WHEN THE PRESIDENT TALKS TO GOD:
A RHETORICAL CRITICISM OF ANTI-BUSH PROTEST MUSIC

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Anti-war protest music has re-emerged onto the American songscape since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the resulting military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This study works to explicate the ways in which protest music functions in the resultant culture of war. Protest music, as it reflects and creates culture, represents one possible site of productive change. Chapter 1 examines Ani DiFranco’s song “Self Evident” which was written as an immediate reaction to 9/11. Throughout this chapter I argue that protest music has the potential to work as a vehicle for consciousness raising. In Chapter 2 I consider the constitutive elements in the Bright Eyes song “When the President Talks to God.” Performed on The Tonight Show in May 2005, this song represents one of the first performances of dissent on national television after 9/11. This chapter also examines the limitations of Charland’s conception of the constituted public as it pertains to diverse and heterogeneous audiences. Ultimately, I argue that consciousness raising through music has the potential to bring listeners into the constituted subject position of those who dissent against war.
Dedicated to the memory of Dr. Lewis (Lee) Snyder

in whose shadow I will always walk.
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to Music with Rhetorical Headphones</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making the Case for Feminist Rhetorics</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist Music Explored by, Who Else?...Women</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonviolence as Feminist Ideology</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissent as Heuristic</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Future: Protest Music and the Rhetoric of Dissent</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. IT’S ALL “SELF EVIDENT”: THE RHETORIC OF DISSENT AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING IN FEMINIST PROTEST MUSIC</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Evolution of Consciousness Raising</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Riot Grrrl Movement</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness Raising Through “Self Evident”</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honoring the Victims</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America is Not a Victim</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Feminist Issues</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Need for Peace</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to Action/Activism</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. “WHEN THE PRESIDENT TALKS TO GOD”: CONSTITUTIVE RHETORIC</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND PROTEST MUSIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting to Know Bright Eyes</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding “When the President Talks to God:”</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpellation</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Ideological Effects</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protests’ Constituted Audience</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCOGRAPHY</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX A. LYRICS: SELF EVIDENT</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX B. LYRICS: WHEN THE PRESIDENT TALKS TO GOD</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“There’s something happening here. What it is ain’t exactly clear.”
~ Buffalo Springfield, “For What It’s Worth”

Riding in a borrowed minivan winding through the Rockies I struggled to stay awake. It was Labor Day 2004, my best friend and I were driving to Aspen, CO to see Cake live in concert. When Cake took the stage late that afternoon I felt a thrill like never before. Standing directly in front of me, performing songs just for me, was Cake. Cake, the band that streamed constantly from my CD player and trickled out of my computer speakers, was singing right at me! I was mostly familiar with the song lineup for the afternoon and basked in the glory of hearing my favorite songs performed live.

When the set ended, hoarse from screaming and euphoric from the performance, I began clapping with the crowd, hoping for an encore. Eventually the band re-emerged and took up their instruments. Lead singer, John McCrea, began a discussion of how displeased he was with political events and how America had entered a dark time, but even in that dark time he believed there was still hope for a brighter future. Then Cake sang a song of hope, their cover of Gloria Gaynor’s, “I Will Survive.” I had hoped to hear “I Will Survive” because I like their cover, but was dually fulfilled as McCrea took the opportunity to use the song for commentary. On the eve of the 2004 presidential elections the war in Iraq had been underway for almost eighteen months and the nation’s prospects had begun to look especially bleak, but McCrea held out hope, hope of a new future with a new president. His message was to vote, vote for anyone but President Bush. Under no traditional pretenses is “I Will Survive” a protest song, but McCrea created a context in which this song could be employed as a rally against the current political atmosphere.

At the time, I was struggling with my own political affiliations. I was raised in a Republican household and voted for Bush in the 2000 election. Along with the majority of
Americans I fully supported Bush after 9/11, but as time went on and the war efforts shifted into Iraq I found myself increasingly disenchanted. By the time the 2004 elections rolled around I certainly did not support Bush’s actions as president, but I also did not really support John Kerry. While I found myself leaning more toward the Democratic ticket, I chose not to vote in ’04. I chose not to follow McCrea’s advice, my own good judgment, or the rights of American citizenship; it is a decision I will not likely repeat.

Along with the struggle to reconcile my political affiliation, I was also beginning to work through my feminist identity at about the same time. Feminism in my household and small community was a “devil” term. Growing up, I understood feminists to be “man-hating bra-burners.” Additionally, because the Rush Limbaugh radio program was an afternoon staple in my parent’s house, I also understood feminists more concretely as “feminazis.” Having spent four full years in college by that point, I was beginning to understand that the roles of women in the world were not parallel to the vision of those roles presented to me while growing up on a farm in middle America. Music became one of my primary outlets to help express and explore my role as a woman and a feminist in the world. Most notably, I began listening to Hole. I began referring to their sound as “angry girl music.” For me, the “discovery” of this music reaffirmed my newfound understanding of the roles of women. That music helped me to realize that even on the larger scale, it was okay for women to be angry and feminist, to sing loudly, to play traditionally male instruments, and to buck the status quo.

Now, as I consider McCrea’s vision of hope and his encouragement to vote in order to change the course of the future I marvel at his bravery. While his statements were not a strong rant against the President, McCrea had to have been aware of the statements made by Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks in 2003 which lambasted Bush and led to a fan-based boycott of the
Dixie Chicks. As of 2008 the boycotts and airplay blacklists are a thing of the past, even in country music. But in 2004 there was still uncertainty regarding the implications of expressing overt political sentiments on-stage and in song. Looking back I can see how far protest music has come since 2003. There has been a distinct change from the time when vocally opposing the President on stage held real potential for recrimination. By 2008 the songscape was littered with blatant protest songs which obviously and deliberately opposed Bush and the war in Iraq; between 2003 and 2008 there was a clear change in terms of public reception of protest music.

Given protest music’s capacity to provoke affective responses from audiences that may constitute means of resistance, it warrants greater attention in the context of the war on terror. Specifically, my purpose is to examine the ways in which protest music functions rhetorically in post-9/11 America as a site for political engagement and change. My examination will be largely informed by feminist theory and practice. It will locate the purpose and potential of protest music in a culture which is increasingly bifurcated not by those who are for or against America but by those who are for or against continued American intervention in the Middle East. Feminism is central to understanding American culture and its war on terror for two primary reasons. First, it provides an alternate means of understanding the conflict which is largely created and perpetuated by the masculinist superstructure. Second, it provides a means by which to resolve the conflict through continued commitment to an ideology of nonviolence.

While this topic could be approached as part of a larger social movement, I wish to examine the rhetoric of the current wave of protest music as it creates a rhetoric of dissent. Charles Tilly defines social movements as “a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others.” Dissent, which will be expanded upon later, is defined by Erik W. Doxtader as “a moment of conflict in which taken-
for-granted rules, topics, and norms of public deliberation are contested, opposed, or transgressed.” While I am confident in saying that there is a larger social movement centered on resisting the Iraq War and the actions of the Bush administration, I have positioned this project as one that examines protest music, not as it fits into the social movement, but as a particular instance or performance of dissent.

I will begin by considering how other rhetorical scholars have envisioned the study of music, followed by studies of protest music specifically. I will then address some of the many factors which serve to complicate the rhetorical examination of music. Next, I will enter the literature on feminist rhetoric and describe how my own feminist position will impact this study; I will also specifically engage the ways in which I envision feminism as an inherently peaceful or anti-war position. Following this discussion I will examine the literature on dissent in order to illustrate the ways in which the examples of protest music I consider reflect a moment of dissent in post-9/11 culture. Finally, I will detail how the rest of this project takes shape by discussing the specific moments of protest under consideration in subsequent chapters.

Listening to Music with Rhetorical Headphones

Rhetorical scholars have traditionally viewed music through an instrumental lens which envisions music as a means toward a persuasive end. While theorizing music as a vehicle for persuasion is a valuable undertaking, I would like to further the persuasive theme while also engaging the topic critically to understand the ways in which protest music functions in our post-9/11 society. Previous scholars have gone to great lengths to legitimize the rhetorical study of music and it is necessary to look at their studies as they are a foundation for mine. For instance, Robert Francesconi begins by defining music as communication: “As in any communicative transaction the communicative aspects of music consist of performer, performance, listener, and
context engaged in a meaning-giving process.” While simple, this definition places music as communication well within the realm of discourse. As a discursive artifact then, music becomes available for rhetorical understanding.

Also working in the instrumental paradigm, James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick theorized music as rhetoric. They did so by producing a list of justifications for the study of music and by pointing out the ways in which music functions rhetorically. Their theorizing begins with considerations of the musician as a rhetor who uses words to “react to and modify the dominant philosophical, political, religious, and aesthetic values of both general and specific audiences.” This statement recognizes the agency of the songwriters and performers to communicate their own message through music even when that message challenges the status quo. Irvine and Kirkpatrick also theorize the role of the auditor in musical performance by assigning them the role of the persuaded, writing that music “influences the auditor in modifying judgments about dominant philosophical, religious, and aesthetic values.” To this list, I argue it is fair to add political values. This theory is therefore applicable to my current study in that it opens a space for the auditor to consider the message in the music and decide for him/herself whether their own values coincide with those of the artist.

Turning now toward specifically protest music, I begin with a definition. Deena Weinstein tells us, “Broadly speaking, the protest in protest songs means an opposition to a policy, an action against the people in power that is grounded in a sense of injustice.” It is this same sense of injustice that inspires the singer/songwriter to perform the song that also inspires the like-minded and engaged audience member to seek out, listen to, or buy the music. Likewise, the injustice Weinstein alludes to also inspires others to protest in forms that are not musical. These protests may come in the shape of boycotts, strikes, sit-ins, speeches, marches, or any
other expression of individual or collective objection. Singing through social difficulty is not a new feature of society, as David A. Carter says:

One perennial way of dealing with hard times, oppression, bosses, or bitterly unbearable conditions is through song. A song tells the story simply. Heroes and villains are identified, struggles and crises are amplified, and the hopes for salvation and nirvana are shouted. Songs become means of uniting against and coping with a common enemy.\textsuperscript{10} Carol Irwin Thomas echoes this observation: “For centuries songs have been used to promote ideology [sic], recruit supporters, and to create organizational cohesion.”\textsuperscript{11}

The notion of protest music as similar to, yet different from written or spoken protest has made it difficult to study in a traditional rhetorical context. Alex Bailey notes, “The key challenge of the rhetoric of music is the ephemeral nature of music phenomena. Music, by it’s [sic] very nature, remains challenging, if not problematic to analyze rhetorically.”\textsuperscript{12} Bailey also highlights one of the key differences between music and speeches or written texts: “Unlike traditional rhetorical texts (speeches and written works), the creation, enactment, reproduction, engagement, and reception of music remains constantly in flux and largely unbounded.”\textsuperscript{13} The unbounded nature of the musical text makes it a difficult artifact to study.

Mark W. Booth explains, “The words that go with music in songs live a life different from that of words written down for printed poetry. They work against different limitations, and their functions are likewise different from…the functions of written poetical-language.”\textsuperscript{14} Bailey cites Elizabeth Tobler in arguing “music’s enigma stems from it being ‘not language’ yet ‘having a voice.’”\textsuperscript{15} The differences between words in music and words in written text abound. First, words in music are performed for the listener. While the song may have originally been composed as a piece largely for the songwriter’s own benefit, it is in the eventual performance of
the song that it becomes, in part, the possession of the listener. The performance allows the musician to deliver their own inflection, timing, emphasis, and tone. Readers of written words are given the freedom to employ their own versions of delivery without necessarily knowing how the author would have read the text. Protest music by its very nature is more affective than written protest documents. Music has the potential to literally move listeners in ways written words do not. Irvine and Kirkpatrick also note the “kinesthetic appeal” and potential of music to sway listeners.16 Whether those movements are all-out dancing or simply swaying to the beat, protest music moves its listeners in ways other forms of protest cannot.

Another major reason music is so difficult to study lies with the listener. Because music has the ability to transcend time in ways traditional speeches do not, it is possible for listeners to be separated by long stretches of time as well as by national, regional, cultural, ethnic, and gender boundaries, among others. There are clear examples of speeches that also transcend time such as “I Have a Dream” and the “Emancipation Proclamation.” I do not intend to suggest that only songs can transcend and speeches cannot, especially in today’s mediated reality when even the lowest profile speeches can garner news coverage and subsequent recording. However, music, with its tradition of repeated live performance and play transcends time in a way different from speech. As Lawrence Grossberg writes, “Different people not only interpret the music differently but use it differently as well.”17 A song will have different meanings for a 14-year old girl than for a 35-year old teamster and each will employ their own use of the same song.

Interspersed among all of these differences is the simple fact that listeners have a choice in what they listen to. John M. Sloop argues, “each individual fluctuates in his or her political commitments and musical attachments based on a large number of factors, including musical genre, the specific artist, the community of other fans and the overall cultural condition.”18
Bailey echoes that notion stating, “each ‘consumer’ selects and experiences musical phenomenon which shapes their attitudes, physical appearance, and social perspectives.”19 As listeners make different musical choices, form individual consumption habits, and are affected by the cultures in which they exist, multiple meanings in music are amplified by multiple meanings in listeners, making the rhetorical understanding of song a difficult process.

To further complicate the logic of understanding music and its listeners, the impact of music on the body must also be considered. D. Robert DeChaine articulates this difficulty stating, “the problem of talking about music—of being able to locate and articulate its power—is hopelessly, or gloriously, compounded by the body as a site of musical experience.”20 DeChaine describes the affective impact of his own music-listening and concert-going experiences with the specific purpose of tying music to the body. While it is easy enough to understand that music “moves” people differently, it is more complicated or even impossible to comprehend why these differences exist and how they are manifested on a person-to-person basis.

Clearly, comprehending the affective bodily experience of music is far beyond the scope of this project, but it is important to note that people are likely drawn to music which has tangible bodily (and emotional) impact. Music that can literally “draw” in its own listeners has the ability to construct its own audience. DeChaine articulates the difference between the conscious meaning-making involved in music as compared to the unconscious impact of sound:

Whereas linguistic signification can undoubtedly provoke emotions and meaning-full experiences, these appear to come by way of reflective cognition. One thinks language into meaning and feeling. Sound, by contrast, seems to find a path that traverses or short-circuits conscious reflection.21
The ability of sound itself to create emotionally meaningful experiences is something that can be found in many different music instances. For example, “The Hey Song,” moves audiences at sports arenas nationwide even though it is a song that cannot be consciously thought into meaning because it lacks lyrics.

In protest music though, songs are often lyric driven; it is message music. Some protest songs, like Ani DiFranco’s “Self Evident” or Ann Waldman’s “Rogue State,” can more appropriately be considered spoken-word poems than songs. They do not have traditional musical sound or accompaniment. The decision to present the message in this music via spoken word rather than through the construct of sound highlights the importance of the lyrics. The use of music as spoken word ensures that the lyrics do not get lost in the music. It is common to misunderstand or completely lose lyrics in engaging music. Going back to DeChaine’s discussion of the affective impact of music on the body, DiFranco, Waldman, and other artists like them are limiting their audiences because they limit their songs to lyrics only. These songs demand DeChaine’s “reflective cognition” and effectively cut off the possibility of short-circuiting “conscious reflection.” The majority of protest songs on the market employ traditional uses of lyrics and sound to convey both meaning and emotional impact. Songs like “Capital G” by Nine Inch Nails, Pink’s “Dear Mr. President,” or “Holiday” by Green Day fit in on the songscape but also convey messages of protest.

In examining and understanding the role of sound in music it is important to consider the ways in which sound also conveys meaning. DeChaine enumerates some of the ways in which sound plays a role in music stating:

[T]he sonic content of music can be combined with other signifying elements such as language, melody, rhythm, and formal or generic conventions. Such elements and
constellations are what help us to distinguish “music” from “noise,” pizzicato from forte, a chorus from a bridge, and the blues from skapunk.\textsuperscript{22}

Francesconi also illustrates the impact of musical score on the rhetorical meaning of songs:

One major resource providing the rhetorical power of music is its potential for juxtaposing frames of reference through the manipulation of sonic forms and materials. In the absence of lyrical content, music cannot “mean” as words do for there is no socially agreed upon discursive content to such musical elements as melodic and harmonic sequences, tone colors, or rhythmic structure. These musical elements do have emotional impact; for example, the use of music to heighten response to the action or plot of a movie, or to heighten patriotic fervor at a political rally.\textsuperscript{23}

DeChaine and Francesconi agree that the meaning of music is often found in combining what they call “sonic” forms with one another. Charles J. Stewart, Craig Allen Smith, and Robert E. Denton, Jr. echo this observation and also draw attention to the relationship between music and lyrics: “The nonverbal elements of music complement the verbal. For example, instruments help to create the somber, forbidding, and haunting views of reality presented in lyrics.”\textsuperscript{24} While the musical score is certainly an important component to song, Bailey adds that, “lyrics largely contain the valuation of a song; the domain of meaning within a song is contained within logical, verbal phenomena rather than in compositional elements.”\textsuperscript{25} Bailey seems to ignore the potential for affective impact carried by what he calls “compositional elements.” I would further Bailey’s argument by saying that the logical meaning of song is contained in the verbal phenomena as well as in lyrical composition while affective meaning can also be carried by both elements.

Whatever value one places on the lyrical versus sonic elements of music, it is the very nature of music itself that makes it so difficult to study rhetorically.\textsuperscript{26}
Grossberg identified another major reason why rhetorical scholars have not embarked on further study of music, explaining:

The failure of contemporary communication theory to study this most visible of popular forms is based on itself, and that the fans define their experiences within the structures of meaning that are articulated. But music – perhaps unlike other forms – need not claim to represent, or even to signify.\(^{27}\)

This lack of focus in representation or signification leads to problems of legitimacy for rhetorical scholars whose work has been traditionally grounded in the study of written or spoken word with definable audiences and articulate claims of representation. Theodore Matula legitimizes the study of not only music but other popular culture texts in arguing, “Popular culture texts are rhetorical…to the extent that they provide audiences with models—or strategies—for managing the meaning of ongoing everyday social struggles.”\(^{28}\) Matula’s words speak directly to the study of protest music which is written as a response to “ongoing everyday social struggles.”

There have been a number of studies undertaken which interrogate music but there does not seem to be a consensus on the role music plays in society, its purpose, or potential. In studying popular music of the World War II era, G.P. Mohrmann and F. Eugene Scott delimit the potential of music:

A song is, after all, a song, and it is an unsuitable medium for complex persuasive appeals. A lyricist may write a soulful plea or make a compelling assertion, but the effective range of communication seems inherently limited, confined to the reinforcement of existing predispositions.\(^{29}\)

While I agree that “a song is, after all, a song,” it seems as though Mohrmann and Scott have either forgotten their own proclamation or they are attempting to refute those who place too
much emphasis on the ability of music alone to right societal wrongs. The point of protest music is to reflect and create culture, and possibly to inform those who are unaware of (the extent of) injustice. Even in this statement I disagree with Mohrmann and Scott’s assertion that music is “confined to the reinforcement of existing predispositions.” Music provides a means by which a listener can attempt to understand the world in a different light.

Thomas holds out a little more hope for the possibility of persuasion through protest music stating, “Contemporary songs indicating specific beliefs, attitudes, or worldviews have become a major part of the American music business and an important element in social dissent. Such songs, when used in combination with speeches, become persuasive.”30 Realistically, songs cannot always be employed in combination with speeches. While it may be possible or even advantageous to have both bands and speakers at a rally or protest, it is impossible, impractical, and improper to get those same speeches played over the radio in conjunction with protest music. Setting is vital to any speech/song combination, and listening to the combination outside of its intended setting (i.e. rally, protest) would severely limit the possibility for persuasion. As Thomas herself notes, “the setting in which the song is performed is also a contributing factor.”31 Robert Root affirms Thomas, writing: “[W]hat seems appropriate and exciting in a live concert setting may be dissonant and heavy-handed on a recording listened to privately.”32 Possibly Thomas is too optimistic in her argument for protest songs in conjunction with speeches; the duo cannot exist outside of specific group events and can certainly not be duplicated on a day-to-day or listener-by-listener basis. While Mohrmann and Scott and Thomas contest the persuasive capacity of protest music, it is important to understand that protest music itself will not rid the world of evil, heal wounds, or make the sun shine brighter. Protest music, like all music, serves to reflect and create culture. While it is possible that the overall role music plays in changing
culture could bring about a societal shift toward ending or preventing war, it is too much to say that ending war is the first role of protest music.

In spite of suggestions from Mohrmann and Scott and others that protest music is ineffective, there have been a number of other studies which propose the contrary. Part of the potential extant in protest music is the understanding that music as an entertainment medium is inherently different from traditionally orated or written protest. Irvine and Kirkpatrick suggest of music that “[l]isteners do not ordinarily anticipate persuasion and, as a result, they are ready recipients of the rhetorical statement without being aware of its complete implications.”33 Alberto Gonzalez and John J. Makay echo that suggestion, writing, “Because songs as rhetoric serve goals which are both instrumental and consummatory, audiences are directed toward some persuasive intent at the same time they are entertained.”34 This is not to imply that audiences are somehow duped into believing the message in the music, just that they are more likely to listen with open minds or to find some entertainment value in the music outside of the message. Stewart et.al. find these inherent differences as advantageous:

[P]rotest music…does have a number of advantages over speeches, leaflets, editorials and essays…songs give persuaders a poetic license to challenge, exaggerate, and pretend in ways that audiences would not find acceptable, unbelievable, or ridiculous if spoken or written as prose.35

An additional advantage of protest music Stewart et.al. point to is that songs are able to cover more ground than a single-issue speech or topic essay because, “[m]ost songs perform all major functions of social movements rather than a single function. Thus, although songs are simplistic, brief, and poetic in nature, they are more complex persuasive channels than theorists suggest.”36 A major component to the persuasiveness of any message lies with the source.
Stewart et al. also note, “Because songs are usually sung either by highly credible sources or by audiences themselves, they present excellent opportunities for self-persuasion through statements of personal intent.” Credibility in this case could come in the form of recognizability; it is possible that a musician is more recognizable to an audience member than a never-before-seen orator. This last quotation is also important because it speaks to the self-persuasive function of protest music. An artist/performer puts an idea to music and presents it to the audience; it is then in the hands of individual listeners to determine for themselves whether or not they agree with the message. This agreement comes in the form of self-persuasion, a vital part of consciousness raising in the twenty-first century. Self-persuasion also speaks to those who suggest protest music can only serve to reinforce predispositions: one cannot have a disposition toward a situation if they are not aware of it.

Making the Case for Feminist Rhetorics

In my analyses I employ a feminist perspective, defined by Cindy L. Griffin as, “a perspective that views gender as one of the organizing features of all communication interactions and constructs.” I argue that gender can be seen as an organizing feature not in that the rhetor (in this case a musician) is necessarily female, but in that their message ties closely to feminist ideals. This is not to say I believe women and men communicate in ways which are inherently different, but that some communication reinforces feminist ideology and some does not; regardless of the speaker’s gender.

I employ the feminist perspective to explore the ways in which music lends itself to the feminist cause. As Deanna D. Sellnow argues, “music can function effectively as an authentic voice for women as a marginalized group.” Again, I see this perspective functioning not only to explore feminist ideas as they come from women, but also feminist ideas and attitudes regardless
of their source. Sellnow also writes, “popular music may be…[an] effective medium for communicating experiences and systems of meaning that characterize a feminist perspective.” An entire industry, known as women’s music, was built around this belief long before Sellnow wrote about it.

Women’s music, defined as music by, for, about, and financially controlled by women, grew in popularity during the Second Wave. Given this definition for women’s music, any record produced by a major label would not qualify. This alternative music scene was originally termed “lesbian music” because some believed it was formed by lesbians for lesbians; but as Cynthia Lont notes, there is some contention to this point. Regardless of its formation, the label “women’s music” stuck because it was less threatening to the masses. This dedication to privileging women throughout the music-making/producing/retailing process gave rise to independent women’s labels such as Olivia Records, Redwood Records, Pleiades, and Wide Woman/Urana. Each of these labels was formed between 1972 and 1975. They were artist-centric having been mostly formed by or around one artist or group and were largely dedicated to light folk and rock styles. Following in this tradition, artists today like Ani DiFranco have started and maintained their own independent labels (hers is Righteous Babe Records).

In addition to woman-centered, independent record labels and music there have also been a number of woman-focused concert endeavors. Created in 1976, the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival (MWMF) is the longest running of these concert endeavors. Taking place on 650 acres of land near Hart, Michigan, the festival is open to “womyn born womyn” (i.e. no men or transsexuals allowed) and run entirely by women. Attended by nearly 10,000 women per year, the MWMF creates a safe space for women, feminists, and lesbians to come together. Possibly the best known women’s music endeavor was Lilith Fair. Founded and organized by Sarah
McLachlan, Lilith Fair was a concert touring both nationally and internationally featuring only female solo artists and female-led bands. Running only from 1997-1999, Lilith proved that female musicians could garner large crowds without the support of their male counterparts. Other women’s music festivals include National Women’s Music Festival, Women’s International Music Festival, and the Los Angeles Women’s Music Festival. Together, these musical endeavors have created and maintained a space for women (lesbian or not) to gain safe access to female artists performing female-driven songs. These efforts have entirely sponsored or created a space for female artists today, regardless of their sexual orientation. Artists and groups such as k.d. lang, Melissa Etheridge, Tracy Chapman, Queen Latifah, Sheryl Crow, the Indigo Girls, Martina McBride, and Ani DiFranco flourish in the tradition of women’s music.

There have been a number of self-identified feminist musicians who sing occasionally or exclusively about feminist issues but there are also a number of songs with feminist perspectives whose performers are not self-identified feminists. In light of the accomplishments of musicians such as Alanis Morissette, Courtney Love, Reba McEntire, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and Martina McBride who employ female-centric lyrics in their songs, Jerry Rodnitsky claims that feminism gained a level of understanding: “Feminism had quickly concluded that the real power of music was its ability to communicate rather than its ability to shock or cross male boundaries.” Women were no longer relegated to the role of back-up singer or billed only as a guitar-toting lesbian. The music world became accustomed to seeing and hearing women perform songs that did not reinforce patriarchy and heterosexual relationships.

**Feminist Music Explored by, Who Else? . . . Women**

The work of explicating gender differences in communication, pointing out masculine-centric hegemonic practices in the academy, and working to change the status quo, has largely
fallen upon or been taken up by women, specifically feminists. Bonnie J. Dow and Celeste M. Condit explain:

[A] focus on women’s/feminist public discourse has often been understood as a prima facie feminist undertaking, and reasonably so, if only because the assertion that such discourse deserves scholarly attention was an act of resistance against norms that held that only male rhetoric was worthy of study and emulation.  

Maintaining the idea that there is worth in women’s rhetoric, a few (mostly) female scholars intent on reshaping the academy, have performed studies which display the necessary resistance to enact change in the discipline. Feminist rhetorical scholars owe a debt of gratitude to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. In 1973 Campbell published, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron” in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. In examining the women’s movement, Campbell identified ways in which the rhetoric of the movement was drastically different from traditional conceptions of rhetoric. She, in effect, opened the door for feminist rhetorical scholars by arguing, “the rhetoric of women’s liberation is a distinctive genre because it evinces unique rhetorical qualities that are a fusion of substantive and stylistic features.” Those who followed in her footsteps, Condit writes, do not necessarily or “explicitly label their works as feminist in terms of its approach and methodology, but in the process of thinking from a feminist perspective and women’s experience, they generated a body of research that looks different from male-stream scholarship.”

Other authors quickly followed Campbell in an attempt to further articulate the ways in which women’s/feminist rhetoric is distinctive from traditional rhetoric. Among these was Sally Miller Gearhart who opposed a basic tenet of rhetorical theory in her 1979 article, “The Womanization of Rhetoric.” Gearhart claims that the definition of rhetoric should not be linked
so closely to persuasion as all persuasion is an act of violence. She proposes a female model of communication which could mean an end to violence. It is only after all violence has ended, feminists argue, that women will enjoy full rights and equality in society.

Sonja K. Foss points out major contributions of feminist authors in her book, *Rhetorical Criticism*. Foss proposes that Campbell, Gearhart, and others like them foreshadowed major shifts in rhetorical studies by arguing for the first time that, “feminism necessarily transforms rhetorical constructs and theories.” They also challenged “fundamental assumptions about rhetoric, suggesting reconceptualizations of rhetorical studies grounded in the influence of feminist perspectives.” Foss also credits these authors with shifting rhetorical focus to a “scholarship dedicated to rhetorical analyses of the rhetoric of women and topics concerning women.” Women who were previous subjects of rhetorical analysis were inevitably of great political or social importance, much like the studies done regarding male rhetors. The pivotal moment came when more mundane or overlooked aspects of female experience and communication styles were validated and made available for critical inspection. Foss notes that this first step to study the rhetoric of those outside of the traditional white, upper/middle class, powerful male construct opened the door even wider to “the study of diverse forms of expression, rhetors, and contexts” beyond even the women’s sphere.

Campbell, Gearhart, Dow, Foss, and other authors have effectively introduced feminism to rhetorical studies. Their work of explicating the necessity and advantages of understanding the two fields of study in a single frame has made it possible for contemporary feminist rhetorical scholars to bypass the justification for their methods of analysis and concentrate on producing scholarship. This work looks, as Condit explains, “different from male-stream scholarship.” These differences manifest themselves in a variety of ways, some more evident than others. One
of the most apparent differences is topic choice. Feminist rhetorical scholars have taken on a number of issues typically ignored by traditional male scholars. Ranging from addressing feminism itself, to women’s health issues, to representations of women in media, to addressing female sexuality, these scholars give voice to traditionally silent populations. While I have specifically introduced the work of Campbell and other early feminist rhetoricians here, my future work will do less to justify the study of feminist issues; I will instead write as a feminist whose work has a place in the academy. Writing from this standpoint will also allow me to produce something “different from male-stream scholarship.”

Nonviolence as Feminist Ideology

As a spiritual feminist who identifies with the Third Wave, I cannot begin to suppose that my beliefs are popularly held by other feminists. Instead, understanding my own feminist identity creates a space in which we can come to understand some portions of feminist ideology across decades and waves. In this next discussion I will identify nonviolence as part of the core feminist ideology. In doing so I will not attempt to speak for all feminists; indeed, one of the redeeming features of current feminism(s) is the acceptance of those in the movement with different beliefs. Each of the terms nonviolence, pacifism, anti-war, and peace will be used but I do not attempt to equate them. While they have relatively similar end goals, I believe proponents of each of these movements would identify starkly different approaches. That being said, feminism and pacifism have long been associated; Mary Wollstonecraft tied the two together in some of her earliest writings. Feminism and the peace movement have also run concurrently through time even when the two were not explicitly linked together. Further, “[w]hile not all pacifists were feminists and not all feminists were pacifists, the two movements overlapped in
theory and in membership.” Pacifism has been defined by Charles F. Howlett, editor of *History of the American Peace Movement 1890-2000* as:

Either the absolute renunciation of war or the refusal to participate in or the opposition in principle to a specific war or governmental programs on religious, philosophical, humanitarian, or social-justice grounds. The values held in advocating peace as more desirable than war are significantly more important than motives, and the behavior should be predictably consistent.

While feminism and pacifism have long been linked, these two movements certainly do not represent all women’s views. At the same time that feminism does not represent all women, it is representing ever larger numbers of men who identify as feminist. Catherine Driscoll identifies feminists as people “interested in the impact of modern life on women.” Driscoll’s definition not only opens the door to men who identify as feminist, but it also serves the anti-war purpose because war is certainly a part of our modern lives and it has a distinct impact on women. Howlett defines “war” as “[a]ny conflict in which organized military force is employed.” Based on this definition of war, I will define “anti-war” as anyone (including but not limited to feminists, individuals, movements, organizations etc.) who opposes war. Others who oppose war and violence but do not self-identify as feminists nevertheless share values consistent with feminism as defined by Driscoll.

Possibly the biggest reason feminists support anti-war efforts is that they also support the peace movement at home. Feminists have traditionally been outspoken in their belief that, as Carolyn M. Byerly writes, “women will never fully realize their rights until war and other forms of institutionalized violence is brought under control.” Harriet Hyman Alonso echoes this sentiment: “For me, the main theme that defines this peace movement is the connection made
between institutionalized violence and violence against women, whether the institution be slavery, the military, or governmental oppression.”73 In this last statement Alonso began the work of defining institutionalized violence in naming not only violence against women but also the larger institutional structures of the government and military. Jerald Richards further defines institutional violence by illuminating its many forms including, “sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and warism.”74 Richards argues that an essential element of institutional “harm-doing” is “some form of dehumanization” which reaches its peak in “the collective violence of warfare.”75 Additionally, Stephen Nathanson points out that institutional violence is not always direct and overt but sometimes “subtle or indirect.”76 This subtlety is sometime difficult to understand or identify because as Richards argues institutional violence is “integrated with and sanctioned by the customs, traditions, or laws of a society.”77

In identifying a nonviolent worldview as a defining feature of feminist ideology, I do not mean to lump all feminists into a superstructure of nonviolence. While I find it fair to argue that many or possibly even most people who self-identify as feminist also hold nonviolent ideologies, there are certainly some feminists who do not espouse nonviolence as a social tactic. Take for instance, “firearm feminists” as described by Amy Ihlan, who are “violent” at least to the extent that they have a “willingness to participate in violent social institutions to serve feminist goals.”78 Some feminists choose not to own guns or other specific weapons of violence because they do not ever want to use those weapons in a violent act against another. Other feminists purposely arm themselves in order to protect themselves, their family, and their property against others who are intent on harm. It is likely that “firearm feminists” represent a shade of grey in terms of the feminist ideology of nonviolence. Acknowledging their existence in a violent world they choose to avail themselves of the arms that could save their lives should they face life-
threatening danger at the hands of another. In that way they are an example of how feminism continues to resist binaries; many feminists may ascribe to nonviolence but acknowledge a willingness to resort to violence themselves in the event of a personal attack.

Another way in which women, feminist or not, have traditionally played a role in peace movements is by advocating as mothers. Alonso points out the role of mothers, writing, “the idea that women, as the childbearers of society, have a particular interest in peace” is because they do not want “to see [their] offspring murdered either as soldiers or as innocent victims of a war.” Mothers have been given some degree of political access to advocate for peace based on their unwillingness to sacrifice the lives of their children in war. This unwillingness to sacrifice is heightened by the unpopularity of the war in Iraq. Karen Slattery and Ana C. Garner conducted a journalistic study of the representations of mothers of combat soldiers in the Iraq. In that study they found that the mothers “were not depicted as necessarily stoic and silent.” Instead, Slattery and Garner found that while mothers continued to support their child(ren) in combat, “some clearly did not support the war.” They contend that one possible reason why mothers are no longer portrayed in the media as supportive and patriotic is that mothers today may be more willing to voice their discontent than in the past; a tradition they found which builds upon Vietnam era protests.

In addition to mothers advocating for peace to preserve the lives of their own children, Katharine Sarikakis demands peace based on the roles women and children play both in times of peace and in conflict: “Women and their dependents are predominantly the victims of everyday violence and discrimination in times of peace and their human rights are severely and systematically violated in times of conflict.” There is an element of identification between American women and those in Afghanistan and Iraq as feminists are able to point abroad and
say, “that could be me.” This consubstantiality has caused a number of feminists to advocate for peace not only at home but also in foreign theaters of war because so many of the victims are innocent.

This vision feminists have for a peaceful world has been articulated in a variety of ways through time and in different feminist eras. Barbara Deming, an outspoken pacifist and civil rights worker, explained her vision for a peace as one in which the ends of power imbalances and oppressive behavior are met through nonviolent means instead of through aggressive action toward those who hold the power or are oppressive.

The feminist vision…abandons the concept of naming enemies and adopts a concept familiar to the nonviolent tradition: naming behavior that is oppressive, naming abuse of power that is held unfairly and must be destroyed, but naming no person whom we are willing to destroy. If we can destroy a man’s power to tyrannize, there is no need, of course, to destroy the man himself.84

Jennie Ruby identified the radical feminist vision of a nonviolent world as one in which oppression and patriarchy have been subverted and justice takes the place of aggression. She identifies the “common root of terrorism and war” as the “patriarchal masculinity and the oppression of women.”85 Ruby also asserts that “[u]sing the masculinist posturing and aggression of war without true legal justice will never get us the world we envision.”86 Writing in 1993, Betty A. Reardon articulated a feminist vision of a peaceful world identifying “women” as those working for peace through increased arbitration and negotiation. Her vision includes a legion of persons skilled in nonviolent conflict management to work at every level of society around the globe. She writes that these arbitrators would be skilled in “applying feminist modes of compromise and reconciliation, as a means of achieving win-win solutions where no one need be
Ruby also expressed her vision for peace as possible through the rule of law after the attacks of 9/11.

If we are not done with the police on our streets, then it seems we cannot dispense with the need for force in our world, at least as an interim strategy. But we need a force that is accountable to the citizens through trial by jury, to laws that are created in democratic process. We do not need a macho vigilante group gunning for the criminal, no matter how sure we are that he did it. We need a process of law.

The common bond that ties all of these nonviolent visions together is the appropriate use of the law (or the appropriate misuse of inappropriate laws) to ensure that no one becomes the target of violence even in the face of hegemonic oppression and attack.

Even though there are a number of different feminist visions for a peaceful future and multiple links between feminism and nonviolence, not all feminists identify as anti-war. Like the majority of the nation, some feminists called for retaliation in the days immediately following 9/11. Ruby wrote, “Feminism as a social justice movement certainly demands justice for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.” She identifies the terrorist attacks as anti-woman because the Taliban disagrees with the extent of freedom enjoyed by women in the U.S. She also identifies the Taliban as a target of political action by feminist groups for their systematic and continued oppression of women.

Some feminists do not believe that the nonviolence movement is part of the scope of women because women have a history of taking part in acts of aggression. Byerly points out, “Women also voluntarily serve in the militaries of many nations today and they have taken up arms in modern national liberations struggles.” Byerly also suggests women are not necessarily pro-peace because they support war machines and economies in non-aggressive ways. While
Byerly is correct in pointing out the roles women have played during times of war, I argue that joining the military or taking a factory job assembling munitions does not necessarily mark someone as naturally violent. I believe part of Byerly’s underlying argument is that women are not always peaceful, this is certainly true, but career choices which could culminate in participation in violent activity are not solely based on violent natures. There are many reasons to join the military, foremost among those reasons, in my mind, are patriotism and economic reasons which have nothing to do with an inclination toward violence. There are also clear economic reasons to take a job assembling munitions or working as part of the war machine in non-active duty capacities.

Other feminists, such as Lynne Roper, refuse to identify as anti-war because, “[t]he marking of anti-war views as feminist views has trivialised [sic] women, and concomitantly the anti-war movement.” While I respect this opinion, I disagree that women and the anti-war movement have been trivialized because of their association with feminism. I do acknowledge that tagging the word “feminism” to a cause today can garner backlash and decrease support mostly due to low public opinion of Second Wave feminists, indeed it has become what Kenneth Burke would call a “devil term.” However, I would argue that the nonviolence movement has historically given women more voice in the public sphere than nearly any other cause.

One of the major arguments of feminists who do not identify as anti-war is that nonviolence has too long been considered a women’s issue and that the peace movement supports binary conceptions of men as violent and women as peaceful. Carol Tavris, author of *The Mismeasure of Woman*, wrote of a group in England called Women Oppose the Nuclear Threat (WONT) in the early 1980s who took a stand to rearticulate the ways in which gender categories play out in wartime. A portion of a WONT document reads:
We don’t think that women have a special role in the peace movement because we are “naturally” more peaceful, more protective, or more vulnerable than men, nor do we look to women as the “Earth Mother” who will save the planet from male aggression. Rather, we believe that it is this very role division that makes the horrors of war possible. The so-called masculine, manly qualities of toughness, dominance, not showing emotion or admitting dependence can be seen as the driving force behind war; but they depend on women playing the opposite (but not equal) role, in which the caring qualities are associated with inferiority and powerlessness.\textsuperscript{92}

Questioning any inherent difference between the sexes and what those differences mean in times of war takes us back to the iconic image of the strong man “saving” the weaker woman from harm. Tavris also discussed the role of women in a war meant to “save” women themselves:

War is a male story par excellence; in the Persian Gulf War, which reflected a “man-to-man” battle between George Bush and Saddam Hussein, we were inundated with images of brave male soldiers “rescuing” an “innocent” nation that had been “raped” by evil villains. What, then, of the 30,000 women (about six percent of the total troops) who served in the war, in every way but combat? How can women do any rescuing of a damsel nation in distress?\textsuperscript{93}

These issues and images hold true today in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Women have a clear part in the conflict but their roles are questioned. Shannon L. Holland complicates the roles women play in the U.S. military by examining the ways in which Jessica Lynch’s body was coded as feminine in the media maelstrom surrounding her capture and subsequent rescue.\textsuperscript{94}

Byerly also saw the binary trend come into focus after 9/11. “Feminist commentaries that circulated in the days after September 11 tended to reflect these binary assumptions, thereby
seeming to essentialize men as inherently violent and women as inherently peaceful and non-violent." Byerly’s observation is even more poignant given the gendered reality of the attacks. The hijackers were all men who were attacking the male dominated economic basis of America. In light of the reality of the situation, I am not surprised that even today we are dealing with oversimplified notions of the “spheres” of women and men.

Despite the continuation of binary gender conceptions and roles in popular discourse, scholars in the field of peace, conflict, and justice studies take a more nuanced view of violence and its causes. Cynthia Peters envisions a way in which feminism itself can work to expose the ways in which our nation enters military conflict. Peters writes, “Feminism can help us see how gender politics reinforces isolation and asks us to bypass thoughtful responses in the name of unity, which translates into mostly male decisions about how the country will go forward.”

When gender politics stand in the way of thoughtful decision-making about something as dangerous as war, it is clear to see we have a long way to go as a nation toward not only peace but also equality.

I certainly do not support the binary conceptions of gender and the idea that women are more inherently pacifistic than men. The issue is much more complicated than saying simply women are peaceful and men are violent, especially in the U.S. which has traditionally been a militarized society. Boys are acculturated in our society to be patriots which is linked to militaristic violence as called for by our leaders. Traditionally, men have had less public space to proclaim anti-war sentiments because ramifications for men as pacifists are more perilous than for women. During the Vietnam War, men who refused conscription were sent to prison and held in extremely low public conscience. Women, on the other hand, with a much shorter history of active military duty have had access to public spaces which allow them to protest war.
Dissent as Heuristic

One public space which has recently opened for advocates of nonviolence to overtly protest war is through music. More musicians today are able to voice dissent without direct legal or physical repercussions. Unlike the difficulties the Dixie Chicks encountered in 2003 when they expressed anti-Bush/anti-war sentiments, just five years later artists are more able to express their beliefs and find support even in dissent.97 Dissent through music has its advantages; music is easily reproducible and has the capacity to reach large audiences, it is generally affordable and does not require a large time commitment by listeners. Other forms of dissent: sit-ins, walk-outs and even pamphleteering require much more participant input than listening to music. For this reason, I have chosen to understand protest music as a moment of dissent in the post-9/11 American culture of war.

In understanding dissent, especially in a warring nation, simple definitions assist in comprehending the concept. Steven H. Shiffrin defines dissent as, “speech that criticizes existing customs, habits, traditions, institutions, or authorities.”98 As previously noted, Doxtader writes, “dissent is a moment of conflict in which taken-for-granted rules, topics, and norms of public deliberation are contested, opposed, or transgressed.”99 Robert L. Ivie takes these simple definitions and furthers their scope: “Dissent…is…a rhetorical practice for engaging in democratic polemics by continually adjusting to circumstances and extant relationships of force on the margins of power and at the miniscule or micro-level of a cultural field.”100

When understanding dissent as a moment of criticism or conflict in which the dissident questions or challenges ideas which are handed down, taken-for-granted or imposed by others, it is important to also remember dissent is a democratic right. Ivie calls dissent “a key ingredient of responsible politics.”101 Americans who wish to fully participate in the democratic process are
those who question their leaders and demand answers for transgressions. Ivie furthers that thought, writing, “dissent is a core feature of democratic citizenship.” Those who wish to participate fully within the democratic system are engaged and willing to participate even when that participation necessitates calling public opinion or political action into question. Ivie then writes:

Dissent is therefore a mainstay—not a luxury, a nuisance or a malfunction—of democratic governance. It serves as the medium of productive competitions without which there would be no play of differences, and no way of holding delimited perspectives sufficiently accountable to one another.

Dissent gives a voice to people who hold opinions different from those in power. It provides a vehicle for constructive dialogue and possible positive change. It also comes with challenges in obtaining positive outcomes, weighing and managing possible risks and in establishing credibility among a skeptical public.

As a tactic, dissent has a number of possible outcomes. At a basic level, Doxtader suggests, “some acts of dissent produce or generate constructive dialogue.” It is this constructive dialogue that can begin to change the way democracy works and public policy is enforced. Ivie suggests another possible outcome is that “[d]issent can rectify power imbalances, thereby ensuring that deliberative processes are informed by a greater number of those who would be affected by policies or practices on the public docket.” In rectifying power imbalances, what is actually happening is that dissent is serving as a way to disseminate knowledge to those who would otherwise glean their knowledge from those in power. This dissemination of knowledge then undermines the ability of those in power to unquestionably make large-scale political decisions.
Roland Bleiker echoes the notion that dissent has the potential to undermine authority at the same time that it returns agency to those holding viewpoints which are outside of the elected majority.

Dissent…has the potential to reveal far more about power and agency than one may think initially. The process of undermining authority says as much, for instance, about the values and functioning of the existing social and political order as it does about the urge to break out of it.\(^\text{107}\)

In this case, the dissident, as the less-powerful agent, has the opportunity to undermine authority (suggesting a bottom-up campaign). Bleiker suggests that the mere process of this undermining dissent speaks to not only the problems of the socio/political order but also the ways in which dissidents envision a way out and a new possible future.

Shiffrin returns to his original definition of dissent in discussing possible outcomes. He also takes a pragmatic and realistic view of the ways in which dissent functions in society.

Dissent attacks existing customs, habits, traditions, institutions, and authorities. It spies injustice and brings it to light. This does not mean that dissent is always effective; indeed, much dissent does little to bring about effective change. Nor is dissent always fair. It may often be distorted by envy of those higher up in a particular hierarchy. Nonetheless, dissent is a part of the *daily* dialectic of power relations in the society. For all its occasional faults, dissent is indispensable. Without it, unjust hierarchies would surely flourish with little possibility of constructive change. If the truth about the presence of injustice is to be spread, social institutions must be constructed in a way that nurtures critical speech.\(^\text{108}\)
Shiffrin makes the important point that not all dissent makes a difference. Sometimes even the hardest fought battles are losing efforts and he reminds us that dissent is one of those easily lost battles. Regardless of the overall outcome, dissent is necessary and practical in terms of retaining the balance of power. Dissent serves a specific need in society to point out injustices and call for change. Even if that change never happens, dissent reminds us that it is there, that simple act of pointing out a wrong has the potential to bring about change. Shiffrin’s last point – that we must work to construct institutions which value and nurture critical speech – is imperative in both maintaining the social order and ensuring the future of dissent. When institutions stifle critical speech they close the door on the possible positive outcomes dissent can provide.

Even though dissent is a valuable portion of democratic citizenship and should be valued as such, it comes with inherent risks. Doxtader weighs in to remind us, “Dissent is not risk-free. If launched in language, a truly radical form of dissent may bring the end of politics.” I do not believe there are any forms of dissent working in America today which are radical enough or strong enough to bring an end to politics, but it is important to point out that there are risks associated with dissent. These risks certainly vary by case but Doxtader points out a risk many dissidents may not consider. It is a reminder along the lines of the be-careful-what-you-ask-for adage:

Produtive dissent may culminate in state co-option; the dissident can appropriate the symbolic terms of the legal system in order to challenge and remake standing norms of justice and political representation, but fail to differentiate the aspects of the law that encourage public interest formation from those that colonize it. In appropriating the language of the colonizer, the dissident hopes to make their case more clear and acceptable to the public, but at the same time, the goal of their dissension is marginalized
and appropriated. Also, in a realistic tone, Doxtader warns, “Dissent brackets a concern for those who believe that the benefits of the system outweigh its costs.”\textsuperscript{111} In the end, dissent may be self-serving to the point that others disagree and prefer to maintain the current system. It is a rare occurrence to find an entire populous willing to support a dissenting idea; there will always be a counterpoint to each point of dissension but one very real risk of dissent is that others will simply not agree.

In dissent, one must consider the role and image of the dissident. Dissidents have been considered, at least in the American context, as crazy on the low end of the spectrum and as unpatriotic traitors on the other end. Doxtader reminds us pragmatically, that, “the dissident does not occupy a position of political leadership.”\textsuperscript{112} Working from a position outside the frame of leadership, dissidents occupy a space of little power and also little public ethos. J. Robert Cox agrees, stating, “One of the most acute and continuing rhetorical problems to engage the leaders of a controversial movement is the need to establish a credible image for dissent.”\textsuperscript{113} He writes that it falls on the shoulders of the dissident to establish their own credibility by, “convinc[ing] people that their dissent is not caused by unpatriotic motives, subversive beliefs, or weaknesses in character, before they can engage in constructive debate.”\textsuperscript{114} Convincing the public of all of these points is difficult for even the dissident with the cleanest record. Though necessary, it is also a potentially long process which takes away from the focus on dissent.

Addressing dissent in post-9/11 America, Ivie writes, “Dissent was rendered unpatriotic. Protest was considered rude and out of place, something appropriately relegated to remote free-speech zones.”\textsuperscript{115} The public opinion of dissent became such that dissidents could not act in public without being questioned on their motives, morals and their American-ness. This is ironic
based on the important role dissent has in democracy. In order to maintain a notion of dissent without drawing general public ire, Ivie writes:

[G]rassroots dissent operated more or less invisibly within a largely depoliticized consumer society, relegated to alternative media and episodic rallies, some on a large scale but all tainted in the eyes of the general public with the mark of disloyalty.\textsuperscript{116}

The relative invisibility protected the dissident from mainstream opposition but it also meant that dissenting opinions were also only available to those who sought them out. Alternative media with dissenting themes, such as independent music was available on the market but it was only really available to those who went looking for it. Even given this low profile status, underground or small-scale dissent was still considered disloyal and unpatriotic even if the purpose was only to point out political transgressions.

Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites tell us that dissent has typically been characterized as “an emotional phenomenon, something…likely to be signified by mute acts of display such as marching or flag-burning than by verbal eloquence and printed documents.”\textsuperscript{117} In Hariman and Lucaites’ view, marching and flag-burning are “mute” activities, insofar as they are not vocal in the same ways as “verbal eloquence and printed documents.” Instead, the emotional response that necessarily accompanies an event which includes marching and flag-burning is actually a performance of dissent. I agree with Hariman and Lucaites that dissent in the American context has been categorized as certain types of action and not others. Flag-burning may always be considered dissent but a woman wearing short hair and long pants is no longer an act of dissent in America. During the Vietnam era it was remarkably clear that protest songs represented moments of dissent and I contend that characterization needs to be carried forward into the current Iraq War era. Musicians have taken it upon themselves to produce protest music
which reveals their thoughts and feelings toward our current form of democracy in such a way that calls audience members to question their own belief systems. Calling the political climate into question is not only a moment of dissent but is also a moment for growth and understanding. Shiffrin points out, “Dissent is…a crucial institution for challenging unjust hierarchies and for promoting progressive change. It is also an important part of our national identity that we protect dissent.” Dissent is a necessary part of the American democratic system, it is the charge of individuals to stand up and protest when the government or institutions get out of control. Today’s protest-music makers are doing just that: standing up and pointing out flaws in the system and agitating for positive change as their constitutional rights allow them to do.

The Future: Protest Music and the Rhetoric of Dissent

In order to understand the nature of war as anti-feminist and the roles music and dissent play in creating and reflecting popular culture, I will examine two artifacts from the contemporary American songscape. First, I will look at the song “Self Evident” by Ani DiFranco. A self-identified feminist songwriter and performer, DiFranco wrote “Self Evident” in the aftermath of 9/11. As a spoken word song/poem it breaks the boundaries of standard lyrical music but remains true to DiFranco’s voice and style. I consider “Self Evident” as not only an anti-war song but also as a site for consciousness raising. Consciousness raising developed during Second Wave feminism as a way to uncover and understand injustices. I contend that the purpose and method of consciousness raising has changed over the ensuing decades to include songwriting and performance as a potential site for consciousness raising in the Third Wave.

The song “Self Evident” draws on the musical tradition of peace activists and war protest musicians who invited their audience to transcend the limitations of current society and to look ahead into a brighter future envisioned through song. This tradition is built on songs like John
Lennon’s “Imagine,” “What’s Going On” by Marvin Gaye, “For What It’s Worth” by Buffalo Springfield, and Bob Dylan’s “The Times They are A-Changin.” DiFranco presents a vision of the world in a post-consumer society. She asks her audience to stop and consider the ways in which they live, the impact they have on the planet, and how the world could be a better place if some key actions were changed. A peaceful song to the core, the lyrics invite the audience to embrace peace and equality while effectively reshaping society.

Second, I will examine a performance of the song “When the President Talks to God” by Bright Eyes. This song is specifically against the war in Iraq: it questions American motives for involvement and President Bush for his decision-making practices and techniques. It was one of the first protest songs to be released after the invasion of Afghanistan and subsequently Iraq. More than being one of the first released, it was also one of the first overtly protest-oriented songs performed on national television. “When the President Talks to God,” was performed by Conor Oberst of Bright Eyes on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno on May 2, 2005. Drawing on the work of Maurice Charland and others I will examine the ways in which this single performance began the process of interpelling protest-oriented audience members into a constituted public.

Unlike the DiFranco song, “When the President Talks to God” is clearly reactionary and angry. Having just completed the “Vote for Change” tour before the 2004 election, Oberst was over asking his audience for specific action. He had just toured imploring them to vote Bush out of office and his efforts were unsuccessful. Written just after the 2004 elections this song really shows how angry Oberst was with Bush and his tactics. Instead of espousing peace and equality this song could be equated with a heated *ad hominem* attack. Drawing on the tradition of songs like “Lyndon Johnson Told a Nation” by Tom Paxton, “War” by Edwin Starr, and Creedence
Clearwater Revival’s “Fortunate Son,” Oberst attacks Bush’s actions and continued international war through song.

Each of these songs has been identified for a variety of different reasons. First, each of these songs is identified as a protest song. DiFranco sings about the events of 9/11 and what brought our country to that date in history, while Oberst protests the actions of George W. Bush as President. Stewart et.al. note, “When a social movement or social movement organization is in direct conflict with a specific person or group, songs may identify this devil…Some songs are devoted entirely to devils.” President Bush is the identifiable devil in each of these songs. Second, they were each among the first songs available to protest their specific event. DiFranco began performing her song right after 9/11 live in concert before it was even completely written. Oberst’s song was one of the first available after the invasion of Iraq.

Lastly, I believe they each hold significance in terms of their feminist perspectives. DiFranco is a self-identified feminist and a number of her previously recorded songs deal explicitly with feminist issues. Oberst has not self-identified as feminist but I hope to advance the study of feminist rhetoric by explicating his ideas as feminist. As Rodnitsky argues, “women folk singers who did not explicitly identify with feminism, such as Joan Baez, Judy Collins and Malvina Reynolds, were excellent feminist role models throughout their careers.” I do not believe Oberst or other musicians need to (self-)identify as feminist in order to uphold feminist ideals.

At the completion of this study I will have put consciousness raising as it works in Third Wave feminism through mediated constructs into conversation with Maurice Charland’s conception of constitutive rhetoric. The intersection between these two concepts remains under-theorized. This study will then contribute to rhetorical studies a means by which audiences can
be examined not only as traditionally constituted in rhetorical terms but also, in feminist terms as having been made aware through consciousness raising.


2 Feminazi is a term popularized by Limbaugh via his radio show which I was most exposed to in the mid-to-late 1990s. It is used as a pejorative term representing feminists. It was used mainly on the program to characterize those feminists seen as intolerant of conservative views and values, specifically abortion. More information on Limbaugh and the feminazis can be found at: http://mediamatters.org/items/200601060006.


8 Irvine and Kirkpatrick, 273.


13 Bailey, 21.


15 Bailey, 20.

16 Irvine and Kirkpatrick, 273.


19 Bailey, 20.


21 DeChaine, 90.

22 DeChaine, 82.

23 Francesconi, 37.


25 Bailey, 23.


27 Grossberg, 51.


30 Thomas, 260.
31 Thomas, 264.
33 Irvine and Kirkpatrick, 273.
35 Stewart et al., 200-201.
36 Stewart et al., 221.
37 Stewart et al., 216.
38 Mohrmann and Scott, 156, suggest protest music is “confined to the reinforcement of existing predispositions.”
43 Lont, 242.
44 Lont, 242.
45 Lont, 245. By the late 1980s Olivia Records could no longer support itself as a record label. Olivia Records began a lesbian cruise line called simply Olivia. Since that time they have also expanded to include tourism and travel in addition to cruises. Their website is available at www.olivia.com. The other labels have all folded.
46 Lont, 246.


By mundane I mean daily life experiences and representations. For a sampling of these studies see note 51 especially regarding representations of women on television and other media.


Berkman, 146.


Howlett, Appendix II.


Richards, 113.


Richards, 113.


Alonso, 11.


Slattery and Garner, 440.

Slattery and Garner, 440.


Ruby, 179.


Ruby, 178-179.

Ruby, 177.

Byerly, 291.


Carol Tavris, *The Mismeasure of Woman: Why Women are Not the Better Sex, the Inferior Sex, or the Opposite Sex*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 78-79.

Tavris, 308-309.


Byerly, 291.


Given the nature of the sentiments expressed by the Dixie Chicks in 2003 there are bands that would have been able (expected) to give those types of comments with little or no backlash. If a band like Rage Against the Machine had made these comments it would have been just another day at the office. The backlash against the Chicks is significant not just in that it happened with such fervor but also that today comments of an anti-Bush nature are significantly more common. Their comments opened a space for dissent even in the backlash. Today that backlash is conspicuous in its absence.

99 Doxtader, 337.


101 Ivie, 2.

102 Ivie, 2.

103 Ivie, 6.

104 Ivie, 2.

105 Doxtader, 337.

106 Ivie, 2.


108 Shiffrin, 93.

109 Doxtader, 357.

110 Doxtader, 358.

111 Doxtader, 358.

112 Doxtader, 357.


114 Cox, 262.

115 Ivie, 4.

116 Ivie, 4-5.


118 Shiffrin, xii.

119 Stewart et.al., 210.

120 Rodnitsky, 19-20.
Chapter 1

It’s All “Self Evident”:
The Rhetoric of Dissent and Consciousness Raising
in Feminist Protest Music

In the days (and years) since the attacks of September 11, 2001, protest music has regained status on the American songscape in ways reminiscent of the Vietnam era. There are a number of new protest songs on the market today that represent a variety of genres and attitudes. Artists and groups as diverse as Pearl Jam, Public Enemy, Kimya Dawson, and Tori Amos have released songs that oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan along with President Bush’s continued insistence that the war on terrorism is legitimate. In questioning U.S. foreign policy and involvement in international warfare these songs present a point-of-view to the listeners which is different from that of the government itself as well as conservative media outlets. By presenting their differing opinions these artists not only question the war but also give their listeners the opportunity to interrogate and formulate their individual belief systems in ways that are not presented as viable by other media sources.

Protest music is not constrained to speaking against war. There are many different protest songs across the musical spectrum that call into question a number of different societal ills. Consider Billy Joel’s “Allentown” which questions labor practices and the job economy or “There is Power in a Union” by Billy Bragg which clearly promotes labor unions. There are a number of different songs protesting racial inequality such as “Hurricane” by Bob Dylan and “Society’s Child” by Janis Ian. Other songs rose out of the arms race protesting the use of nuclear weapons including “99 Luftballons” by Nena and “A Hard Rains A-Gonna Fall” by Bob Dylan. There are even songs that protest American consumerism and materialism. Malvina
Reynolds’ song “Little Boxes” remains a popular example of a song that actively dissents against materialism; it has recently been covered by both Death Cab for Cutie and The Shins. “Rockin’ in the Free World” by Neil Young is another example of music that contests consumerism. What these songs have in common is that they each perform dissent in their own specific way even though they are not specifically directed at war. Recall that Steven H. Shiffrin defines dissent as, “speech that criticizes existing customs, habits, traditions, institutions, or authorities.”² Each of these examples from – unionization to consumerism – represent one of the facets that Shiffrin lists and these songs are specifically “speech that criticizes.”

One viable outlet for dissent is consciousness raising. Karlyn Kohrs Cambell notes that in consciousness raising, “[i]ndividuals are encouraged to dissent, to find their own truths.”³ Rising out of Second Wave feminism, Campbell defines consciousness raising (alternately consciousness-raising and CR) as “meetings of small, leaderless groups in which each person is encouraged to express her personal feelings and experiences.”⁴ Campbell explains that each member of the group is understood as an expert and an equal in relation to every other member. The goal of consciousness raising according to Campbell is “to make the personal political: to create awareness (through shared experiences) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared, a result of their position as women.”⁵ As will be explained later, the Second Wave conception of consciousness raising as a small-group activity gave way to consciousness raising in mediated form with the onset of the Third Wave in the 1990s. In its mediated form, consciousness raising is now performed on television, in movies, and through music. One visible way in which consciousness raising is carried out today is through anti-war protest music. Songs like “Dear Mr. President” by Pink, “Holiday” by Green
Day, and “Annihilation” by A Perfect Circle do the work of consciousness raising by drawing attention to the reality that one's personal feelings about the war are not isolated or unique.

In order to share her voice and feelings about the attacks of 9/11 Ani DiFranco wrote the song/spoken-word poem “Self Evident” (lyrics in Appendix A). This is a song that honors the victims of 9/11 while reminding us that America itself was not exactly an innocent party in the chain of events leading up to the attacks. DiFranco felt so strongly about this particular song that she began performing it onstage before it was completely written. While it is atypical for most artists to perform a song which has not been fully produced, DiFranco explains she could not hold it back any longer stating:

That was more of a public process than usual, because of my urgency to speak to the political climate around us all in those early days last fall [2001]. We went on tour in September, when everyone else was canceling tours, and there was a palpable energy everywhere I went, everyone thinking of the same thing, searching for alternative voices beyond the t.v. propaganda and the deflating messages from the powers that be. So I began speaking that poem before I’d memorized it, before I’d even finished writing it. I was reading onstage, which is something I almost never do, because I couldn’t travel around in this climate and work on it privately any longer. I felt that since this was something we were all working on together as a nation, I could be a little less introverted with my process.6

In performing “Self Evident,” DiFranco became one of the few dissenting voices on the songscape in 2001. Mediated representation of the events of 9/11 was nearly homogenous in the months following the attacks. DiFranco worked to represent the voices silenced by the mainstream media. In the process of creating and perfecting the song, DiFranco was touring
through New York City. She had the opportunity to play the song and the enormity of it all hit her while performing for those most affected by the attacks.

It was one of the most profound experiences I’ve ever had on stage; I launched into it because there it was on my set list, and about 3 seconds in, panic just hit me, like how dare I? Who knows who these people in this audience are, what happened to them that day, or whom they lost? And sure enough, halfway through I could hear sobbing from the back of the upper balcony in that huge, glorious, cavernous, beautiful, silent room. The emotion that I asked us all to share was extremely cathartic and terrifying — and yet empowering.7

“Self Evident” was released in 2002 on the album So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter. The version on the compilation was recorded live at a concert in Michigan. DiFranco finds gratification in the recording saying, “My favorite thing about the recording is hearing the audience respond to what’s being said; it’s so affirming for me to realize how many of us agree on certain things that are not represented in the media.”8 DiFranco’s own sentiments about her recording are what make “Self Evident” an interesting topic of study. She finds herself speaking to and for a group of people who have not heard their own voices represented in the media; her audience is able to come together to share sentiments which cannot be found in other parts of the culture. This moment and these shared sentiments are a critical element in the process of consciousness raising. As explained earlier, consciousness raising was developed by Second Wave feminists as a means to help women come to understand that their personal discontents were actually symptomatic of large-scale oppression. DiFranco’s audience has the opportunity to hear an underrepresented point of view and to come to understand it as their own, their
consciousness is raised as they learn that they are not the only ones who have been seeking alternative perspectives following 9/11.

My purpose in this chapter is to analyze the ways in which Ani DiFranco’s song/poem “Self Evident” works in the consciousness raising process. Just as “feminism” has been reconstituted in recent years, so too has consciousness raising. Instead of adhering to its Second Wave conception as a small-group process, consciousness raising in the Third Wave has morphed into a process of identification and self-persuasion often accomplished through mediated contexts. “Self Evident” raises consciousness in part because it represents opinions not found in the mainstream media, but also because it simultaneously deals with traditionally feminist topics such as human rights, political corruption, and ecology. The song is especially fitting for this analysis because it was one of the first protest songs on the market post-9/11. The fact that DiFranco continued to tour and perform it directly in the aftermath of the attacks makes it a significant cultural marker. My argument begins with a description of consciousness raising and the differences between its Second and Third Wave incarnations. Then, I examine how feminist musicians, such as those of the Riot Grrrl movement, helped shape Third Wave feminism through mediated consciousness raising. Finally, I analyze “Self Evident” and explicate the variety of ways in which it serves as a potential tool for consciousness raising. In doing so I also articulate how this song and others like it work as feminist rhetorics of dissent to raise the consciousness of diverse audiences.

The Evolution of Consciousness Raising

Developed by Second Wave feminists of the 1960s and 1970s, consciousness raising was a way for women to share their experiences with others in an effort to understand the nature of their oppression. Consciousness raising typically took place in a small group setting in a
member’s home or an alternate third-space. In their book, *Catching a Wave*, Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier contend:

[C]onsciousness-raising (CR) groups offered a space for women to discuss their life experiences and feelings. What women often discovered in these groups was that problems that they thought were particular to them were shared by many others and were, in fact, part of a larger system of sexist practices.\(^9\)

In sharing their stories and frustrations and questioning the status quo, Susan Oliver argues that “women began to see their condition through their own eyes.”\(^10\) In understanding the true nature of their condition, women were finally able to see “that their experiences of oppression had deeper cultural, social, and economic causes. Their personal experiences were rooted in the political society created and run by men: Therefore, the personal is political.”\(^11\) Consciousness raising groups sprouted up all over the nation and even around the world enabling women by helping them to understand that their frustrations and oppression were systemic. In carrying this main theme from group to group, Lisa Marie Hogeland argues that “CR was a starting point for feminism, a place from which to begin doing more public, activist organizing, rather than an end in itself or an investigative model.”\(^12\) As a decentralized part of the feminist movement, consciousness raising took different forms that varied from group to group and city to city. The main purpose of sharing experiences and identifying oppression remained constant through most groups, the secondary purpose of political activism was not as prevalent. Writing from the height of the consciousness raising movement in 1973, James W. Chesebro, John F. Cragan, and Patricia McCullough indicated its central purpose:

As a political interaction, the primary effort of the small group is to determine the nature and causes of the group’s “oppression” and to provide the foundation for “revolutionary
acts to eliminate oppression.” Therefore, consciousness raising sessions often create new political values.13

While not all local consciousness raising groups mobilized their cause for political gain, Dicker and Piepmeier conclude that the movement was successful in “providing not only a feminist awakening but also a means to bridge the personal and the political.”14

In terms of the larger purpose and goals of the Waves themselves, the Second Wave of American feminism is generally acknowledged as the resurgence of feminist awareness and activism during the 1960s and 1970s. According to Dicker and Piepmeier, the overriding goal was to provide equal rights for women. These rights included legal access to abortion, equal opportunity for education and employment, the persistence in passing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), and the end of all violence against women.15 The Second Wave was largely driven by white middle-to-upper class straight women. Little acknowledgement was given to women of color, poor women, or lesbians. The Third Wave, first coined and identified in 1992, works to correct that oversight. In terms of its goals, according to Dicker and Piepmeier, the Third Wave is typically understood as the resurgence of the same goals of the Second Wave but in a manner more accommodating to those of diverse backgrounds.16

The relationship between the Second and Third Waves has not always been harmonious. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, co-authors of Manifesta, point out that the older and younger generations do not always co-exist peacefully. Instead, they say, “[t]he clash between a new generation defining its voice and an older one remembering losing its voice makes the feminist movement feel as if it is at cross-purposes.”17 Some Third Wavers have problems acknowledging the gains made by their foremothers and forget that “older feminists did not die with the ERA and have kept right on doing important work.”18 At the same time some older
Second Wavers have had problems giving up their positions of authority and letting the younger generation take the helm. Baumgardner and Richards note, “Second Wavers often deny that they could benefit from younger feminists’ knowledge and experience.”19 These tensions are constantly being re-hashed and worked out for the greater good of the whole, but they are still evident in the Waves today.

Even in spite of the strain that exists among older and younger generations of feminists, consciousness raising has bridged the gap between the Waves. By the late 1970s and 1980s, organized consciousness raising groups faded from the scene but the need for consciousness raising never went away. With the advent of a new Wave in the early 1990s, Kristina Sheryl Wong essentially equates the main purpose of Third Wave feminism with the goals of consciousness raising:

Third wave feminism is about embracing individual experience and making personal stories political. First and second wave feminisms sought to empower women as a united front. Although they offered a political voice for women as a whole, they didn’t acknowledge the varying agendas and experiences of individual women.20

Drawing the lines of Third Wave feminism so close to those of consciousness raising indicates a shift in thinking not only in terms of the Wave movement but also in terms of the goals and purposes of consciousness raising. In dealing with a new generation of feminists, the focus and vehicle of consciousness raising also changed. While the greatest majority of consciousness raising groups have disbanded, consciousness raising is still practiced today; it just uses vehicles unfamiliar to the earlier movement. Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar point out the potential of popular culture identifying it as “a viable forum for third wave feminist consciousness raising. Women are increasingly visible in television, film, music, and other media
Increasing visibility has afforded young women the opportunity to come to respect and admire feminist actors and activists. Sowards and Renegar explicate the ways in which consciousness raising has morphed to suit its new audience:

One of the ways in which third wave consciousness-raising has adapted to the changing cultural climate is that it seeks to address larger and more public audiences. In addition to traditional private sphere settings, consciousness-raising now occurs in semi-public settings, such as classrooms, or in mass media venues, such as anthologies and books that are widely available. Third wave feminists have responded to the rhetorical exigencies of their time through writing and story telling, as a way to explain how feminism has succeeded in creating greater opportunities for women, but also observing that gender inequities still exist.

The need to reach larger and more public audiences is not something consciousness raising could accomplish under the old small-group model. In its older incarnations, consciousness raising was limited to the perspectives of a few members in the limited amount of time and space they were able to meet and discuss their issues; now consciousness raising methods are used in mediated and public contexts with the ability to reach large audiences. Today, consciousness raising reaches individuals in books, stories, poems, television, movies, and song.

The Third Wave has made it possible for consciousness raising to recognizably take place through the performance of protest music. In the new model, consciousness raising is also potentially much more accessible as participants are not limited by time and space; they can read, listen to, or watch mediated consciousness raising as their individual schedules allow. Sowards and Renegar argue that this feature of Third Wave consciousness raising “increases the flexibility of consciousness-raising and emphasizes the individual nature of consciousness
shifts. The availability of mediated texts, specifically protest songs, has made it possible for consciousness raising to take place just as effectively on the subway through an MP3 player during rush hour as sitting in a coffee shop listening to open mic night. No longer is consciousness raising constrained to a few opinions expressed in a limited time during a planned meeting which may or may not conflict with individual schedules.

Sowars and Renegar also place a lot of importance on the potential for “self-dialogue and persuasion” by indicating that those two features can happen to a much greater extent in Third Wave consciousness raising than in small-group sessions. In listening to protest music, individuals can decide for themselves whether or not they agree with the lyrical content. Even if they initially disagree there is space for self-persuasion in a non-judgmental and unforced environment. While they may engage in dialogue with other listeners or audience members, they are given the space to engage in self-dialogue and to consider their own opinions. Whereas consciousness raising group members might have pushed the individual to agree with their points of view, an artist in a mediated format can only sing. This empowers the individual as they are allowed to make their own decisions and change their mind and view points accordingly.

While some may contend that face-to-face interaction is a necessary component for consciousness raising to effectively take place, it is clear that consciousness raising can be successful even without interaction. Even though consciousness raising was initially grounded in group sessions, Hogeland points out that it was quickly reinvented in the form of consciousness raising novels in the 1970s. Given the link to consciousness raising novels, the Third Wave mediated context is an easy bridge to see. Some purists may still prefer the small group interface but there has clearly been a shift in the ways in which consciousness raising is accomplished in
the Third Wave. The experience and interactions of Third Wave consciousness raising are different but the ends are similar; the recognition of systemic sexism and discrimination.

Others may challenge consciousness raising in its mediated format because media consumption is closely tied to consumerism. In this sense it appears simple to link the consumption of mediated consciousness raising with the consumption of any other good. I attest though, that Third Wave consciousness raising is not equitable to buying a new pair of shoes or jeans even though these products are roughly equitable to the price of a CD and a concert ticket respectively. First, not all mediated consciousness raising requires an actual purchase. It is possible in some cases to hear these songs played on the radio, to catch a free performance in a park or coffee shop, or to plunder a friend’s music cache. Even when it becomes necessary to purchase CDs, concert tickets, or MP3 downloads to gain access to protest songs in mediated versions this act is different from adding another piece to a wardrobe or buying office supplies. Buying mute consumer goods does not allow for the possibility of heightening political awareness or becoming more in tune with one’s own perception of reality, both of which are allowed for in mediated consciousness raising. Finally, mediated consciousness raising, even though it sometimes requires a cash expenditure is vital to the self-persuasion process. While buying a new pair of jeans may persuade the consumer to purchase more of the same brand, buying protest music can lead a listener to understand that they have actually obtained a new political ideology. These two processes are linked only by the initial cash outlay.

Sowards and Renegar contend, “many of these feminist-minded audiences are able to focus on messages of empowerment, while simultaneously rejecting messages of sexualization or objectification. Consciousness-raising, then, provides a critical framework where audiences problematize texts rather than passively accept their messages.”27 What the individual does with
their newfound (or reinforced) worldview is up to them; thus, Third Wave consciousness raising is not as closely tied to activism as was the Second Wave. Instead, Sowards and Renegar explain:

[T]hird wave feminists share their stories, listen to others' stories, consume popular culture in ways that they find empowering, and create new vocabularies to enhance their own lives, but these activities do not necessarily lead to social activism in its traditional forms. While many third wave feminists openly embrace various forms of activism, they do not want to force individuals to take an activist stance or assume that certain forms of activism are appropriate for all people.28

Baumgardner and Richards see a need for Third Wave consciousness raising based on their observation that “[m]any young women are pre-consciousness and haven’t yet had the opportunity to examine the politics of their own lives. They are pre-click, or maybe even pre-sexism in their own lives.”29 Music is one effective vehicle for reaching young girls and women who have not yet been exposed to feminism. Erin Harde writes of her personal experience with music; “Because pop music informs the thinking of so many girls and women, I would argue that it is an essential text in this discussion of feminism.”30 In expanding Harde’s vision beyond pop music, Mary E. Rohlfing writes, “Some forms of popular culture products, especially genres of rock ‘n’ roll, do suggest means by which its fans may be liberated from conditions of class, race, and gender oppression.”31 By understanding and being exposed to the world through music, women are given the opportunity to interrogate their own experiences with oppression and discrimination and to question their political status. The process of developing a feminist identity can be a difficult and confusing process. Wong explains how popular culture can assist young feminists in their process of identification:
The concept of feminism has become so academic that only a select few understand its new meaning. In spite of this, feminist politics can be shared with the world if it is carefully disguised in the mass media. Pop culture provides an effective vehicle to carry the self-celebrating concepts of third wave feminism.32 Sowards and Renegar agree that young women can come to consciousness through popular culture and that they are empowered by female role models. They also argue that young feminists “become aware of their own oppression and the possibilities for emancipation through the consumption of popular culture.”33 This argument indicates that the “click” Baumgardner and Richards found lacking in some women can be found in popular culture.

The Riot Grrrl Movement

The Riot Grrrl (alternately Riot Grrl) movement in music employed the Third Wave mediated conception of consciousness raising. Spawned in the Pacific Northwest, the Riot Grrrl (girl spelled with a growl instead of an “i”)34 movement was the girl-dominated alternative rock scene which in many ways was representative of the early portion of the Third Wave. Lisa B. Rundle describes the Riot Grrrl movement as “in-your-face, pull-no-punches, do-something-about-it, space-claiming, brutally honest, and anti-all-kinds-of-oppression and, as if you needed more bang for your feminist buck, a screaming-out-loud kind of fun.”35 The flagship Riot Grrrl band was Bikini Kill led by Kathleen Hanna, while the “most successful and visible of the girl-powered bands” was Hole, headed by Courtney Love.36 Other Riot Grrrl bands include: Babes in Toyland, Bratmobile, Cold Cold Hearts, L7, The Macrobiotic Boat, 7 Year Bitch, The Third Sex, and Sleater-Kinney. Hanna has denied claims that she is the founder of the Riot Grrrl movement but says,
[T]he feminism espoused by that movement is very much in sync with her own—one that builds awareness from the personal experiences of oppression and unfairness that every young woman goes through and turns that awareness into action. In a way, Riot Grrrl meetings were like consciousness-raising sessions updated for the 1990s—and so were Bikini Kill shows, “I always saw performing as an advertisement for feminist activity.”37 Those “advertisements” generally came packaged in scream-delivered songs dealing with pertinent social issues such as “incest, child abuse, abortion, eating disorders, harassment.”38 In hearing songs about these touchy and often ignored topics, listeners found common ground with performers and other audience members while realizing they were not alone. In listening, performing and identifying with the Riot Grrrl movement, “Riot grrrls had apparently appropriated characteristics usually reserved for men and boys, they were loud, aggressive, angry and assertive. A loud woman was a powerful one, as the riot grrrl slogan said.”39 Riot Grrrls refused to play by the rules as they delivered their often personal and in-your-face messages to whoever would listen.

In shirking the accepted rules of feminine decorum in song, so did the Riot Grrrls refuse modesty in dress and presentation. Riot Grrrls found a number of ways to express themselves through dress. Love, for instance, would often perform in tattered baby-doll dresses with smeared-makeup and tangled hair. Others would dress in a hypersexualized manner that bucked respectability, making a spectacle of their own sexuality. Christina Kelly, editor of Sassy magazine in the early 1990s commented on the changing nature of feminism at the time reporting that Riot Grrrls, “don’t want to be seen as objects, but at the same time, they’re not afraid to use it as a power thing. Women are valued as sexual objects, so the riot grrrls are going to go ahead and take that and use it to get power.”40
In challenging the norm and refusing to conform to traditional expectations, the Riot Grrrls were, according to Farai Chideya, Melissa Rossi, and Dogen Hannah, attempting to, “make the world safe for their kind of girlhood: sexy, assertive and loud.” This was accomplished through a number of different media; music was not the only conduit. Also employed were websites, listservs, and zines (home/handmade pamphlets which were reproduced and distributed by hand). Susan Hopkins notes that these writings were “frequently delivered dark personal revelations about incest, rape, abuse, pain anger and self-loathing.” Hogeland argues, “these various sites of grrrl culture—web sites, music, ‘zines—offer to young women much the same kind of potential consciousness raising as did the consciousness raising novel of the 1970s.” Hogeland also links the Riot Grrrls with Second Wave feminism pointing out their “shared attitude of defiance; the lyrics of groups like Bikini Kill and the rhetoric of some web sites echo—sometimes eerily—the style of second-wave manifestos, the hyperbole of SCUM or the theatricality of WITCH.” The Riot Grrrls of the Third Wave had learned from their foremothers that the movement would get more visibility from blatant defiance than quiet attempts at reform. Baumgardner and Richards clarify the genealogy of feminism between the Second and Third Waves:

For the generation that reared the Third Wave, not only was feminism apparent in the politics of the time but politics was truly the culture of the time—Kennedy, the Vietnam War, civil rights, and women’s rights. For the Third Wave, politics was superseded by culture—punk rock, hip-hop, zines, products, consumerism, and the Internet. Young women in the early nineties who were breaking out of the “established” movement weren’t just rebelling; they were growing up and beginning to take responsibility for their lives and their feminism.
While many of the alternative-rock girl bands of the Riot Grrrl movement have broken up, stopped recording, or fallen out of the limelight, the potential for music to heighten feminist understanding in young girls and women remains. The legacy of the Riot Grrrls are the legions of women who head their own bands or play “boys” instruments like guitars and drum sets – modes of expression that constitute a form of consciousness raising. Even today, Baumgardner and Richards point to the hand music has in feminism speculating: “Some might say that Ani DiFranco magnetized girls toward feminism with her one-woman record label and incredibly loyal grassroots following.” Consciousness raising through music was one of the earliest and defining features of Third Wave feminism and still remains important today as protest music fills the songscape and Americans attempt to understand the culture of war in which they live.

Consciousness Raising through “Self Evident”

Ani DiFranco’s spoken word song/poem “Self Evident,” is a nine minute ten second memorial to the events of September 11, 2001 including lead up events and aftermath. The significance of a song about 9/11 that runs 9:10 is not lost. That DiFranco took the song just to the cusp of 9:11 but stopped short seems to indicate a willingness to stop the world just before disaster happens. It is also possible that 9:10 is indicative of the time in the morning on 9/11 when DiFranco was alerted to the events unfolding in New York City. The first plane had struck the north tower almost 25 minutes before and news was traveling fast. She alludes to answering the phone at 9:10 on 9/11 and then watching the towers fall. In a song/poem of this nature, time is flexible and she chose to end, or to record and disseminate a version of the song which ended, just before the tragic 9:11.

Coming in at twice the length of a typical pop song and unhampered by a repeated chorus, “Self Evident” covers a lot of ground in a systematic, yet poetic fashion. While there are
a number of ways to evaluate and critique “Self Evident,” I will consider the song as a consciousness raising protest anthem. There are five major themes running through this song that I consider to be aimed at consciousness raising. These themes are: honor the victims, America is not a victim, other social/feminist issues such as abortion rights and ecology, call for peace, and finally a call to action/activism. In discussing these themes I will consider the ways in which they are used throughout the song as well as the political/cultural landscape that likely led to their inclusion.

*Honoring the Victims*

The first main theme in “Self Evident” is the need to honor the victims of 9/11. DiFranco repeatedly refers to them as “poems.” In the opening lines she sings, “us people are just poems/we’re 90% metaphor.” Throughout the rest of the song she “toasts” the “whiskey of eternity” to these poems and others as she tells the story of 9/11. Again at the very end of the song DiFranco reminds us of the “poem” metaphor singing, “3000 some poems disguised as people,” in a clear allusion to the people who died that day. Also in honoring the victims, DiFranco uses “us,” “we,” and “all” to equate the living with the victims, making their experience common to us all and putting us in their shoes. This is what Kenneth Burke would consider a rhetoric of identification.47 She does this most explicitly singing,

\[
\text{cuz we were all on time for work that day}
\]

\[
\text{we all boarded that plane for to fly}
\]

and then while the fires were raging

\[
\text{we all climbed up on the windowsill}
\]

and then \textbf{we all} held hands

and jumped into the sky
DiFranco puts us in the victims place by juxtaposing the common acts of showing up on time for work and traveling via plane with the horrible ends that met people who did those simple and routine actions on 9/11. She puts us in their place and asks us to feel what it was like to be forced to make a choice between burning and jumping. As a final offering to the victims, DiFranco sings that it is her job as well as ours “to make sure they didn’t die in vain” as “pawns/in some asshole’s passion play.”

*America is Not a Victim*

A second major consciousness raising theme developed around the idea that while there were many human victims on 9/11, America itself was not one of those victims. DiFranco first alludes to America as a perpetrator singing, “on the day that america/fell to its knees/after strutting around for a century/without saying thank you/or please.” These lines are in reference to any number of American actions which do not reflect a kind and generous world leader.\(^{48}\) Put simply, this stanza reminds us that the U.S. government and its corporate enterprises are not necessarily nice to the people and nations with which they do business. Singing in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, DiFranco gives the audience some perspective sorely lacking in the mainstream media. While her audience was likely aware of U.S. policy transgressions (there have been a number of them) what is important is that she called their attention back to them when no one in the mainstream media was willing to do so. This is a specifically consciousness raising tactic because it reminds the listeners that these problems are systemic. There is a century’s worth of history that points to the American misconduct at home and abroad.

Having spent so much time taking what it wanted with little regard to the needs of others, America had been perpetrating violence around the world for a long time, and DiFranco asks us to consider 9/11 as retribution for all of those actions, not as unprovoked terror. She does this
specifically by singing, “even as the blue smoke of our lesson in retribution/is still hanging in the air.” This explicitly suggests that the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated as retribution for other American injustices. To make this point clearer, DiFranco sings later in the song that it is time to, “get our government to pull its big dick out of the sand/of someone else’s desert.” This is an allusion to the major U.S. international oil interests. The “big dick” simultaneously represents the oil derrick that rips the oil from the earth and the power the U.S. exerts in those foreign nations. In raping the land of oil and refusing to accept the sovereignty of oil producing countries, perhaps the U.S. has positioned itself for retribution or violence in kind. The practice of buying or extracting foreign oil for American consumption is a taken-for-granted arrangement that removes American citizens from the daily realities of those who live in oil producing nations. Sometimes we forget that the gas we buy at the pump has a history and has traveled sometimes around the globe to reach our cars. Driving is an American institution that depends on what Jerald Richards calls “harm-doing” abroad. As a part of our culture and society we rarely stop to think about the ways in which our daily practices impact not only the earth but also individuals around the globe. DiFranco draws attention to our forgetfulness and implicates us as individuals who are complicit conspirators. Therefore not only is it our fault that we continue to depend on foreign oil but as conspirators it is also in our power to end the drilling. This move is a consciousness raising shock. Typically consciousness raising is a vehicle to point out the ways in which individual oppression is the result of the patriarchy. Here DiFranco implicates oil users as part of the larger system of oppression. In terms of consciousness raising she has pulled the wool off of the eyes of American oil buyers and pointed out their own transgressions.

DiFranco also suggests that America was not the victim on 9/11 because we had been attacked before and knew that another attack was imminent. She reminds us of the 1993 attack
on the World Trade Center singing, “remember the first time around?/the bomb?/the ryder truck?/the parking garage?/the princess that didn’t even feel the pea?” While that attack was less devastating, it was an attack on the same landmark with the same intentions. She sings that she would like to, “let the record show/that the FBI was all over that case/that the plot was obvious and in everybody’s face.” That the plot was “obvious” and that the FBI seemed to be on the case would suggest that continued surveillance and monitoring would prevent or intercept future attacks. In reality, DiFranco suggests that the CIA, which she likens to the KGB, used that first attack to commit “countless crimes against humanity/with this kind of eventuality/as its excuse/for abuse after expensive abuse/and it didn’t have a clue.” Not having a “clue” seems to be either an accusation of ineptitude after all the time and money spent investigating the first attack or as a suggestion that really the CIA was aware of the plot to attack again in 2001. This theme may be one of the harder ones to swallow, but it certainly serves the purpose as a consciousness raising element. What DiFranco has asked her audience to understand here is that not only is the government responsible for wide scale oppression which reaches across the globe and down to each individual, but it was also unable to keep American civilians safe even though there had been previous attacks of a similar nature. Even though there were intense KGB-like investigations after the 1993 bombing, the government was not able to maintain security at home. These attacks also happened in spite of White House intelligence that indicated the likelihood of attacks by al-Qaeda. The Bush administration had been presented with a memo titled “Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the U.S.” Even in light of such specificity, Condoleezza Rice maintained, at least through 2004, that there was nothing the government could have done to predict or prevent the terrorist actions of 9/11.\textsuperscript{50} This consciousness raising tactic is effective in that it demonizes the government from two directions. In the past,
consciousness raising participants recognized the government as representative of the patriarchy and as the delivery system for oppression but it had reasonably upheld its duty to keep American lives safe from invasion. On 9/11 it failed. In the days immediately after 9/11 it was difficult to gain enough perspective to see that possibly the attacks were not unprovoked. While acts of terrorism like those of 9/11 can never be justified, DiFranco made it clear that she believes the U.S. needs to be more aware of the international impact of its in/actions.

As further argument that America was not the victim in these attacks, DiFranco also points out instances of injustice happening at home. One of the major lapses of justice that DiFranco points to is the 2000 presidential election. She begins by calling President George W. Bush, a “blue blood royal son/who stole the oval office and that phony election.” In reference to Bob Dylan’s song “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” and its often imitated line “you don’t need a weather man/to know which way the wind blows,” DiFranco continues, “it don’t take a weatherman/to look around and see the weather/jeb said he’d deliver florida, folks/and boy did he ever.” Her disdain for Bush is clear, but the larger implication is that if America perpetrates this kind of electoral violence on its own citizens, there is no stopping others who wish to also violate the nation. In a continuation of the previous lyrics, DiFranco then adeptly appropriates the Declaration of Independence and mirrors its words back to the nation singing, “and we hold these truths to be self evident: “#1 george w. bush is not president/#2 america is not a true democracy/#3 the media is not fooling me.” These are some of the harshest and most blatant lyrics in the entire song and the live audience on the recording reacts wildly in favor. In these lyrics DiFranco’s attitude of dissent becomes clearer than at any other point in the song. Not only has she directed her musical ire at President Bush as an authority but also at the American institutions of democracy and the media. In doing so she has enacted what Robert Ivie calls “a
key ingredient of responsible politics.” Remember that dissent is a democratic right and here DiFranco exercises that right even to the point of calling into question America’s most recognizable institutions.

Social and Feminist Issues

Even in this protest-themed song, DiFranco includes other topics which are themed as social or feminist issues. One that she addresses throughout is the need to decrease reliance on fossil fuels. She asks us to “give the big oil companies the finger finally” and to find other sources of energy at the same time we reduce our overall need. She suggests that we return to train travel as a way to reconnect with the inner-portion of our nation and to lead simpler, less hectic and demanding lifestyles. She asks that we “vow to get off this sauce [oil],” stop utilizing costly and polluting commuter planes and find alternatives. Not only is she alluding to a need to conserve but also to “clean the streets/and clear the air.” These are social issues but also feminist issues as they relate directly to ecology and the need to protect and preserve Earth’s limited resources. She is, in effect, calling for environmental peace as well. In asking her listeners to reduce their dependence on oil she has simultaneously asked them to stop perpetuating the ecological violence of oil drilling and use; the understood outcome of both is pollution.

The theme of ecology also appears as she sings, “here’s a toast to the folks living on the pine ridge reservation/under the stone cold gaze of mt. rushmore.” The issue here is ecological in that much of area including and surrounding Pine Ridge has been deemed a National Sacrifice Area. This classification is largely due to the extent of water and soil pollution caused by extensive uranium mining and military testing. Levels of radioactivity in the area are several times those medically recommended and the groundwater contains lead and other contaminants which are especially harmful to developing fetuses, children, and the elderly. In addition to the
ecological issues at Pine Ridge, these lines also exemplify the ways in which the government has historically perpetrated violence on the Native American population throughout the nation. Violence in terms of resettlement, gross negligence, forceful occupation, and Americanization are only a few of the ways that the government has contributed to or wholly created the problems Native Americans face today.

In the presence of institutionalized violence, in Richards’ terms, there cannot be peace. DiFranco only briefly mentions Pine Ridge but in so doing she evokes not only the toxic conditions of the present but also the long history of government sanctioned Native American oppression. In hearing this song a listener’s consciousness is not automatically raised. After careful consideration though, lyrics like these could well inspire the “click” of understanding that Baumgardner and Richards see as a vital component of not only consciousness raising but also feminist understanding.

Another major feminist and social issue DiFranco tackles in “Self Evident” is abortion. She sings: “here’s a toast to all those nurses and doctors/who daily provide women with a choice/who stand down a threat the size of oklahoma city/just to listen to a young woman’s voice.” Her largely pro-choice audience again reacts wildly in favor of these sentiments in the live version of this song. As before, just mentioning the ongoing social and political struggle over abortion does not immediately raise consciousness. What it does do though, is to create a space in which listeners can engage with her lyrically to understand their own personal relationship with abortion, feminism, and their own bodies. Bringing up the issue of abortion has also worked to remind the audience that even in the face of attacks there are still battles over major social problems. She continually works to shed light on the concerns of those who have no
voice in times of peace but even less opportunity to speak out when there are other national issues of concern.

One final feminist and social issue that DiFranco addresses is capital punishment. She sings, “here’s a toast to all the folks on death row right now/awaiting the executioner’s guillotine.” DiFranco here speaks out against the death penalty which is a topic I find to be a feminist issue based on an ideology of peace. In working for the end to all violence, some feminists insist that women will only gain equal rights and status after all other forms of violence have been eradicated. Among the forms of violence that many feminists would like to see done away with is the institutionalized violence of capital punishment. As Carolyn M. Byerly writes, “women will never fully realize their rights until war and other forms of institutionalized violence is brought under control.”52 Regardless of whether audience members are for or against the death sentence, DiFranco effectively draws attention to a largely forgotten population with no voice and fewer rights.

The Need for Peace

The fourth major consciousness raising theme DiFranco addresses in “Self Evident” is the need for peace. Again, as a feminist issue, peace is a necessary status for women to gain an equal foothold. The majority of the violence that DiFranco calls specific attention to in “Self Evident” is institutional violence. Recall that Richards delineates many forms of institutional violence including, “sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and warism.”53 Richards also points out that this violence need not be inherently physical; he calls attention instead to “harm-doing.”54 This harm-doing can also take a number of different forms, many of which are difficult to identify because they are “integrated with and sanctioned by the customs, traditions, or laws of a society.”55 The song calls for peace in a number of ways already discussed. First, it calls for the
government to pull its “big dick” out of other people’s deserts. Again, this is symbolic both of the violence oil production perpetrates on the land but also the ways in which the U.S. government undermines the authority of oil producing nations. The song continuously calls for environmental peace, not only in ending oil drilling but also in utilizing train transport instead of flying, and in calling for cleaner air and streets.

DiFranco also points to the mainstream media as an accessory to the government’s plan to seek military revenge singing, you can “keep the propaganda/keep each and every tv/that’s been trying to convince me/to participate/in some prep school punk’s plan to perpetuate retribution.” These lyrics not only condemn the media as an accessory and suggest their compliance is corrupt they also implicate Bush as an over-privileged “punk” who blindly seeks revenge. This particular stanza also points out one of the main reasons DiFranco wrote this song; her opinions were not represented in the media and she wanted to put out an alternative voice for those who found themselves in the same situation. In doing so she is also raising consciousness; not all listeners would have necessarily sought out her music for its alternative message but could have used the song for self-persuasive ends. Toward the main theme of peace, these lyrics also suggest that there are other nonviolent options. DiFranco asks her audience to react to the events of 9/11 not through violence and retribution but by understanding our place in the world, picking up the pieces, and carrying on while recognizing we need to make a change in the way we all live and treat others. She never calls for more violence, only change through peace. While DiFranco could not have known we would enter into war with Iraq and would still be fighting seven years after the initial attacks, her song still resonates.
**Call to Action/Activism**

The final theme with implications for consciousness raising is a call to action or activism. Most of these issues have also already been discussed. DiFranco calls for action in asking us to make a serious attempt to reduce our reliance on oil. She suggests one way to do this is in utilizing mass transit, specifically trains instead of planes. Finding alternative energy solutions can come both in the form of action and activism. Whether we make small choices every day from the types of food we eat to the cars we drive or if we, as DiFranco suggests, “give the big oil companies the finger,” the potential for action exists. We are also asked to get the government out of other people’s deserts. This is not an issue that is likely to show up on a ballot, it requires more than action, it is a call for activism. She does not say specifically how we should go about convincing the government to withdraw from other nations, but reducing oil dependence would be a big first step. Finally, at the end of the song, DiFranco implored her audience “to make sure they didn’t die in vain.” She suggests ways to go about that through the main themes she addresses in the song. We need to honor those who lost their lives while remembering that America was not the victim. We need to work for a peaceful end to all conflicts and remember that whatever larger issues we are working toward there are always also less public matters like abortion and human rights. It is in the song’s culmination that the audience can come to see that in addition to memorializing the victims of 9/11, DiFranco has also presented an alternative vision for the future.

While “Self Evident” is certainly part of a larger social movement which calls for peace and an end to the military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, it also stands as a moment of political protest and dissent which is informed by DiFranco’s feminist ideology. More than that, it is an exemplary piece of consciousness raising material. DiFranco addresses major political
issues at the same time that she reminds her audience of other easily forgettable populations. In presenting what she knows is an alternative point-of-view, DiFranco provides her listening audience with the opportunity to seriously evaluate their own political, social, and feminist stances. For some audience members, this song and others like it, provide the “click” that Baumgardner and Richards find necessary to understanding ones perspective in the larger feminist movement. Portions of the audience may have never contemplated these issues in the way DiFranco presents them. Others may not have been aware of some of the topics she addresses, and this may have led some to do research and ask questions trying to find out why places like the Pine Ridge reservation were pertinent enough for DiFranco to sing about. Regardless of the listener’s background, “Self Evident” creates a space for self-dialogue which may lead to self-persuasion. This self-suasory act is vital to Third Wave mediated consciousness raising. As listeners come to understand the world in ways that are similar to or different from performers they create their own worldview and cultural identity. Songs like “Self Evident” allow for the possibility that some of those persuasive performances will lead listeners to understand their world through a feminist lens.

Speaking through her own feminist understanding of the world, DiFranco has not only provided an exemplar of consciousness raising through music, she has also actively performed dissent. She has done this by not only speaking out against the government and its institutions but also by insisting that her voice be heard through the fray of mainstream media. In so doing, this song exemplifies the possibilities for not only consciousness raising through music but also exhibits successful affirmation of the feminist ideology of nonviolence even while performing dissent. This case shows how protest music can be employed not only to represent the voices of
the artist and their listeners, but also to encourage listeners to interrogate their cultural and social understanding of the world.

1 Protest songs by each of these artists can be found on the compilation CD, *Body of War: Songs that Inspired an Iraq War Veteran*, March 14, 2008. Sire.
4 Cambell, 79.
5 Campbell, 79.
7 Ehmke.
8 Ehmke.
11 Oliver, 105.
14 Dicker and Piepmeier, 21.
15 Dicker and Piepmeier, 9.
16 Dicker and Piepmeier, 10.
18 Baumgardner and Richards, 220.
19 Baumgardner and Richards, 222.
22 Sowards and Renegar, 547.
23 Sowards and Renegar, 547.
24 Sowards and Renegar, 547.
25 Sowards and Renegar, 547.
26 Hogeland, passim.
27 Sowards and Renegar, 548.
28 Sowards and Renegar, 548.
29 Baumgardner and Richards, 84.
32 Wong, 296.
33 Sowards and Renegar, 543-544.


Hopkins, 12.


Chideya, Rossi and Hannah, 84.

Hopkins, 12.

Hogeland, 166.

The SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto was written by Valerie Solanas in 1967. It calls for “civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females” to “overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.” There is much emphasis throughout the document on the perceived worthlessness of men and the ways in which females and the planet would be better off without them. Hyperbole as described by Hogeland is also found throughout the document and is especially visible in statements such as “Women…don’t have penis envy; men have pussy envy,” and “…the male is an incomplete female.” The SCUM Manifesto has been reprinted in a variety of sources and is available online at: www.reactor-core.org/scum.html. WITCH is also an acronym, this time with a little flexibility. It is generally translated as the Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell, but is alternately known as Women Inspired to Tell their Collective History and Women Interested in Toppling Consumer Holidays among others. As a theater inspired group WITCH “covens” sprouted up across the country performing “hexes” and “zaps” on a variety of different people and events. They struck such organizations as Wall Street, a bridal fair and the Chicago Transit Authority. This document has also been reprinted numerous times but can be found (along with pictures) at: www.jofreeman.com/photos/witch.html.


While it is not possible to explicate in any detail the extent of American transgressions abroad, consider the following documents. Regarding America’s failure to provide an “effective apology” for the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade see: Dexin Tian, “US and NATO Apologies for the Chinese Embassy Bombing: A Categorical Analysis,” International Journal of Communication 1 (2007): 360-376. In 1998 President Clinton ordered the bombing of a Sudanese factory he believed was “involved in the production of materials for chemical weapons.” That factory actually produced aspirin. To add insult to injury, many American’s still believe that Clinton ordered the bombing to draw attention away from the media circus surrounding his involvement with intern Monica Lewinsky. For a news article related to this issue see: “U.S Faces Court Action Over Sudan Bombing,” http://edition.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/africa/07/28/factory7_28.a.tms/. Lest the focus of these incidents be too highly chronologically concentrated, let us not forget American involvement in Vietnam or what some consider the worst single event massacre of all time, the bombing of Dresden during WWII. More information on these transgressions can be found at: http://www.vietnamwar.com/, and http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWdresden.htm, respectively.


More information on the contents of the memo can be found at: http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/10/bush.briefing/. Information on Rice’s specific testimony and reporting of the events that led to the eventual declassification of the memo can be found at: http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/08/911.commission/index.html.


Byerly, 291.

Richards, 113.

Richards, 113.

Richards, 113.
On May 2, 2005, Bright Eyes front man Conor Oberst appeared on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. At the top of the show after the standup monologue, Leno typically banters with his band leader Kevin Eubanks and briefly introduces his guests for the night. Appearing on the show that night were comedian Wanda Sykes, *Lost* actor Jorge Garcia, and Bright Eyes. Upon introducing Bright Eyes, Leno asked Eubanks if he had heard the song that Bright Eyes would be performing. Eubanks said he had not, to which Leno replied:

> I haven’t heard a protest song like this. You know, I grew up in the 60s, I used to tour with Jesse Winchester and Jerry Jeff Walker and Kris Kristofferson and they did all these anti-Nixon ba…[ballads]. This is, this is a song that’s right up there. This will galvanize the audience, you’ll go one way or the other but you will have an opinion when he’s done.\(^2\)

The show progressed and after the final commercial break, Leno introduced Bright Eyes invoking his often cited comparisons to a young Dylan or Springsteen. Leno then held up the two albums Bright Eyes was promoting and said, “Tonight he’s singing his critically acclaimed protest song, please welcome, Bright Eyes.”\(^3\) The camera panned to Oberst standing alone in the spotlight wearing a cowboy costume that included a dark-red rhinestone encrusted western suit. The ensemble was topped with a bent-up black felt cowboy hat, Oberst’s scraggily black bangs hung down the front. Oberst began the solo acoustic song “When the President Talks to God” (lyrics Appendix B). He sang into the lone microphone stand questioning President George W.
Bush, his religion and his decision making practices. The song ended with loud audience cheers and applause. Then, as is customary, Leno came on stage with Oberst and ended the show.

I have chosen to feature “When the President Talks to God” in this analysis because of its highly contentious protest-heavy lyrics and the notoriety it gained after airing on The Tonight Show. While it is standard fare to see protest music on late night television today, just three years ago it was virtually unheard of. Just as the Dixie Chicks were the first to draw wide scale public attention for their dissenting comments in 2003, Oberst’s performance on The Tonight Show was among the first of its overt nature to be seen on national television post-9/11. In a way then, the protest musicians who populate television talk shows today owe a debt of gratitude to Bright Eyes for being first. Drawing on the work of Maurice Charland I will show how the public performance of this song began the process of constituting an audience comprised of people who carry on the countercultural tradition of protest via music formed during the Vietnam Era. Inherent in this audience is support for the end of the Iraq War. This support is apparent in the narrative of Charland’s ideological effects as well as in Edwin Black’s implied “second persona.”

In understanding this specific performance of music as dissent I first define dissent in the same manner as Steven H. Shiffrin. Dissent is “speech that criticizes existing customs, habits, traditions, institutions, or authorities.” Protest music, regardless of the direction of its gaze, calls into question established norms and customs as well as institutions, leaders, and rules. In terms of gaining rhetorical credibility even in dissent, J. Robert Cox writes: “One of the most acute and continuing rhetorical problems to engage the leaders of a controversial movement is the need to establish a credible image for dissent.” Cox asserts that it falls on the shoulders of the dissident to establish their own credibility by, “convinc[ing] people that their dissent is not caused by
unpatriotic motives, subversive beliefs, or weaknesses in character, before they can engage in
constructive debate.”

Oberst had his work cut out for him in order to establish his credibility as a dissident in a
post-9/11 world. Addressing dissent in post-9/11 America, Ivie writes, “Dissent was rendered
unpatriotic. Protest was considered rude and out of place, something appropriately relegated to
remote free-speech zones.” The public opinion of dissent became such that dissidents could not
act in public without being questioned on their motives, morals, and their American-ness. After a
decade of touring, producing, and performing music, Bright Eyes has attained a certain level of
credibility in the independent music scene as well as popular culture. Joan Anderman of The
Boston Globe states that, “Oberst, a veteran of both ‘The O.C.’ and the Vote for Change tour,
wields an unusual level of credibility.” Bright Eyes has also been parodied on Saturday Night
Live and its music has appeared on the soundtracks of pop culture movies such as Knocked Up
and Cloverfield.

Bright Eyes creates and performs protest music filled with dissent and does so with a
level of credibility. In addition to that, “When the President Talks to God,” specifically takes a
lyrically feminist stance. As stated before, I do not believe that an individual must personally
self-identify as feminist in order to uphold feminist ideology. One of the main tenets of feminist
ideology that Oberst upholds as the singer/songwriter for “When the President Talks to God,” is
the commitment to nonviolence. This standpoint dovetails with the larger feminist movement
because, recall from the introduction, feminists have traditionally been outspoken in their belief
that, as Carolyn M. Byerly writes, “women will never fully realize their rights until war and
other forms of institutionalized violence is brought under control.” Remember also that Jerald
Richards defines institutional violence by illuminating its many forms including, “sexism,
racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and warism.” Richards argues that an essential element of institutional “harm-doing” is “some form of dehumanization” which reaches its peak in “the collective violence of warfare.” Lyrically, Bright Eyes supports the feminist ideology of nonviolence, institutionalized and otherwise.

Getting to Know Bright Eyes

Bright Eyes is an indie-folk band from Omaha, Nebraska comprised of three permanent band members; founder and lead singer Conor Oberst, producer and multi-instrumentalist Mike Mogis, and trumpet and piano player Nate Walcott. The rest of the band is permanent only in its fluctuation. Depending on the album, concert, or location Bright Eyes will sometimes play with a full string section, two drum sets, and various moonlighting instrumentalists and vocalists who are largely members of other Omaha bands. Other times Bright Eyes will appear as only Oberst singing solo and accompanying himself on acoustic guitar. This tendency to single-handedly represent Bright Eyes and his role as founder has made the name Conor Oberst synonymous with Bright Eyes. Since 1998 when their first album, A Collection of Songs Written and Recorded 1995-1997, hit the stands, Bright Eyes has released or participated in over twenty albums.

In 2004 Bright Eyes was invited to participate in the Vote for Change concert tour. Aimed at key swing states, the main goal of the tour was “to remove Bush from the White House on November 2 [2004].” Comprised of a variety of different bands including R.E.M, Pearl Jam, Death Cab for Cutie, My Morning Jacket, the Dixie Chicks, and Dave Matthews Band among others, the tour was organized and sponsored by “pro-John Kerry political action committee MoveOn.” Like the Rock the Vote tour, voter registration was available on-site at the concert venue. Bruce Springsteen’s biographer Dave Marsh points out a key difference between the tours, “This doesn’t just cross the line into electoral politics. This is not Rock the Vote. This is
specifically: You should vote for this candidate. And the reason you should is the other guy is a very bad guy.” While this concert was specifically an anti-Bush/pro-Kerry event the audience was much different than it would have been at a similar anti-Nixon rally thirty years ago.

Zachary Pincus-Roth of the *Daily Variety* points out that “[t]he average age at the Vote for Change show in Philadelphia was over 30, the beneficiary is something called a 527 and the arena is named after a bank.” In large part the over-30 crowd could be attributed to the participation of headliners like Springsteen who have an older fan base. Even so, the age disparity between the twenty-something protesters of the 1960s and 1970s and the over-30 crowd in 2004 along with strong corporate ties to the Vote for Change tour indicate a change in demographic. No longer is the typical protester the person collective memory tells us is of the Woodstock variety; an unemployed college-age student with a penchant for tie-dyed clothing, long hair, and pot smoking.

While onstage at Vote for Change, Oberst implored the audience to vote “so we don’t have this madman running the country.” Oberst’s political position and feelings toward President Bush are evident not only through this direct call to action but also in his very participation in the tour. Backstage after the show Oberst took a fatalistic stance in regard to the overall success of his efforts saying, “I’m sure it made the people feel good to see the concert, but it’s only really going to matter if we win.” Declaring that the Vote for Change tour could only be successful if Bush was ultimately denied a second term places a limit on the value of dissent through music.

In Oberst’s view, musical dissent in 2004 could only be productive if followed up by direct political action. Shiffrin reminds us though that dissent is not always effective, “indeed, much dissent does little to bring about effective change.” Ultimately Bush was re-elected in
2004 despite the best efforts of those on the Vote for Change tour. On November 21, 2004 Oberst played a new song to a crowd at the University of London Union. He performed it from a lyric sheet propped on a podium. That song was an early version of “When the President Talks to God.” The song quickly became steady encore fare during the Bright Eyes tour. Containing blatant anti-Bush lyrics which condemn the president on everything from foreign policy, to women’s rights, to the plight of America’s poor, the song is clearly dissent oriented. Even at its most basic level it speaks directly against American institutions and authorities.

Even though the Vote for Change tour did not bring about Oberst’s intended and hoped-for results, Bright Eyes continues to play concerts that draw attention to and benefit Oberst’s political agenda. On March 20, 2006 Bright Eyes participated in the “Bring ‘Em Home Now” concert. The event marked the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. The beneficiaries of the concert were two veteran’s organizations, Iraq Veterans Against War and Veterans for Peace. Oberst’s opinions on war have been clear since the beginning, but they were reinforced when J. Freedom du Lac of The Washington Post reported in 2005 that Oberst said, “We’re at war so rich people can be richer. And poor people can be poorer. Or dead.”

Despite his continued participation in protest-themed concerts and tours, Oberst resists the pigeon-hole of protest singer. In March 2007 he told Laura Barton of The Guardian (London) “I’m not gonna be a tool for anyone – even if it is for a good cause. I don’t wanna be their property, just like I don’t want to be a corporation’s or teenage-girl [sic] property, or whatever.” Choosing not to devote himself to protest music gives Oberst the musical freedom that he is historically accustomed to as a prolific songwriter with his own independent label – Saddle Creek Records.
While Bright Eyes has a lot of protest songs, they have never been written with direct lyrical calls for action. Instead, Oberst (as lead singer), will deliver messages to his audience before, after, and between songs. Some of those messages are calls for action, others are overly facetious. Playing a show at Constitution Hall in Washington D.C. just over a year after the 2004 elections, Oberst introduced “When the President Talks to God” as an encore by saying “I want to wake up the [expletive] who sleeps across the street.” Before playing another song on the lineup he said, “We’re gonna try to make ’em hear us across the street. Let’s tell them not to embarrass us anymore.” Sasha Frere-Jones of *The New Yorker* reported that in February 2005 Oberst introduced the song saying, “I was so moved by the President’s inauguration speech last week that I wrote this song.” The *Irish Independent* reported that in an April 2007 show Oberst dedicated “When the President Talks to God” to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and President Bush, two men he says he “admire[s] a lot for their biceps and for their creepy fascist agendas.” Overt uses of disrespectful humor such as these continue to align Bright Eyes as an oppositional force to the Bush agenda.

**Understanding “When the President Talks to God”**

In the performance on *The Tonight Show* Oberst appeared as Bright Eyes singing “When the President Talks to God.” This performance characterizes a moment of dissent in the larger social movement against the Iraq War and the decision making policies of President Bush. Oberst also takes a largely feminist stance throughout the song by lyrically supporting the feminist ideology of nonviolence. This specific performance of protest music is important because it was among the first of its kind to be seen in a major national broadcast after 9/11. There was little identifiable anti-Bush or anti-Iraq war protest music on the market even as late as 2005. The Dixie Chicks had garnered national attention in 2003 for their incendiary
comments toward President Bush. This act of political dissent from the stage held tangible economic consequences. The climate was not yet ripe for contention. Green Day released *American Idiot* in 2004 but the band refused to call it a protest album. Instead they allowed their listeners to decide for themselves whether the album is about the President himself or a “disaffected teen.” Another notable album, *Emotive*, by A Perfect Circle also hit the stands in 2004. This album is highly dissent oriented featuring remakes of classic protest songs like “Imagine” and “What’s Going On” in addition to original material. It took until 2005 for the political climate to change enough for public performance of dissent through protest music to gain a viable foothold in the market and to be allowed on television. Andrew Purcell of *The Guardian (London)* aptly writes that by 2006, “The death threats and radio bans [directed at the Dixie Chicks] of 2003 have been conspicuous by their absence.”

In performing “When the President Talks to God” on *The Tonight Show* it is clear to see that Oberst was angry and hurt. Much of that anger likely came through the original writing and composition of the song. Written on the heels of the 2004 elections, right after Oberst invested himself in the Vote for Change tour, he poured his anger over what he would consider a “failed” election into this song. That anger translates to the television audience. Even in so much hurt and anger there is only one curse word in the entire song. When singing the last stanza of the song on *The Tonight Show*, the camera took a close head shot of Oberst as he sang “Does he ever smell his own bullshit?” The show was edited before airtime and the vocals are cut out over “bullshit.” There is no beep to obscure the word, it is simply cut out of the vocal track. Even though the word was edited out it is clearly understood not only in context but also because of the extremely close camera shot which plainly shows Oberst mouthing “bullshit.”
Throughout the course of “When the President Talks to God,” Bright Eyes tackles a variety of different issues. Evidence of dissent can be seen throughout the song. Recall that Shiffrin defines dissent as “speech that criticizes existing customs, habits, traditions, institutions, or authorities.”34 Oberst continuously questions the authority of both President Bush and God, as well as institutions, such as the military and the prison system. Similarly there is much evidence of support for the feminist ideology of nonviolence in the song especially in considering institutionalized violence. Again, Richards defines institutionalized violence as violence that is “integrated with and sanctioned by the customs, traditions, or laws of a society” that may take the form(s) of “sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, and warism.”35 There is lyrical evidence that Oberst takes issue with sexist institutionalized violence as it manifests itself in the continued repeal of women’s rights. Additionally, forms of nationalism, racism, and class-ism are also brought up in the song. Consider, for example, the lines asking if God and Bush “agree which convicts should be killed/where prisons should be built and filled.” In questioning the death penalty as a form of institutionalized violence sanctioned by law and custom these lines also bring up inherent race and class issues as the American prison population is disproportionately poor and non-white.

Repetition of the line “When the President talks to God” at the beginning and end of each stanza draws continued attention to Oberst’s belief that those conversations are evidence of what the Irish Independent might call “religious crackpottery.”36 Aside from the repetition of this line the issue of these supposed prayerful conversations are the most widely addressed in the song. Oberst asks if possibly God is the one making poor decisions in such lyrics as “does God suggest an oil hike?” Similarly, God takes the heat in the song for deciding to give “more liquor stores and dirty coke” to those in the “ghetto” instead of finding more jobs like the Bush character
recommends. God is also depicted as a golfing buddy or business partner in the line, “do they drink near beer and go play golf.” While on these supposed golf outings God and Bush are depicted as making decisions through which they ultimately conclude “which countries to invade/which Muslim souls still can be saved.” Again, in the line “which voter fraud must be concealed,” God and Bush are depicted as good buddies who will decide together how to solve the problems of voter fraud. This time though, the fraud was on their side so they decide together how to conceal it, even though the means to do so are illegal. God and Bush are depicted as agreeing on that last decision as well as “which convicts should be killed/where prisons should be built and filled.” Oberst questions the nature of the conversations and how they are played out asking, “are the conversations brief or long,” “are the consonants all hard or soft/is he [Bush] resolute all down the line,” “does he [Bush] fake that drawl or merely nod,” and “I wonder which one plays the better cop.”

The entire last stanza is dedicated to questioning the existence of God and therefore Bush’s apparent relationship with him. Tackling Bush’s commitment to God in such an overt and angry manner is not something one might expect to see in a protest song but Oberst has specific reason to do so. He has articulated his own views on religion, stating “it is the worst thing to ever happen to the human race. It really is.” Coming from an anti-religious standpoint Oberst questions Bush’s ability to make reasonable decisions throughout the last stanza of the song.

When the president talks to God/Does he ever think that maybe he's not?/That that voice is just inside his head/When he kneels next to the presidential bed/Does he ever smell his own bullshit/When the president talks to God?

In questioning the legitimacy of Bush’s conversations with God, Oberst has also taken issue with the decisions Bush makes after these supposed discussions. Simply what Oberst is singing about
is that Bush cannot possibly make thoughtful informed decisions related to running the nation if he insists on basing those decisions on his relationship with God.

At the end of the performance on The Tonight Show Oberst includes lyrics that do not appear in any other recording of the song. At the end he sings the last lines, “I doubt it, I doubt it” followed by “fil mish mish, fil mish mish.” This Arabic lyric is translatable to the rough equivalent of the English expression, “when pigs fly.” Appearing on the heels of the lyric, “Does he ever smell his own bullshit?/When the president talks to God,” fil mish mish is meant as reinforcement for the previous “I doubt it.”

After the performance aired on The Tonight Show, media buzz speculated how and why Bright Eyes was allowed to sing such a contentious song on a relatively conservative program. Jason Zengerle, senior editor from the magazine the New Republic published a blog lambasting Oberst for his attempts to effectively protest through music. The blog has since been removed from the New Republic site; however, in all fairness, that deletion was likely caused by or due to recent site upgrades and format changes. What I know of the contents from that blog have been quoted by other news sources. Adam Morton of The Age (Melbourne, Australia) cites Zengerle as concluding: “Yes, the lyrics are that bad.” Kelefa Sannah of The New York Times says Zengerle chided Oberst for failing “to live up to the protest-music legacy of Bob Dylan.” Sannah quotes Zengerle as saying that Oberst’s voice was “ill-suited for stopping a war,” and that even if Bush had heard the song he “would have paid the singer absolutely no mind.”

Comments like these and less-than-favorable reviews by others piqued the curiosity of viewers who then went in search of clips of the performance on the internet. In the days immediately following the initial performance there were multiple websites that either showed the video clip or had links to it. Since then, NBC has ordered its content removed from non-affiliated sites so
the clip is somewhat harder to come by. In spite of the widespread removal of the clip from the internet, what remains true is that immediately following the initial broadcast, viewers were able to see the performance in its entirety. Internet availability is something new to anti-war protest. It is no longer necessary to rely on second-hand accounts of an event not witnessed in person.

Interpellation

In order to participate as a member of a constituted collective, an individual must first be called upon. Drawing on the work of Louis Althusser, Charland explains this process as interpellation which, “occurs at the very moment one enters into a rhetorical situation, that is, as soon as an individual recognizes and acknowledges being addressed. An interpellated subject participates in the discourse that addresses him [sic].”43 Charland also writes that interpellation occurs rhetorically, “through the effect of the addressed discourse.”44 In this sense the “very act of addressing is rhetorical.”45 Terrill simplifies and explains the process, “In other words, such discourse addresses a subject position as though it already were occupied by a physical group of individuals, and through this addressing the individuals ‘hailed’ by such discourse come to occupy that subject position.”46 In this case, “When the President Talks to God,” puts forth a narrative which assumes an audience of protest minded individuals who ascribe to the lyrical message of the song. These individuals are part of a culture of protest established with the Beat culture, carried through the Vietnam generation, and activated again by protest in today’s climate of war.

Interpellation through protest music can generally be understood as having the potential to occur the first time a listener actively hears and contemplates the message in the music. This occurs in two main forms. First, the interpellation can serve to re/unite members of the anti-war culture. People with anti-war beliefs already existed in the larger culture but they are united
through song and thus connected to a rhetorical artifact. Second, interpellation serves to draw in what can be considered new members of an anti-war culture. Some have not considered their own ideological framework to the extent that they understand their own anti-war beliefs. Others are interpellated through protest music for the first time as they come to understand that their previous pro-war beliefs are no longer truly representative of their worldview. They have come to see the world in a different light for the first time and music serves as a conduit to the anti-war culture.

Narrative Ideological Effects

In terms of understanding the ways in which constituted audiences are brought together from their first interpellation via protest music, Charland describes three “ideological effects” of constitutive rhetoric. The first of these is concerned with the “process of constituting a collective subject.” The collective subject position is one in which the individual, according to Charland, is able to overcome “divisive individual or class interests and concerns.” Anti-war music comes from a variety of different genres with singer/songwriters of various backgrounds, faiths, classes, races, and personal interests. The same can be said of those who actively listen to and participate in the culture that espouses protest music. Charland also posits the collective identity as one that “transcends the limitations of the individual body and will.” The ability to transcend these limitations is made possible through the realization that “personae are not persons; they remain in the realm of words.” Michael McGee posits that the “people” are a “rhetorical phenomena” which come to be when individuals grow to accept the political myths which surround them. He contends:

“The people,” therefore, are not objectively real in the sense that they exist as a collective entity in nature; rather, they are a fiction dreamed by an advocate and infused with an
artificial, rhetorical reality by the agreement of an audience to participate in a collective
fantasy.\textsuperscript{52}

In the case of protest music there are numerous advocates, all of whom generally advocate the
same set of ideas which culminate in ending the war in Iraq. As a multi-song and multi-generic
platform, protest music presents different (non-contrasting) narratives to its audiences. The
narratives are not all the same but the message is largely consistent.

Others who have identified constitutive collective subjects have been able to identify the
group with a single overarching identity term. In his analysis of the white paper, Charland
describes how the term “Quebecois” came to represent the constituted subject.\textsuperscript{53} Terrill argues
that Malcolm X uses “black” to identify his constituted subject, all black people were potentially
a part of his collective.\textsuperscript{54} Morus examines the constitution of a Serbian “people” as defined by a
widely published memorandum.\textsuperscript{55} While each of these groups could have sympathizers, there
were clear demarcations in terms of identity. Regardless of how much any individual might have
sympathized with the efforts of the Quebecois, if they themselves were not part of the group
formerly known as “French Canadians” they were not part of the collective.

In the case of those who utilize protest music as a form of dissent, the collective subject is
less easy to identify under a single umbrella term. While Charland contends that there is always
already an audience present that can be hailed through identification, this study represents an
audience that is more loosely joined together that cannot be simply labeled one term or another.
There is no one term that identifies those people who hold a dissenting attitude toward American
involvement in war. Also, in terms of this subject, there is more room for an individual to choose
their own subjectivity. In the case of the white paper, a Quebecois would have to make a major
life change starting with relinquishing his or her French language and culture in order to remove
him/herself from the position as a Quebecois. As Malcolm X identifies his subject as “black,” there is even less one can do to choose their subjectivity as virtually nothing (short of passing) can be done to alter an individual’s membership in a racial group. But, in terms of the collective of those who dissent against war, membership can be fluid. Some may initially support a war and later change their mind, or support one war above another, or possibly hold a positive or neutral opinion regarding the matter until it negatively affects them personally. Charland allows for the “development of new subject positions, of new constitutive rhetorics” in “particular historical moments.” I contend this moment in history is ripe for the development of new positions. As Charland notes, “we can live within many texts.” Sometimes those many texts become too contradictory to maintain and thus change in worldview occurs. Some individuals will find themselves living in a new (for them) worldview which does not account for ignoring or passively allowing the war in Iraq to continue uncontested. In these ways, the collective nature of the subject in this case is less concrete than in previous analyses. The inability to stamp a single label on the audience of post-9/11 dissenters represents a limitation present in Charland’s original work, but it is one that can be healed through greater understanding of the subject position of those who truly exist in the various and diverse positions that Charland claims to bring together.

Even though the collective of protesters is less concrete or identifiable than those in other studies, it has nonetheless been successfully constituted. This constitution is visible historically in the traditions of the Beat generation, the Vietnam era protesters, and that same collective is again re-interpellated today. This success is partially revealed in the ways in which Black conceptualized the “second persona.” He wrote that the “second persona” is the “implied auditor” of a discourse. This implied auditor is one that can be derived solely from
understanding the discourse and its rhetor. In understanding what is being said or implied, the “second persona” comes to light as a collection of persons who share an ideology or worldview with the rhetor. According to Black, simply evaluating the lyrics of protest songs will imply an audience comprised of persons with similar ideologies to the singer/songwriter. For instance, in “When the President Talks to God,” the “second persona” is derived as someone who also questions George Bush’s divinely inspired decision making process. The implied auditor also dissents against war and questions Bush’s ability to decide “which countries to invade” and the continued need to “send poor farm kids off to die.” In using this single song as an example of anti-Iraq War protest music, it becomes clear that the implied “second persona” is fully constituted collective subject comprised of people who share similar ideologies with one another as well as the musician.

The second of Charland’s ideological effects is the “positing of a transhistorical subject.” By this he means that the discourse bridges the past and present giving the subject a clear picture of their shared struggle across time. Charland shows how the white paper and other historical narratives established a transhistorical subject by articulating the shared history of Canadian Francophones. Terrill argues that Malcolm X created a transhistorical subject in his speeches, “Black Mans History,” “Yacub’s History,” and “Message to the Grassroots.” The transhistorical subject position of the Serbian “people,” according to Morus, was articulated through a shared history of victimization outlined in the SANU memorandum.

In the case of protesters, there is no clear link to hundreds or thousands of years of literally shared history. The collective group of protesters interpellated through music does not share a common language, race, class, ethnic background, or gender. However, I argue that this brand of protest – protest against American involvement in international ideological wars – was
born out of entry into the Cold War. The first visible protesters of this type of involvement were the Beats. The Beats (also beats or beatniks) were a group of (mostly) men who, according to Leerom Medovoi, “embraced an alternative hipster lifestyle in the forties, and began writing about their ideas and experiences by the late forties and early fifties, but were only discovered by mainstream American culture in the late fifties.” 64 Among the beat authors were Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, and John Clellon Holmes. Parke Puterbaugh writes that these authors and other beats, “generally read the same authors, espoused pacifism, studied Eastern religion and held leftist/anarchist views.”65 With the publication of Kerouac’s *On The Road* in 1957 thousands of young Americans found themselves and their identities represented in literature. These young people were constituted as the “beat generation” in the 1950s. According to Medovoi, this term is typically used “to connote the entire cadre of young Americans who lived out their teen and young adult years (roughly speaking) between 1945 and 1960, and who presumably shared the social position embodied by the beats.”66 The beats wrote about their positions and counterculture experiences in post-World War II America. They reacted to the straight-laced conservatism of the Cold War era by actively doing drugs, forgoing employment for the art scene, and engaging flippantly in both straight and homosexual relationships. Then they wrote about it all. In writing they also opposed both the impending doom of nuclear war with the USSR and eventually the war in Korea. As the Vietnam War began many of the beat writers were still on the scene and actively opposed the conflict along with the new generation of hippies.

The ideological likeness between the beats and the hippies can be at least partially explained by the involvement of beats in both cultures. Puterbaugh writes, “Certain Beat Generation figureheads such as Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, Gary Snyder and Michael
McClure were witnesses to and participants in both the beatnik and hippie eras.”67 Sharing cultural leaders certainly led to many of the similarities between the two movements. Having the same leaders also meant that the hippie culture of the Vietnam Era was at least a partial continuation of the efforts of the beats from the previous decade. Puterbaugh explains the relationship between the beats and the hippies not as a linear genealogy but as fluid thought sharing:

Although it is tempting to describe a linear progression from poet-spewing Beats to guitar-thrashing hippies, it wasn’t quite that cut and dried. The Beat Generation and the counterculture were not neatly linked as a parent to a child, and the latter wasn’t only about music any more than the former was only about poetry. Moreover, the influence didn’t proceed in one direction only, from old to young or from writers to musicians. San Francisco in the Sixties was actually a fluid scene in which influences traveled across permeable borders in all directions.68

As Puterbaugh noted, one of the main differences between the beats and the hippies was their choice of medium. While the beat generation typically espoused the medium of literature and poetry to convey their messages, the hippies of the 1960s and 1970s heavily employed music to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Puterbaugh also explains the connection from literary cultural dissent to musical forms of protest writing, “The cultural revolt espoused by the Beats against the status quo of the Fifties was picked up by the musical counterculture in the Sixties... In that sense, the Haight-Ashbury musicians inherited the revolutionary zeal of the Beat Generation.”69 This description clearly indicates a continuation of the attitudes and opinions which formed the ideological basis of these countercultural communities, even though they were
separated by time they shared the same basic principles. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, beat author and owner of City Lights bookshop maintains:

All the main tenets of the hippie counterculture were first articulated by the Beat writers of the Fifties: the turn toward Far East, Buddhist philosophy and mysticism in general, ecological consciousness, political positions. Further parallels were pacifism and antiwar positions and generally the fact that both were youth revolts, maybe the first revolts of the Twentieth Century against mechanization and industrialization. What hasn’t been said enough is that the counterculture was a youth revolt that, it seems to me, began with the Beats.\textsuperscript{70}

Again, this is a clear delineation of the similarity of the two movements. While there are notable differences their likenesses cannot be denied. Among the similarities was an attitude of peace.

The antiwar position of the hippies was clearly communicated through music. The counterculture produced during the Vietnam era gave rise to some of the greatest protest songs ever disseminated in American history. When the Vietnam War ended, James E. Perone writes that “music with an anti-war message became more and more difficult to find.”\textsuperscript{71} Perone argues that the counterculture, along with its need for protest music, ended with the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{72} I disagree with Perone, this counterculture never went away, the music never died, the war simply ended. McGee dealt with this very issue writing:

“[T]he people” are more process than phenomenon. That is, they are conjured into objective reality, remain so long as the rhetoric which defined them has force, and in the end wilt away, becoming once again merely a collection of individuals.\textsuperscript{73}

In the cases of both the Cold and Vietnam Wars, the conflicts themselves ended, without an active war to oppose the protesters and dissenters became increasingly less visible and faded
back into society. Since then there have been armed, international conflicts but none have been as sustained as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the group status of war protester may have gone by the wayside with the end of the conflict, the anti-war ideology did not leave the individual or the collective. The collective of protesters today inherited their beliefs from earlier protesters, those who objected to the Cold War and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.

No single protest song tells the entire story of how the protest ideology generated during the beat generation has been handed down and altered by successive generations. There is though a widely acknowledged link between the music of the Vietnam Era and today’s anti-Iraq war music. While the links exist, they are not necessarily lyrical. Instead, given the number of comparisons between the Vietnam War and the war in Iraq, pundits even point to music as a likeness.\(^7^4\) Additionally, there have been many comparisons between today’s musicians and those of the past. Oberst, has been likened to a “young Bob Dylan” not only stylistically but also for his penchant for protest songs.\(^7^5\) Even in introducing Oberst on *The Tonight Show*, Leno noted his own involvement in the culture of the 1960s and compared him to singer/songwriters like Kris Kristofferson.\(^7^6\) Indeed, like the beat authors who bridged into Vietnam, some musicians who actively protested the Vietnam War are again singing protest today. The biggest name among those returning is Neil Young.\(^7^7\) Young’s role in this new era of protest is contested. Some, like this writer for the *Irish Independent* contend that after the Vote for Change tour in 2004:

> There was a sense of a torch being passed on to a new generation of protest singer; at last, the new breed had been jolted out of their solipsism and apathy by the war on terror and the bloodbath in Iraq, just as the televised horrors of Vietnam had impacted on the ‘60s generation of troubadours.\(^7^8\)
Young himself said he decided to record yet another protest album for the new century because: “I was waiting for...some young singer 18 to 22 years old, to write these songs and stand up. I waited a long time. Then decided that maybe the generation that has to do this is still the 1960s generation.” It seems likely that in today’s climate of protest there are no age limits and that the only ones who “should” be singing protest are singers themselves without limits to age, race, or genre. Possibly, like the beat writers before him, Young is yet another example of the bridge between generations of protesters.

The third of Charland’s ideological effects is regarding the “illusion of freedom” in the narrative as a component of successful constitutive rhetoric. Charland argues, “Subjects within narratives are not free, they are positioned and so constrained. All narratives have power over the subjects they present. The endings of narratives are fixed before the telling.” He likens subjects in a narrative to literal characters in a story who have no actual power over their final destiny but who operate with the “illusion of agency.” Once a subject has been interpellated and integrated into a narrative they are “constituted with a history, motives, and a telos.” Charland demonstrates this “illusion of freedom” as the way in which the constituted Quebecois is then expected to vote. While it seems as though the Quebecois voter has a choice to vote for or against the measure to form an independent Quebec, in reality, as a constituted subject the individual is positioned only to vote for the measure.

In illuminating the rhetoric of Malcolm X, Terrill comes to many of the same conclusions as Charland but he also expands on Charland’s original concepts as he considers the rhetoric of Malcolm X after leaving the Nation of Islam. In the speeches he gave while still a minister in the Nation of Islam, Malcolm gave such conclusions as the “demand for land” and the “apocalyptic destruction of the white race.” After leaving the Nation of Islam though, Terrill argues that
Malcolm “does not provide his audiences with a sustained, teleological narrative.”

While Malcolm does provide his audiences with stories in his speeches, those narratives do not lead to one single telos. Terrill writes, “those constituted in Malcolm’s post-Nation of Islam discourse are not called upon to complete the story, because there is no single story for them to complete.” While the “overarching goal” of “black liberation” remained at the forefront, “the collective identity of Malcolm’s audiences is constituted through alignment with any number of possible narratives.”

The collective and constituted audience of anti-Iraq War protest music is more like the audience of Malcolm X in his post-Nation of Islam speeches. Each protest song carries a number of different narratives which require social action but the main overarching goal is the end of fighting in Iraq. The means by which this telos is achieved are not as clear as in the case of the white paper. The Quebecois were constituted as a subject working for their own independence from Canada, the path to freedom was most directly through voting. Even in considering “When the President Talks to God,” the drive to end the war is present but there is no suggestion for how that should come to pass. The song was first performed after the 2004 elections so there is no lyrical call to vote. In performing the song live, Oberst is likely to make a distinct call to action as the 2008 elections draw nearer but there is no lyrical answer to the nation’s greatest quandary. While the narrative has set forth its own overarching conclusion, the means by which the collective attains the goal have been left open. Additionally, there are a number of proposed sub-goals or minor teloi in the song; among these are the need to discontinue repealing women’s rights, capital punishment, the penal system and the plight of the poor. The teleological narrative present in “When the President Talks to God,” and other protest songs, is most like that of Malcolm X after he ended his involvement in the Nation of Islam. The major parallel between
the two is the lack of a single telos with a clearly proscribed path. Each have instead an overarching goal along with a multitude of other possible narratives, none of which have a clear single narrative ending.

Protests’ Constituted Audience

In developing the collective subject of Quebecois, Charland argues that position was rearticulated from two previous identities. Prior to being interpellated as Quebecois, those subjects were either “Canadien francais” or residents of Quebec.93 Charland posits that the white paper was responsible for arguing the superiority of the identity as Quebecois over both of the previous positions. Additionally, Charland writes, “Constitutive rhetorics of new subject positions can be understood…as working upon previous discourses, upon existing constitutive rhetorics.”94 In this way, most of the constituted subjects are somewhat familiar or comfortable with their new position. In some cases though, a subject will find him/herself in an entirely new position, espousing a new worldview. Charland argues that the eventuality of the rearticulated subject is not due to persuasion.95 Instead, “it is akin more to one of conversion that ultimately results in an act of recognition of the ‘rightness’ of a discourse and one’s identity with its reconfigured subject position.”96 The understanding of the “rightness” of a different discourse has already been discussed in terms of those subjects who find themselves new to the anti-war ideological frame. Whether the individual could no longer reconcile pro-Bush sentiments with continued acts of war or if they found that the war touched them too close to home to continue its placid support, some people are bound to find themselves as newcomers to the collective of protesters. Music can serve as a vehicle to those seeking a new worldview. In understanding the world through the eyes of the singer/songwriter a listener can come to understand their own shifting beliefs. This instance is, as Charland contends, not simply persuasive. Instead in that
case the listener is given new tools for understanding the world and is then able to see the
“rightness” of the anti-war discourse.

Not every member of the constituted audience is entirely new to protest though. Some have been reconstituted from a variety of potential positions. As has already been demonstrated, a number of subjects were likely re-interpellated from the ideological position of those who also protested the Vietnam and Cold Wars. Additionally, some subjects who previously identified as anti-Bush were subject to interpellation and rearticulated their position as also anti-War. The link between these two positions is clear specifically in “When the President Talks to God” through direct attacks on Bush. The narrative of this song constitutes its audience as dissenters, people who feel obligated to voice their opinions which have been underrepresented in the mainstream media. As Charland frames it, these collectivized subjects are driven to act under the illusion of agency in accordance with their narrativized roles of voicing their dissent against the president and the ongoing war. Their ultimate aim is to free themselves of both. Other subjects who espouse the feminist ideology of peace are also likely to have also found themselves constituted in this audience. Lyrically this song directly supports a feminist platform not only in seeking peace through an end to institutionalized violence but also in ensuring women’s rights.

Charland also documents how the white paper effectively negated any possibility that remaining with the nation of Canada could have any positive outcomes for the Quebecois. This assertion echoes what Erik W. Doxtader warns about dissent, he says: “Dissent brackets a concern for those who believe that the benefits of the system outweigh its costs.” In the end, dissent may be self-serving to the point that others disagree and prefer to maintain the current system. It is a rare occurrence to find an entire populous willing to support a dissenting idea, there will always be a counterpoint to each point of dissension but one very real risk of dissent is
that others will simply not agree. In much the same way, Oberst discursively denies that there is any possible benefit to having George W. Bush as President. Oberst has bracketed any point-of-view which allows Bush any executive lenience or prefers Bush over others who could have become President.

**Conclusion**

When Oberst performed “When the President Talks to God” on *The Tonight Show* he reached Leno’s national nightly viewing audience many times larger than any typical music arena. This initial performance of dissent-oriented music not only opened the door for future performances of protest music on television it also served to begin the process of interpellation to re-constitute the audience that would later view those performances. The work of interpellation is ongoing and cannot be attributed solely to this single song or performance but for many this was their first exposure to anti-Iraq War protest music.

One limitation of this analysis is that the majority of constitutive rhetoric pieces are written with the benefit of history on their side. Charland considered the white paper only after the final votes had been counted. Terrill wrote about the rhetoric of Malcolm X after his death. The advantage of history in these cases gives the author the opportunity to examine the narratives after they have had the opportunity to spin out. In this case the war is ongoing; protest music is still being produced, sold, and played. The narratives have not been completed and the ultimate telos of ending the war has not been achieved. Even though the original performance for this song and its resulting maelstrom are complete, the historical context that made it happen is not. Just as Charland’s narrative did not finish when the white paper was fully drafted, this event is ongoing.
Given the nondirective nature of specifically “When the President Talks to God” it will be interesting to see how the constituted audience works to end the war in Iraq. The song itself does not call for any specific action and the collective does not have the opportunity to vote for Bush in the 2008 elections. Potentially, some will see the end of Bush’s presidency as the end of their protest, regardless of his successor as they link the president very closely with the war (as Oberst’s song). Others will work to elect a candidate who espouses beliefs and tactics opposite from Bush in order to facilitate an end to war. In any case the narrative is ongoing and unresolved.

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1 *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Show no. 2925, first broadcast 2 May 2005 by NBC. Directed by Ellen Brown.
2 These notes are from my own transcription of the television broadcast cited above. There are very few video depictions of this performance still available online. NBC has entered into a copyright claim with YouTube which resulted in the removal of most NBC content. There is one video of the event available on YouTube but it shows only the performance and leaves out the comments at the top of the show from which this transcription was taken. A more complete video which depicts the comments I am referencing can be found at: www.saddle-creek.com.
3 *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. Show no. 2925.
7 Cox, 262.
12 Richards, 113.
15 Montgomery.
18 Montgomery.
20 Shiffrin, 93.
22 “REM’s Stipe Fronts Concert Calling for Iraq Exit,” The Globe and Mail (Canada), Feb. 24, 2006, R2.
25 Laura Barton, “G2: ‘Im Not Gonna Be A Tool For Anyone’: Two Years Ago Conor Oberst was at the Top of the American Charts, When He Sang Mockingly About Bush and His Chats With God, the Left was Sure he was Just the Person to Rally the Kids Against the President and his War. But Oberst Had Other Ideas…He Talks to Laura Barton,” The Guardian (London), March 26, 2007, 12.
26 du Lac, C01.
27 du Lac, C01.
29 “He Wears His Heart on His Sleeve,” Irish Independent, April 14, 2007.
32 Norris.
33 Andrew Purcell, “Film & Music: Cover Story: Don’t Mention the War-Unless You’re Over 50: Andre Purcell Reports on Why US Rock’s Reaction to the Iraq War has been Dominated by the Old Guard, While Caroline Sullivan Hears From the Dixie Chicks, On What Happened When They Spoke Out,” The Guardian (London), June 23, 2006, 4.
34 Shiffrin, xi.
35 Richards, 113.
36 “He Wears His Heart…”
37 Norris.
38 This inclusion can be seen on either the YouTube link or on the video at: www.saddle-creek.com. Fil mish mish does not appear on either of the recorded and distributed versions of the song that can be found on the albums, Motion Sickness and Body of War. Those lyrics also do not appear on the version of the song that is available as a free download from iTunes.
39 For a more thorough description of the translation refer to:
42 Sanneh, 7.
44 Charland, 138.
45 Charland, 138.
47 Charland, 139.
48 Charland, 139.
49 Charland, 139.
50 Charland, 138.
52 McGee, 240.
53 Charland, 139.
54 Terrill, 165.
56 Charland, 141.
57 Charland, 142.
Charland, 139. Charland claims that in creating a collective subject, “ultimate” identification allows for the overcoming of “divisive individual or class interests and concerns.”

Black, 89.

Black, 89-90.

Charland, 140.

Terrill, 165-66.

Morus, 146.


Medovoi, 218.

Puterbaugh, 361.

Puterbaugh, 361-362.

Puterbaugh, 361.

Puterbaugh, 362.


Perone, 66.


The Tonight Show with Jay Leno. Show no. 2925.

Work by these artists and others can be found on the two-disc compilation album, Body of War, March 18, 2008, Sire/Wea

“He Wears His Heart…”

Purcell, “Film & Music…”

Charland, 140.

Charland, 140.

Charland, 140.

Terrill, 166.

Terrill, 168.

Terrill, 169.

Terrill, 169.

Charland, 141.

The first public performance of this song is referenced in this news article which implies that the lyrics are so new that Oberst is reading them off a lectern. Simon Price, “Rock & Pop: Let’s All Worship at the Feet of the Green Goddess; Yeah Yeah Yeahs Forum London Conor Oberst ULU London,” Independent on Sunday (London), Nov. 21, 2004, 22-23. In the following link to a YouTube video, Oberst tells the audience he wrote the song that day, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFot6SE0MCI.

“does he ask to rape our women’s rights”

“agree which convicts should be killed”

“where prisons should be built and filled”

“we should find some jobs the ghetto’s broke”

Charland, 142.

Charland, 142.

Charland, 142.

Charland, 142.

Charland, 146.

“Imagine all the people, living life in peace”
~Imagine, John Lennon

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 changed American culture. Immediately after the attacks there was a declaration of war on terrorism and the U.S. military engaged in a campaign to hunt down terrorist organizations in Afghanistan. Over time, military involvement spread into Iraq and the war continues five years later. Reactions to the war have taken on various forms: among these are protests and sit-ins from military mothers like Cindy Sheehan, a brief national insistence that french-fried potatoes be renamed Freedom Fries, and musical reactions from small independent artists to big-name large-scale national tours.¹ This thesis project has been aimed at gaining some understanding as to how protest music functions in post-9/11 society. With this goal in mind I have engaged in analyses of protest music; which I believe performs dissent while supporting the feminist ideology of nonviolence. I have done so using the theoretical conceptions of consciousness raising and constitutive rhetoric.

In Chapter 1, I detailed the ways in which feminist consciousness raising has become a mediated reality in the Third Wave. Part of understanding how consciousness raising morphed from a small group activity in the 1960s and 1970s into a mediated context in the 1990s and beyond is in recognizing that this change is due to a larger cultural shift. Various media have been reinvented time and again in the last forty years literally changing the ways Americans communicate and interact. Since the Second Wave, American culture has come to accept 500 channel cable television, cell phones, MP3 players, and the internet. Making the shift between small group sessions and mediated consciousness raising has vastly expanded the potential audience base of consciousness raising. This argument is in line with Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar’s observation: “One of the ways in which third wave consciousness-raising
has adapted to the changing cultural climate is that is seeks to address larger and more public audiences. Today consciousness raising is available to the masses, and it can be achieved through various methods; one of which is music. Not only is consciousness raising now available to more people, the shift to a mediated form has also privileged individual possibilities of self-persuasion. Sowards and Renegar again argue that the mediated feature of Third Wave consciousness raising “increases the flexibility of consciousness-raising and emphasizes the individual nature of consciousness shifts.”

Recognizing the importance of self-persuasion is a key element in understanding both consciousness raising in the Third Wave as well as individual cultural identification. Listening to music, in this case specifically protest music after 9/11, is one way individuals can come to understand their own personal beliefs, expand their consciousness, and clarify their cultural identity. As Simon Frith argues, “[i]dentity is not a thing but a process – an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music. Music seems to be a key to identity because it offers…a sense of both self and others, of the subjective and the collective.” A sense of self and others is important in consciousness raising because it allows the listener to understand where the singer is coming from while highlighting that personal struggles are not always unique. The element of awareness was key in early consciousness raising of the Second Wave. The purpose of consciousness raising in its Second Wave conception, according to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell was “to make the personal political: to create awareness (through shared experiences) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared, a result of their position as women.” It was by telling their individual stories that women of the Second Wave came to understand themselves as systemically oppressed. Today, feminists can come to understand the same concepts through mediated contexts such as music.
Protest songs such as Ani DiFranco’s “Self-Evident” bring to light the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the singer/songwriter. Simply hearing DiFranco’s music does not automatically expand the consciousness of a listener. There is no magic bullet in this theory. What listening to this song and others like it does do though is create the opportunity for reflection and self-persuasion. Likewise, self-persuasion does not always mean that the listener will come to understand their own belief system to be the same as the musicians. It is entirely possible that contemplation of this song will bring a listener to understand their worldview as divergent from that of DiFranco. In either case, consciousness raising has occurred regardless of whether the listener agrees with her opinions.

The aim of this chapter was to focus on the ways in which the rhetoric of dissent in music has the potential to act as a vehicle for mediated consciousness raising as defined by Third Wave feminism. This chapter draws from the observations Sowards and Renegar made in their study regarding the ways in which consciousness raising has shifted into a format more in line with Third Wave thinking as well as larger cultural shifts in communication and information technology. While Sowards and Renegar point out the possibilities of consciousness raising through music in the Third Wave they do not enter into any specific case studies or analyses. This chapter works to explicate the changes Sowards and Renegar observe in consciousness raising in the Third Wave specifically through a musical case study. In completing this chapter it has become evident that there are distinct possibilities for consciousness raising through protest music. The possibilities exist in lyrical performance but are contingent upon the receptive capacity of the listener and whether or not they are ready and able to evaluate their own consciousness.
In Chapter 2, I worked to explain the means by which the performance of “When the President Talks to God” began the process of re-interpellating a collective of protest-oriented individuals. I contend that the collective is re-interpellated because they share a genealogy of protest with not only the Vietnam era protesters but also the Beat generation. This chapter is based on Maurice Charland’s conception of constitutive rhetoric. One of the main purposes of constitutive rhetoric is to understand how audiences are brought together through narrative. Charland showed this collectivization through narrative in his explication of the Quebecois in their pursuit of sovereignty after the publication of the white paper.

In my analysis I feature the performance of “When the President Talks to God” on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno on May 2, 2005. That song was among the first of many protest songs which would eventually infiltrate mainstream media outlets making headway for dissent in post-9/11 culture. Immediately following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 Robert Ivie writes that “[d]issent was rendered unpatriotic. Protest was considered rude and out of place, something appropriately relegated to remote free-speech zones.” It was not until 2004 that albums either on major or independent labels were widely available for purchase. Dissent through music was quelled in the even years after entering into a major military conflict in the Middle East. Chapter 2 details some of the backlash that the performance of “When the President Talks to God” garnered as well as the way in which new media, such as YouTube, made it available for wide scale public viewing after its initial performance. This act of performing lyrical dissent on a major nightly talk show was one step forward in beginning the process of re-interpellating the collective audience of dissenters. Before this performance many watchers/listeners would not have had access to such a blatantly protest oriented song because there were very few on the
market and those that were did not receive radio airplay. For some dissenting individuals this was one of the first times their views were represented in the mainstream media.

One major difference between this chapter and previous work done on constitutive rhetoric is that there is no single label under which the collective of post-9/11 dissenters can be represented. Unlike Charland’s “Quebecois,” Robert Terrill’s understanding of Malcolm X’s black Muslims, or even Christina Morus’ definition of the Serbian people, these dissenters defy labeling. While Charland defines the collective subject position as one in which the individual is able to overcome “divisive individual or class interests and concerns;” there is still a gap in his theoretical consideration of those who come from less homogenous backgrounds. The individuals making up the collective of Quebecois represented various backgrounds and Charland argued that their collective identity allowed them the opportunity to transcend “the limitations of the individual body and will.” The extent to which the individual natures and backgrounds of those who became Quebecois differed is less varied than the backgrounds of those who dissent against war. The Quebecois shared linguistic and cultural heritage, common former identification as French Canadian, as well as outsider status in an adopted homeland. While various parts of the ideological background of the Quebecois were different, their cultural similarities are recognizable. In the case of anti-war protesters their main connections are ideological while all other points vary. Dissenters can be of any race, gender, orientation, religion, economic status, age, linguistic background, family status, and even of any nation. These are only some of the multitude of variables that define those who dissent against war. This group defies easy classification. Charland is correct in arguing that the collective identity can bring together subjects from various positions. He simply fails to articulate ways to identify and theorize groups which are more divergent than his study of the Quebecois. The resistance that the
post-9/11 dissenters exhibit in complying with a single label represents a limitation in Charland’s original work. The limitation can be overcome though through a more comprehensive understanding of the truly diverse heterogeneous subject.

In considering the potential benefit of Chapter 2 on the discipline, I contend that its greatest impact comes in furthering Charland’s narrative ideological effects specifically in respect to immensely diverse audiences. The song “When the President Talks to God” constructs through narrative an audience of dissent-oriented, protest-minded individuals. But that collective defies labeling which other scholars of constitutive rhetoric have found available and applicable. There is more work yet to be done to understand how such a diverse collective comes together and functions. Possibly the greatest opportunities for research lie in the future once the war has ended. Then it could become clear to see what impact, if any, the audience of protesters had on bringing the conflict to an end.

In the introduction to this project I argued that it is not necessary for an individual to self-identify as feminist in order to affirm feminist ideology. The main element of feminist ideology that I have worked to explicate is that inherent to feminism is the belief that all violence must be ended in order for women to eventually gain equality. Many artists, including Conor Oberst lyrically support the feminist cause without ever having personally proclaimed their stance on feminism. This same system of understanding also carries over to the audience. Not all listeners who support the end of military and institutionalized violence do so because they actively embrace feminism. Indeed, some listeners are likely unaware of the connection between feminism and nonviolence. Despite any lack of direct artist or listener identification with feminism, they can still lyrically support feminist ideology. Also, just because consciousness raising is closely tied with feminism, that does not mean that I believe it has to be used only for
feminist ends. Consciousness raising can be effective for various purposes, not just in understanding ones worldview specifically in relation to war based on a feminist ideology of nonviolence.

The lyrical support for the feminist ideology of nonviolence exhibited in each of these songs creates the potential for the key elements of consciousness raising to reach large audiences. While I have spent much time articulating the ways in which Third Wave mediated consciousness raising can assist listeners in their pursuit of defining their own cultural identity; what is not to be overlooked is that at the same time the consciousness raising principles can also inform audiences about other feminist stances, not just nonviolence. Both DiFranco and Bright Eyes lyrically unpack elements of feminism from ecological awareness, to abortion, to women’s rights. The decision to include these issues in their respective songs represents the willingness of each of the artists not only to express their own beliefs but also to suggest that their audiences also question their belief systems in order to make informed decisions. Consciousness raising through protest music has the potential to not only constitute dissent oriented audiences but also to develop audiences in tune with other feminist issues.

Throughout the course of this project I have worked to show how DiFranco’s “Self-Evident” works as an exemplar of feminist consciousness raising in the Third Wave. I have also shown how Bright Eyes’ “When the President Talks to God” began to reconstitute the collective of dissent oriented individuals who are cultural descendents of earlier eras of protest. To advance and intermingle both of those arguments I also contend that consciousness raising is an effective method of inviting individuals into a constituted collective. In Chapter 1 I argued that not all individuals fully understand their own cultural identities. Some have not fully explicated their own belief systems. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards co-authors of Manifesta, also see
this pattern arguing: “[m]any young women are pre-consciousness and haven’t yet had the opportunity to examine the politics of their own lives. They are pre-click, or maybe even pre-sexism in their own lives.”10 While their observation is specific to young women who they see as pre-feminists, I would expand their notion to the larger public. Not all people, regardless of age or sex, have fully taken stock of their identities.

In terms of the role protest music has played on the American songscape since 2001, the differences are dramatic. Immediately following the terrorist attacks, many touring bands cancelled their concerts due to the uncertainty of the future. DiFranco maintained her scheduled tour and began performing “Self Evident” even before it was fully completed.11 The protest scene remained quiet in the years immediately following 9/11; especially in terms of big label bands. In 2003 the Dixie Chicks took a stand specifically against President Bush and their country fan base evaporated.12 By 2004 more bands, on both major and independent labels, were producing and performing protest music. Key in 2004 were tours like Vote for Change which served both to register voters and to garner support for the democratic ticket.13 After Bush was re-elected there was an ever growing crowd of musical dissenters who disliked both the president and the military conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2005 musical opposition really geared up with performances of protest on national television, among those performances was Bright Eyes. By 2008 musical dissent saturated the market. It is possible to see protest music performed on any variety of television talk shows as well as to hear it on local radio broadcasts. The increasing number and availability of protest songs reflects a change in culture. No longer are the majority of Americans willing to sit and watch as an unpopular war continues. Those who listen to this ever expanding body of music represent a collective of dissent-oriented individuals.
Based on Charland’s second ideological effect of constitutive rhetoric, the positing of a transhistorical subject, I have shown how the war protesters of today share a historical background which began in the 1950s. Not all members of that collective are able to articulate their shared subject position with beat authors or Vietnam protesters but the linkages are there all the same. In Chapter 2, I argued that the collective of dissent-minded individuals is in flux. Not all people who originally supported military entry into Afghanistan and eventually Iraq still support it today. Similarly, some people who initially opposed military engagement in the war on terror now support the cause. The reasons for these individual changes are diverse. Some people have changed their views on the war as it has dragged on well past President Bush’s declaration in 2003 that active fighting had ended. Others found their opinions changing as the war touched their lives in either direct or indirect participation in the military. Still others have found their opinions changing as they became more educated on the war. This fluctuation of dissenters is directly related to individual conceptions of worldview and cultural identity; time goes by, opinions change, and personal beliefs are amended. Consciousness raising then, as a process of coming to understand oneself in relation to the world, is an effective method for allowing individuals to become aware of one’s own position in the dissent-oriented collective. By placing the feminist theoretical construct of consciousness raising into conversation with constitutive rhetoric, I have made some headway in understanding audience construction. There is more work left to be done in this arena but from this initial study it seems apparent that there are more extensive ways of knowing audiences based on pre-existing methods of understanding. It is not necessary or productive to segregate these two concepts simply because they were developed under different circumstances. Like other scholars before me who have articulated the ways in which feminism has a direct relationship with rhetorical studies, I too believe that further
interrogation of the existing methods in divergent fields can yield greater possibilities not only in
terms of scholarship but also long-term peace.\textsuperscript{14}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{1} For more information on Sheehan’s influence on the peace movement see:
http://www.thenation.com/doc/20060612/houppert. Information on the french fry name change can be found in a
couple of the national protest music tours.
\textsuperscript{2} Stacey K. Sowards and Valerie R. Renegar, “The Rhetorical Functions of Consciousness-Raising in Third Wave
\textsuperscript{3} Sowards and Renegar, 547.
\textsuperscript{5} Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, “The Rhetoric of Women’s Liberation: An Oxymoron,” \textit{Quarterly Journal of Speech} 59
(February 1973): 79.
\textsuperscript{6} Robert L. Ivie, “Democratic Dissent and the Trick of Rhetorical Critique,” \textit{The Poynter Center for the Study of
Ethics and American Institutions} (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 2005), 4.
\textsuperscript{7} See Robert E. Terrill, \textit{Malcolm X: Inventing Radical Judgment} (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University
Press, 2004); and Christina Morus, “The SANU Memorandum: Intellectual Authority and the Constitution of an
Exclusive Serbian ‘People,’” \textit{Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies} 4, no. 2 (June, 2007).
\textsuperscript{8} Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the People Quebecois,” \textit{Quarterly Journal of Speech} 73
\textsuperscript{9} Charland, 139.
\textsuperscript{10} Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, \textit{Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future} (New York:
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 84.
\textsuperscript{11} Ronald Ehmke, "Ani Difranco Talks About the Making of Her Album \textit{So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter.}"
\textsuperscript{12} Billy Cerveny, “Radio Listeners Nix the Chicks: Anti-Bush Remark Earns Scorn in Dixie,” \textit{The Washington
Times}, March 20, 2003, B05.
\textsuperscript{13} James Montgomery, “Vote For Change Kickoff: Springsteen Seeks Humanity, Oberst Wants ‘This Madman’
\textsuperscript{14} For citations of these works see endnote 51 in the introduction to this thesis.
Discography


Body of War: Songs that Inspired an Iraq War Veteran, March 14, 2008. Sire


Bright Eyes, “When the President Talks to God,” November 6, 2007. Motion Sickness: Live Recordings, Team Love Records


Cake, “Sheep Go To Heaven,” October 6, 1998. Prolonging the Magic, Volcano


Pink, “Dear Mr. President,” April 4, 2006. *I’m Not Dead*, LaFace Records


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Lyrics: Self Evident
Written and Performed by: Ani DiFranco

yes,
us people are just poems
we're 90% metaphor
with a leanness of meaning
approaching hyper-distillation
and once upon a time
we were moonshine
rushing down the throat of a giraffe
yes, rushing down the long hallway
despite what the p.a. announcement says
yes, rushing down the long stairs
with the whiskey of eternity
fermented and distilled
to eighteen minutes
burning down our throats
down the hall
down the stairs
in a building so tall
that it will always be there
yes, it's part of a pair
there on the bow of noah's ark
the most prestigious couple
just kickin back parked
against a perfectly blue sky
on a morning beatific
in its indian summer breeze
on the day that america
fell to its knees
after strutting around for a century
without saying thank you
or please

and every borough looked up when it heard
the first blast
and then every dumb action movie was
summarily surpassed
and the exodus uptown by foot and motorcar
looked more like war than anything i've seen
so far
so far
so far
so fierce and ingenious
a poetic specter so far gone
that every jackass newscaster was struck
dumb and stumbling
over 'oh my god' and 'this is unbelievable'
and on and on
and i'll tell you what, while we're at it
you can keep the pentagon
keep the propaganda
keep each and every tv
that's been trying to convince me
to participate
in some prep school punk's plan to
perpetuate retribution
perpetuate retribution
even as the blue toxic smoke of our lesson in
retribution
is still hanging in the air
and there's ash on our shoes
and there's ash in our hair
and there's a fine silt on every mantle
from hell's kitchen to brooklyn
and the streets are full of stories
sudden twists and near misses
and soon every open bar is crammed to the
rafters
with tales of narrowly averted disasters
and the whiskey is flowin
like never before
as all over the country
folks just shake their heads
and pour
so here's a toast to all the folks who live in
palestine
afghanistan
iraq
el salvador
here's a toast to the folks living on the pine
ridge reservation
under the stone cold gaze of mt. rushmore
here's a toast to all those nurses and doctors
who daily provide women with a choice
who stand down a threat the size of
oklahoma city
just to listen to a young woman's voice
here's a toast to all the folks on death row
right now
awaiting the executioner's guillotine
who are shackled there with dread and can
only escape into their heads
to find peace in the form of a dream
cuz take away our playstations
and we are a third world nation
under the thumb of some blue blood royal
son
who stole the oval office and that phony
election
i mean
it don't take a weatherman
to look around and see the weather
jeb said he'd deliver florida, folks
and boy did he ever
and we hold these truths to be self evident:
#1 george w. bush is not president
#2 america is not a true democracy
#3 the media is not fooling me
cuz i am a poem heeding hyper-distillation
i've got no room for a lie so verbose
i'm looking out over my whole human
family
and i'm raising my glass in a toast
here's to our last drink of fossil fuels
let us vow to get off of this sauce
shoo away the swarms of commuter planes
and find that train ticket we lost
cuz once upon a time the line followed the
river
and peeked into all the backyards
and the laundry was waving
the graffiti was teasing us
from brick walls and bridges
we were rolling over ridges
through valleys
under stars
i dream of touring like duke ellington
in my own railroad car
i dream of waiting on the tall blonde wooden
benches
in a grand station aglow with grace
and then standing out on the platform
and feeling the air on my face
give back the night its distant whistle
give the darkness back its soul
give the big oil companies the finger finally
and relearn how to rock-n-roll
yes, the lessons are all around us and a
change is waiting there
so it's time to pick through the rubble, clean
the streets
and clear the air
get our government to pull its big dick out of
the sand
of someone else's desert
put it back in its pants
and quit the hypocritical chants of
freedom forever
cuz when one lone phone rang
in two thousand and one
at ten after nine
on nine one one
which is the number we all called
when that lone phone rang right off the wall
right off our desk and down the long hall
down the long stairs
in a building so tall
that the whole world turned
just to watch it fall

and while we're at it
remember the first time around?
the bomb?
the ryder truck?
the parking garage?
the princess that didn't even feel the pea?
remember joking around in our apartment on
avenue D?

can you imagine how many paper coffee
cups would have to change their design
following a fantastical reversal of the new
york skyline?!

it was a joke, of course
it was a joke
at the time
and that was just a few years ago
so let the record show
that the FBI was all over that case
that the plot was obvious and in everybody's
face
and scoping that scene
religiously
the CIA
or is it KGB?
committing countless crimes against
humanity
with this kind of eventuality
as its excuse
for abuse after expensive abuse
and it didn't have a clue
look, another window to see through
way up here
on the 104th floor
look
another key
another door
10% literal
90% metaphor
3000 some poems disguised as people
on an almost too perfect day
should be more than pawns

in some asshole's passion play
so now it's your job
and it's my job
to make it that way
to make sure they didn't die in vain
shhhhhhh....
baby listen
hear the train?
When the president talks to God
Are the conversations brief or long
Does he ask to rape our women’s rights
And send poor farm kids off to die
Does God suggest an oil hike
When the president talks to God

When the president talks to God
Are the consonants all hard or soft
Is he resolute all down the line
Is every issue black or white
Does what God say ever change his mind
When the president talks to God?

When the president talks to God
Does he fake that drawl or merely nod
Agree which convicts should be killed
Where prisons should be built and filled
Which voter fraud must be concealed
When the president talks to God?

When the president talks to God
I wonder which one plays the better cop
We should find some jobs the ghetto's broke
No, they're lazy, George, I say we don't
Just give 'em more liquor stores and dirty coke
That's what God recommends

When the president talks to God
Do they drink near beer and go play golf
While they pick which countries to invade
Which Muslim souls still can be saved
I guess God just calls a spade a spade
When the president talks to God