issues and to teach others about feelings. *Glee* shows us that whether or not it is branded as such, sentimentality is alive and well—it remains an important and relevant aspect of popular song production in the United States to this day.

APPENDIX A

Songsters Printed in the United States with “Sentimental” in the Title
 Compiled from Irving Lowens’s *A Bibliography of Songsters Printed in America Before 1821* (American Antiquarian Society, 1976)

* = Also Masonic

- 1777: [SONGS, COMIC, satirical, and sentimental. By George Alexander Stevens. Philadelphia: printed and sold by Robert Bell, next door to St. Paul’s Church in Third-Street. M,DCC,LXXVII.]
- 1778: SONGS, COMIC, satirical, and sentimental. By George Alexander Stevens. I love fun!—Keep it up! Lecture upon heads. Philadelphia: printed by R. Bell, Third-Street. M.DCC.LXXVIII. – 1778 [Historical society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia]
- *1779: THE SYREN, or vocal enchantress: being a collection of the newest and most admired miscellaneous,--pathetic, and passionate,--Anacreontic and jovial,--comic, ingenious, and witty,--sea, hunting, and Masonic songs. Selected from the most approved sentimental, humorous, and ingenious publications; including all the best songs of Dibdin Edwin [sic], &c. Wilmington; printed for and sold by James Wilson, book-seller and stationer, No. 5, High Street, opposite the Upper Market House.
- *1798: THE COLUMBIAN SONGSTER and Freemason’s pocket companion. A collection of the newest and most celebrated sentimental, convivial, humourous, satirical, pastoral, hunting, sea and Masonic songs, being the largest and best collection ever published in America. Selected by S. Larkin. Portsmouth: New-Hampshire, printed by J. Melcher, for S. Larkin, at the Portsmouth bookstore, 1798. [Library of Congress]
- 1800: THE FEDERAL SONGSTER: being a collection of the most celebrated patriotic songs, hitherto published. With a variety of others, sentimental and convivial. The man who has not music in his soul, Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils. Entered according to act. New-London; printed by James Springer.
- 1800: THE NIGHTINGALE; or rural songster; in two parts, Part I.—Containing favorite, innocent, entertaining and sentimental songs. Part II—Containing the most approved patriotic songs. [Many of which are original.] Dedham: printed by H. Mann. 1800.
- 1800: PATRIOTIC MEDLEY, being a choice collection of patriotic, sentimental, hunting and sea songs, interspersed with Anacreontic songs & Cytherian

poems, selected from the most approved authors. New York: printed for Jacob Johnkin, Maiden Lane.

- 1801: THE REPUBLICAN HARMONIST: being a select collection of republican, patriotic, and sentimental songs, odes, sonnets, &c. American and European: some of which are original, and most of the others now come for the first time from an American press. With a collection of toasts and sentiments. While hard oppression's iron chain, The sons of Europe dragg [sic] along, We who its links have snapt in twain, Will chaunt to liberty a song. By D. E. A. citizen of the world. The second edition, with additions and alterations. Boston: printed for the people. 1801. [Library of Congress]
- *1804: THE MERRY MEDLY [sic], or, pocket companion. Being a collection of the best sentimental, convivial, humourous, patriotic, pastoral, hunting, sea, and Masonic songs, among this collection is the celebrated new song called Lady Washington's lamentation. And a number of other new songs never before published in any collection. Lansingburgh. Printed by Francis Adancourt, for himself and Samuel Shaw. 1804.
- 1805: THE PHILADELPHIA SONGSTER; or a complete vocal pocket companion: being a collection of the most approved Anacreontic, political, and sentimental modern songs. Selected from a variety of volumes. 'Mirth, love, and sentiment, are here happily blended, The chastest ear unoffended.' Philadelphia: printed and published by B. Graves, No. 40, N. Fourth-Street. 1805. [Library of Congress]
- 1805: THE SENTIMENTAL SONGSTER: a collection of useful & elegant songs. Bennington: Haswell & Smead, printers. 1805. [Vermont]
- *1805: THE UNION SONG BOOK; or American sky lark; from the most approved modern songs, a great variety of which have never before been printed in America. Containing sentimental, humourous, witty, satirical, theatrical, hunting, sea and Masonic songs. Also a number of toasts and sentiments. Printed at Boston, for William Tileston Clap, No. 88, Fish Street. 1805. David Carlisle, printer, Cambridge Street.
- 1806: THE COMPLETE MODERN SONGSTER, or vocal pocket companion: containing upwards of 270 of the most approved English, American, Irish and Scotch, Anacreontic, political, and sentimental modern songs, selected from a variety of volumes. To which is annexed a handsome collection of original toasts and sentiments. "Mirth, love and harmony are here happily blended, The chastest ear unoffended." First American edition. Philadelphia: printed and published by B. Graves, No. 40, North Fourth-Street. 1806.

- 1806: THE JOVIAL SONGSTER, NO. II: Being a selection of some of the most favorite, and sentimental songs; some of which are original. Set to music, chiefly in two parts. By S. Jenks. Printed at Dedham—Mass. March, 1806.
- *1808: THE NATIONAL SONGSTER: Containing a collection of the most modern and admired, patriotic, sentimental, Anacreontic, comic, and Masonic, songs, original and selected. To which is added a number of select toasts and sentiments. Embellished with a handsome engraving of the genius of America. Philadelphia: published by Robert Desilver, No. 110, Walnut Street. 1808.
- 1810: NEW MUSICAL BANQUET; or, choice songs, sentimental, lively, jovial, and amorous. Improved with the most popular songs lately published in London. Apollo struck the lyre—the muses sung in strains melodious. Windsor: printed for J. Parks, Montpelier.
- 1811: THE BOSTON MUSICAL MISCELLANY. A selection of modern songs, sentimental, amatory, humourous, Anacreontick. Adapted for the voice, violin, and German flute. Boston: printed by J. T. Buckingham, 1811.
- *1811: THE HUMOURIST; a collection of comic, patriotic, sentimental, and Masonic songs, original and selected. Embellished with an engraving. By W. Degrushe. New-York; printed for William Degrushe by Largin & Thompson, No. 189 Water-Street.
- 1812: THE DIAMOND SONGSTER: containing the most approved sentimental English songs. Baltimore: published by F. Lucas, Jun'r. B.W. Sower & Co. printers.
[Also versions containing the most approved sentimental Scottish songs and the most approved sentimental Irish songs from the same year.]
- 1813: POPULAR SONGS AND BALLADS, patriotic, sentimental, and miscellaneous. Boston: sold by Thomas Wells.
- 1814: THE COLUMBIAN HARMONIST, or songster's repository; being a selection of the most approved sentimental, patriotic, and other songs. New York; printed and sold by Smith & Forman, at the Franklin Juvenile Bookstores, 195 and 213 Greenwich Street.
- 1814: THE COLUMBIAN HARMONIST, containing the newest and much admired naval and patriotic songs, as well as a great variety of fashionable, sentimental and other polite songs; together with most of those elegant odes, occasioned by the recent successes of the American heroes, Hull,

Jones, Decatur, Bainbridge [sic] Perry, &c. Philadelphia. Printed by Thomas Simpson.

- 1815: THE AMERICAN SONGBOOK: being a new collection of the best patriotic, military, naval, amatory, quizzical and sentimental songs, extant. Printed for the New York and Boston booksellers.
- 1815: BOSTON MUSICAL MISCELLANY: a selection of songs, sentimental, Anacreontic, humorous, amatory, and national. In two volumes. Boston: printed and sold by T.J. Buckingham, No. 5, Marlborough Street.
- 1815: THE COLUMBIAN HARMONIST, or songster's repository; being a selection of the most approved sentimental, patriotic, and other songs. Albany: printed and sold by G. J. Loomis & Co. Corner of State and Lodge Streets.
- 1815: SAILOR'S RIGHTS; or Yankee notions; being a collection of American patriotic, sentimental and comic songs. Among which are the following new songs, viz. Bainbridges' Tid-re-l. Laurence's [sic] victory. American's rights on the ocean. The soldier. Dennis Durham's adventures. Britania's [sic] lamentation. Neptune's award and The rule of three. New York: printed by John Hardcastle, No. 6, Cross Street for Samuel A. Burtus.
- *1815: THE SONGSTER'S OLIO. A collection of the newest and most popular patriotic, sentimental, comic, and Masonic songs. Binghamton: printed and published by T. Robinson.
- 1815: THE THEATRICAL SONGSTER, and musical companion: containing a selection of the most approved patriotic, comic, sentimental, and entertaining songs. Boston: printed by Thomas Brown.
- *1816: THE MASONICK MINSTREL, a selection of Masonick, sentimental, and humorous songs, duets, glees, canons, rounds and canzonets respectfully dedicated to the most ancient and honourable fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. "Orpheus' lute was strung with poet's sinews; Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones, Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands." With an appendix, containing a short historical account of Masonry: and likewise, a list of all the Lodges in the United States. Dedham: printed by H. Mann and Co. for the author.
- 1816: THE SKY-LARK. Or, a new collection of choice, naval, patriotic, and sentimental songs. From late publications. Hartford: printed and published by B. & J. Russell, State-Street. 1816.

- 1817: THE AEOLIAN HARP, or songster's cabinet; being a selection of the most popular songs and recitations; patriotic, sentimental, humorous, &c. In two volumes. Printed and published by M. Swaim and J. Howe. New-York. 1817.
- 1817: THE DIAMOND SONGSTER: containing the most approved sentimental Scottish, Irish, and national songs. Baltimore: published by F. Lucas, Jun'r. 1817.
- 1817: THE STAR. A collection of songs, sentimental, humorous, and patriotic. Published by Butler & Lambdin, Pittsburgh, 1817.
- 1818: THE AEOLIAN HARP, or songster's cabinet; being a selection of the most popular songs and recitations; patriotic, sentimental, humorous, &c. In two volumes. Stereotyped and published by Charles Starr, New-York, 1818.
- *1818: THE ANTIHIPNOTIC SONGSTER, containing original and select songs. Patriotic, sentimental, Anacreontic, comic, & Masonic. With favorite airs, glees, and catches. Philadelphia: printed and published by T. Town and S. Merritt. For sale by Robert Desilver, No. 110, Walnut Street, and at the principal book stores in the city. 1818.
- 1818: THE SONG-SINGER'S AMUSING COMPANION. Being a selection of the best philosophic, sentimental, national and moral songs: and also a number of airy and amusing pieces. Arranged by Philo Musico, A. B. &c. Sweet enlivener of my hours. Oft I've felt thy genial pow'rs; Sentiment with music join'd, Yields a pleasure most refin'd. When from toil and labor free, I refresh myself with thee; Banish'd hence be wrath and spite, Songs and music, bring delight! Original. Copyright secured. Boston: printed for Sterne and Mann, No. 147, Market Street. 1818.
- 1818: THE SONGSTER'S MAGAZINE; (published in numbers) designed to contain a choice selection of the most approved patriotic, comic, sentimental, amatory, and naval songs; both ancient and modern. No. 1. (third edition) containing thirty songs for a shilling, with two or three trifles gratis, viz. [a list of 34 songs in two columns] New York: published at the bookstore and circulating library, 249 Broadway, corner of Murray Street. August 22, 1818.
- 1818: THE STAR. A collection of songs, sentimental, humourous, and patriotic. Pittsburgh: published by Lamdin & Minis. 1818.

- 1818: THE WHISTLE. Or a collection of songs; sentimental and humorous selected and composed by S. Jenks. Dedham: H. & W. H. Mann, printers. 1818.
- 1820: THE AEOLIAN HARP, or songster's cabinet; being a selection of the most popular songs and recitations; patriotic, sentimental, humorous, &c. In two volumes. Published by R. & W. A. Bartow, New York, 1820.

APPENDIX B

Songs published by Septimus Winner under the name Alice Hawthorne between 1853 and 1888. Stars indicate “home” songs.

- “After Sundown” (1871)
- “Am I Not True to Thee?” (1856)
- “As Dear Today as Ever” (1862)
- “As We Gathered in the Hay” (1857)
- * “Away From Home” (1858)
- “Be Happy With Me” (1869)
- “Because Thou Art So Far Away” (unknown year)
- “Bid Me Goodbye” (unknown year)
- “Bird and Mate” (1873)
- “Bow in the Cloud” (1874)
- “Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters (1855)
- “The Chimes of the Monastery” (1854)
- “Come Gather ‘Round the Hearth” (1854)
- “The Cozy Nook” (1861)
- “Cruel Words Unwisely Spoken” (1869)
- “Dance of the Sprites” (1869)
- “The Days Gone By” (1855)
- “Did You Think of Me Today” (1864)
- “Don’t Forget to Say Your Prayers” (1879)
- “Down Upon the Rappahannock” (1863)
- “Dreams that Charmed Me as a Child” (1855)
- * “Drifting From Home” (1871)
- “Echoes From Afar” (1867)
- “The Flower Fadeth” (1857)
- “Fond Moments of My Childhood” (1855)
- “Friend of My Heart” (1862)
- “The Friends We Love” (1868)
- “Gentle Maggie” (1858)
- “God Bless the Little Feet” (1871)
- “The Golden Moon” (1855)
- “Goodbye Dear Mother” (1888)
- * “The Happiness of Home” (1855)
- “The Heart’s Mission” (1857)
- * “Hearth and Home” (1869)
- “Hiawatha Polka” (1856)
- * “Home and Friends” (1857)
- * “Home By and By” (1874)
- * “Home Ever Dear” (1866)
- “How Sweet Are the Roses” (1853)
- “I Am Dreaming of the Loved Ones” (1865)

"I Have Tidings" (1858)
 "I Set My Heart Upon a Flower" (1854)
 "I Was Thinking, Idly Thinking" (1866)
 "Jenny, Darling Jenny" (1859)
 "Just as of Old" (1865)
 "The Lazaroni Maid" (1868)
 "Let Us Hope for the Best" (unknown date)
 "Let Us Live with a Hope" (1855)
 "Link'd with Many Bitter Tears" (1866)
 "Listen to the Mocking Bird" (1856)
 "Look with Thy Fond Eyes upon Me" (1860?)
 "Lord, Thou Knowest That I Love Thee" (1873)
 "Lost Isabel" (1863)
 "The Love of One Fond Heart" (1855)
 "Love Once Gone, Is Gone Forever" (1870)
 "Love's Offering" (1869)
 * "Make Yourself at Home" (1868)
 "Mercy's Dream" (1854)
 "Morn and Eventide" (unknown date)
 "Motherless Kate" (1858)
 * "My Cottage Home" (1853)
 "My Early Fireside" (1855)
 * "My Love to All at Home" (1869)
 "My Mother's Kiss" (1861)
 "Netty Moore" (1858)
 "New Friends True Friends" (1860)
 "New Hearts and Faces" (unknown date)
 "The Old Red Cent" (1858)
 "One Fond Heart" (1878)
 "Only a Child" (unknown date)
 "Only One" (unknown date)
 "Our Good Old Friends" (1855)
 "Our Own" (1868)
 "Out of Work" (1877)
 "Over My Heart" (1866)
 "Parting Whispers" (1863)
 "Pass Us Not By" (1882)
 "The Pet of the Cradle" (1854)
 "Pray Tell Me the Wish of Thy Heart" (1865)
 "Pretty To Me" (1864)
 "Rebecca at the Well" (1854)
 "Shepherd Boy" (1858)
 "Side By Side" (1875)
 "Snow-White Rose" (1861)
 "Some Happier Day" (1873)

“Song of the Farmer” (1854)
“Song of the Winter Wind” (1869)
“The Summer of My Heart” (1857)
“That Little Church Around the Corner” (1871)
“There is Wealth for Honest Labor” (1858)
“This Land of Ours” (1857)
“Thy Voice Hath a Charm” (unknown date)
“A Tiny Bark” (unknown date)
“To Him that Giveth Let Us Sing” (1856)
“Vanity Fair” (unknown date)
“We Met No More” (1871)
“What Care I?” (1866)
* “What Is Home without a Mother?” (1854)
“What Shall I Offer Thee?” (1860)
“When the Corn is Gathered In” (1870)
* “Where Mother Is We Call It Home” (1870)
“Whispering Hope” (1868)
“Wicket Gate” (1858)
“Years Ago” (1856)
“Yes, I Would the War Were Over” (1863)
“Yours Truly (Bessie Jane)” (1880)

APPENDIX C

Songs Included in *100 WLS Barn Dance Favorites*, Compiled by John Lair (Chicago: M. M. Cole Publishing Company, 1935)

“Bury Me Beneath the Willow”
 “Take Me Back to Renfro Valley”
 “When It’s Prayer Meetin’ Time in the Hollow”
 “I Feel Just As Happy As a Big Sunflower”
 “Sitting ‘Round the Old Fireside At Home”
 “Lone Cowpuncher”
 “I’ll Take You Home Again, Kathleen”
 “My Mother’s Old Sun Bonnet”
 “Down by the River”
 “Sally Git Yer Hoe Cake Done”
 “Freight Train Blues”
 “The Old Wooden Rocker”
 “Bring Me Back My Blue Eyed Boy”
 “Me and My Burro”
 “Goodbye, Maggie”
 “Goin’ Back To Old Montana”
 “Froggie Went A Courtin’”
 “He’s a Hillbilly Gaucho (with a Rhumba Beat)”
 “The Captain and His Whiskers”
 “The Little Red Caboose”
 “I’ll Remember You, Love, In My Prayers”
 “A Starry Night for a Ramble”
 “Oh, Susanna”
 “Lonesome River”
 “Sweet Evalina”
 “Gathering Up the Shells from the Seashore”
 “Save My Mother’s Picture from the Sale”
 “Kitty Clyde”
 “Charlie Brooks”
 “Meet Me, Darling, Meet Me At the Gate”
 “Sugar Babe”
 “The Yellow Rose of Texas”
 “Trail to Mexico”
 “Sweet Kitty Wells”
 “Wait for the Wagon”
 “Mary of the Wild Moor”
 “We Parted by the Riverside”
 “Old McDonald Had a Farm”
 “Good Morning, Fair Maiden”
 “Come Back to Erin”

“Since Nellie Got the Gong”
“The Monkey’s Wedding”
“Footprints in the Snow”
“Single Girl”
“Down in My Old Cabin Home”
“I Wish I Were Single Again”
“Since Sally Simpkins Started Sipping Soup”
“Silver Threads Among the Gold”
“Lorena”
“Bright Eyed Little Nell of Narragansett Bay”
“Ain’t We Crazy? Yes We’re Crazy”
“Working on the Railroad”
“A Home on the Range”
“Over the Hills to the Poor House”
“I Ain’t Gwine Study War No More”
“Methodist Pie”
“Pretty Little Pink”
“I’m Going Home to Clo”
“Nobody’s Darling”
“I Whistle and Wait for Katie”
“The Belle of the Mohawk Vale”
“Give My Love to Nell”
“Don’t Leave the Farm”
“Madam, I’ve Come to Marry You”
“That Beautiful Home”
“Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”
“Nearer, My God, To Thee”
“Sing Me the Old Songs Tonight”
“We’ll Have a Little Dance Tonight”
“Gentle Nettie Moore”
“Nancy Till”
“Hi Rink-tum Ink-tum”
“Can You, Sweetheart, Keep a Secret”
“Cowboy Jack”
“Ty Yippy Ty Ee”
“Brown Eyed Bessie Lee”
“Don’t Be Bashful, Joe”
“Mother’s Old Red Shawl”
“Lost on the Lady Elgin”
“Traumerei”
“Climbing Up the Golden Stairs”
“Miss McLeod’s Reel”
“Falling Waters”
“She’ll Be Comin’ Round the Mountain”
“The Irish Washerwoman”

“Old Dan Tucker”
“Buffalo Gals”
“Durang’s Hornpipe”
“The Girl I Left Behind Me”
“Gray Eagle”
“Leather Breeches”
“Devil’s Dream”
“Soldier’s Joy”
“Pop Goes the Weasel”
“Arkansas Traveler”
“Cackling Hen”
“Going to Boston”
“Skip to My Lou”
“Miller Boy”
“Old Brass Wagon”
“Home Sweet Home”

APPENDIX D

Bradley Kincaid Songbook Title	Date	Song Title	Lomax, John A. <i>Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads (1910)</i>	Sharp, Cecil J. <i>English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians (1917)</i>	Pound, Louise. <i>American Ballads and Songs (1922)</i>	Sandburg, Carl. <i>The American Songbag (1927)</i>
<i>My Favorite Mountain Ballads and Old-Time Songs..Bradley Kincaid (As Sung Over WLS The Prairie Farmer Station)</i>	1928	“As I Walked Out”				✓
		“Barbara Allen”		✓	✓	✓
		“Billy Boy”		✓	✓	
		“Bury Me Out On the Prairie”			✓	✓
		“Cuckoo Is a Pretty Bird, or (A Foresaken Lover)”				
		“Dying Cowboy”	✓		✓	
		“Fair and Tender Ladies”			✓	
		“Fair Ellen”			✓	✓
		“Four Thousand Years Ago”				
		“Frankie (Gambler’s Song)”				✓
		“Froggie Went A-Courtin”			✓	
		“I Asked Her If She Loved Me (Over There)”				
		“I Gave My Love a Cherry”				
		“I Loved You Better Than You Knew”				
		“I’m Dying for Someone to Love Me”				
		“Liza Up In the				

		“Simmon Tree”					
		“Methodist Pie”					
		“No, I Won’t Have Him, or (The Old Man Who Came Over the Moor)”					
		“No, Sir, No”					
		“Paper of Pins”			✓		
		“Pearl Bryan”					
		“Pretty Polly”				✓	
		“Soldier! Soldier! Will You Marry Me?”		✓			
		“Sour Wood Mountain”		✓		✓	
		“Swapping Song”					
		“Sweet Kitty Wells”			✓		
		“The Butcher Boy, or (I Died for Love)”			✓		
		“The Gypsie Laddie”		✓		✓	
		“The Lily of the West”		✓			
		“The Little Mohee (From the English ‘The Indian Lass’)”			✓		
		“The Turkish Lady”					
		“Tildy Johnson”					
		“Two Sisters”		✓	✓		
<i>Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 2, “The Mountain Boy”</i>	1929	“And So You Have Come Back to Me”					
		“A Pretty Fair Maid”				✓	
		“Charlie Brooks”					
		“Cindy”					
		“Dog and Gun”					
		“Down in the Valley”					✓
		“Four Thousand Years Ago”					
“Give My Love to Nell”							

		"Ground Hog"				
		"I'll Be All Smiles Tonight"				
		"I'll Remember You Love in My Prayers"				
		"I Love Little Willie"				
		"I Love My Rooster"				
		"I Wonder When I Shall Be Married"				
		"Liza Up in the 'Simmon Tree"				
		"Mary Wore Three Links of Chain"				✓
		"Old Smoky"				
		"Pretty Little Pink"				✓
		"Rattler"				
		"The Best Old Man"				
		"The Blind Girl"				
		"The House Carpenter"			✓	✓
		"The Kicking Mule"				
		"The Orphan Girl"				✓
		"The Ship That Never Returned"				✓
		"The True Lover's Farewell"				✓
		"There Was An Old Soldier"				✓
		"When the Work's All Done This Fall"	✓			✓
		"Young Charlotte"	✓		✓	
<i>Favorite Old-Time Songs and Mountain Ballads, Book 3</i>	1930	"A Housekeeper's Tragedy"				
		"Away She Went Galloping Down The Long Lane"				

		"Arkansas Traveler"				
		"Betty Brown"				
		"Black Eyed Gal"				
		"Black Eyed Susie"				
		"Darling Corie"				
		"De Ladies' Man"				
		"Dinah"				
		"Farewell Lovely Polly"				
		"Fond of Chewing Gum"				
		"Free A Little Bird As I Can Be"				
		"Gallant and Gay"				
		"Little Rosewood Casket"				
		"Oh I Wish I Had Someone To Love Me"				
		"Ol' Coon Dog"				
		"Old Dan Tucker"				
		"Old Joe Clark"				
		"Pretty Little Devilish Mary"				
		"Rabbits In The Lowlands"				
		"Somebody's Waiting For You"				
		"The Hunters of Kentucky"				✓
		"The Innocent Prisoner"				
		"The Streets of Loredó"				✓
		"Twenty Years Ago"				
		"Two Little Orphans"				
		"What Are We Made Of"				
		"What'll I Do With The"				

		Baby-O?"				
		"Willie Down By The Pond"				

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