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MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COWBOYS: THE RHETORICAL VISION
OF COUNTRY-WESTERN POPULAR SONGS, 1970-1979

The Ohio State University

Ph.D. 1985

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My heroes have always been cowboys
And they still are it seems
Sadly in search of and one step in back of
Themselves and their slow moving dreams

"My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys," by Sharon Vaughn,
copyright ASCAP (Recorded by Waylon Jennings on RCA Records
LP "The Outlaws," 1977).

MY HEROES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN COWBOYS:
THE RHETORICAL VISION OF COUNTRY-WESTERN
POPULAR SONGS, 1970-1979

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By

Terrence Calvin Winebrenner, B.S., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University

1985

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1985

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LIST OF TABLES

Table

1.	Type One (Interpersonal) Themes	161
2.	Type Two (Intrapersonal) Themes	167
3.	Type Three (World View) Themes	171
4.	Theme Fragments (By Type)	177
5.	Romantic Love Theme Fragments	178
6.	Character Theme Fragments	182
7.	Emotional Outlook Theme Fragments	186
8.	Self Concept Theme Fragments	190
9.	Religion Theme Fragments	193
10.	World View Themes	195
11.	Core Theme Codings	273
12.	Theme Fragment Codings	274

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
VITA	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
 CHAPTERS	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale	3
The Country-Western Explosion	6
The Country-Western Culture Class	10
The Country-Western Decade	13
Theoretical Perspective	17
Methodology	23
Content Description	23
Content Interpretation	28
Chapter Outline	30
Chapter One Notes	32
II. RHETORICAL INQUIRY AND THE POPULAR SONG	42
Growing Interest in Music Communication	43
Functional Dimensions of Music Communication ..	47
Persuasive Function	48
Expressive Function	49
Commercial Function	52
Critical Dimensions of Music Communication ...	55
Artist Centered Criticism	57
Situation Centered Criticism	65
Audience Centered Criticism	72
Summary	88
Chapter Two Notes	90
III. THE COUNTRY-WESTERN RHETORICAL EVENT	99
The Act	99
Means of Presentation	100
Musicological Character	115
Lyric Content	125
The Audience	130
The Event	143
Chapter Three Notes	149

IV.	THE LYRIC CONTENT OF COUNTRY-WESTERN POPULAR SONGS	160
	Core Themes	160
	Theme Fragments	177
	Summary	199
	Chapter Four Notes	202
V.	THE RHETORICAL VISION OF COUNTRY-WESTERN POPULAR SONGS	211
	The Heroic Fantasy	211
	The Romantic Fantasy	218
	The Escape Fantasy	221
	The Rhetorical Vision	228
	Chapter Five Notes	232
VI.	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	234
	Chapter Six Notes	254
APPENDICES		
A.	<u>BILLBOARD</u> "TOP COUNTRY SINGLES" 1970-1979	257
B.	SAMPLE CODED SONG AND COMPLETED CODING SHEET	268
C.	COMPILED CORE THEME AND THEME FRAGMENT CODINGS ..	272
DISCOGRAPHY		276
BIBLIOGRAPHY		298

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"The jukebox, a peculiarly American institution, has long been a rich source of social and psychological truths. Many a hypothesis is available to the researcher for a mere quarter (three hypotheses for 50 cents). Although numerous musical styles . . . offer testable ideas, Country and Western music offers an impressive medley of themes that are particularly amenable to psychological investigation." ¹ In this manner, James Pennebaker whimsically introduced a research report confirming a psychological thesis suggested in a popular country-western song. ² Scholars from other disciplines have likewise found country-western music to be a rich source of research data, perhaps realizing, as did Jens Lund, that "An issue captured in song has an emotional impact that it does not carry when it is read from the sociologist's questionnaire or heard over the telephone from the lips of a professional pollster. It may contain the essential difference between what people ³ think about an issue and how they actually feel about it."

Communication scholars, in particular, ought to be interested in the musical messages expressed in country-western popular songs. According to Robert Beckley and Paul

Chalfant, country-western songs constitute a medium through which people share the "ideal and real values of what has been called middle-America."⁴ As Charles Gritzner puts it, "In its own distinct manner, country music communicates in a clear and obviously appealing way to many Americans who identify with 'red necks, white sox (sic), and blue collars.'⁵" Gritzner continues, "Hailed by some critics as America's great musical gift to people the world over, country music has been viewed less enthusiastically by others as being simplistic, unsophisticated, right-wing, boring, bedrock Baptist, redneck, ignorant, and probably racist. No doubt it is all of these and more: [Country music is] a kaleidoscopic self potrait of a substantial segment of American popular culture set to lyrics and music."⁶ Country-western music is, he concludes, a valid medium of group communication, a medium which reflects the dominant attitudes and feelings of the individuals who participate in a unique rhetorical transaction.⁷ From this perspective, the musical messages shared through country-western popular songs are viewed as components in what Ernest Wrage calls the "mosaic of documents" through which popular ideas find expression and seek force.⁸

It is the express intent of this dissertation to undertake a rhetorical analysis of the musical messages shared by a significant American audience through the lyrics of contemporary country-western popular songs. The research

is motivated by the significant role country-western music has played in American popular culture, particularly during the decade of the 1970s, and is grounded in Ernest Bormann's concept of rhetorical vision. The purposes of this chapter are to discuss the rationale for undertaking the study, to identify the theoretical perspective which guides the research, to describe the methods by which data have been collected and analyzed, and to provide an outline for the remainder of the dissertation.

Rationale

Current directions in American popular music are indexed through trends in commercial radio programming. Richard Peterson indicates that music popularity is a product of symbiosis between the commercial recording and radio broadcast industries.⁹ Peterson explains that music production firms are geared almost exclusively to recording and distributing music on a mass scale and are ill-equipped to effectively promote the vast profusion of records continually dumped on the market place. Instead, producers rely on radio stations to advertise records through repeated airplay. Broadcasters, in turn, depend upon the free records provided by producers as a source of inexpensive programming. According to Peterson, only those records which receive considerable airplay are likely to become commercially successful.¹⁰ Thus, scholars interested in

recorded music as an artifact of popular culture may safely assume that music broadcast on commercial American radio and American popular music are essentially one and the same. While it may be true that there are music streams which are not represented on radio playlists, these are unlikely to be popular streams.¹¹ The records which do appear on these playlists, then, define what is popular in American music.

In recent years, the composition of radio broadcast playlists has led a number of popular culture analysts to reform explanations about the natural maturation of popular art forms, at least inasmuch as these explanations relate to music art. The traditional hypothesis was that maturing popular art forms undergo a process of massification in which diffusion leads to a homogenized product.¹² Jose Gasset, in his seminal statement of the massification hypothesis, explained "The mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select. Anyone who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated."¹³ Dwight Macdonald described how massification should affect cultural artifacts. "Mass culture is a dynamic, revolutionary force, breaking down the old barriers of class, tradition, taste, and dissolving all cultural distinctions. It mixes and scrambles everything together, producing what might be called homogenized culture."¹⁴ As applied to popular music, the massification

hypothesis predicted that, as the commercial recording industry matured, stylistic heterogeneity would give way to a uniform popular music style.¹⁵

The predicted homogenization of popular music has not taken place. Competition for advertising dollars has encouraged broadcasters to abandon the practice of defining the radio audience as a conglomerate and to orient programming toward discrete audience groups. The advent of horizontal programming has helped preserve commercial markets for heterogeneous music styles by giving widespread exposure to music which only appeals to segments of the mass audience. Rather than discouraging innovation, radio audiences have demanded recordings tailored to satisfy a variety of musical tastes.¹⁶ Rather than evolving toward uniformity, popular music has diversified. Today the commercial music industry recognizes more than a dozen distinct streams of popular music.¹⁷ Each of these streams¹⁸ is generally associated with a particular music audience. Suprisingly, country-western popular songs command the attention of one of the larger audiences.

According to one observer of the American popular music scene, "The latent popularity of country, or 'hillbilly' music . . . was one of the surprises of the century, at least to those who were generally supposed to be wise in such matters."¹⁹ The surprise was not that country-western music would survive in an eclectic music market. Indeed, the

commercial history of country-western music spans some fifty years of small-scale radio broadcasts, record sales and live performances.²⁰ What supprises popular culture analysts is that country-western music has matured into a significant popular music stream, and that it has done so by breaking down traditional audience barriers.²¹

The country-western explosion. Little more than a decade ago, John Greenway observed about country-western music, "The prejudice of Americans against their only living folk music is so strong and pervasive that it cannot be explained by standards of scholarship or ethics. It is a matter of social pathology."²² Gritzner identified four reasons for the historical rejection of country-western music: (1) The traditional themes of country-western songs addressed psychological realities that audiences were not generally willing to face. (2) Country-western was undeniably a peasant music form and thus carried a stigma of "low art." (3) Country-western music was generally associated with the rural South and its negative cultural stereotypes. (4) Many people found the vocal styles of country singers aesthetically displeasing.²³ As John Buckley put it, "much of the public thinks of country music as an artistic and intellectual wasteland."²⁴ It is not surprising, then, that popular culture analysts were unprepared for the country-western explosion of the 1970s.

In 1959, the Country Music Association was formed by Nashville music industry executives who were concerned about the inability of country-western music to compete with teen-oriented rock and roll music in commercial markets.²⁵ Their concern was genuine. In the preceding five years, rock and roll music had so captured the national attention that it threatened to engulf all other forms of popular music. During that period, full-time country radio programming and country music television shows all but disappeared from the airwaves.²⁶ Influenced, no doubt, by CMA promotional skills, the country-western music industry was able to weather the rock and roll threat, and has grown to become a dominant stream of popular music.²⁷

The country-western explosion is well documented. As Billboard, an entertainment industry trade magazine, noted, "The growth of country music has . . . paralleled that of the increasing number of radio stations programming it."²⁸ According to the Country Music Association, in 1983 over one-third of all U.S. commercial radio stations programmed country-western music. Furthermore, seven of every ten stations broadcasting country-western music programmed this format exclusively.²⁹ This figure is particularly impressive when placed in historical perspective. In 1961, the first year for which CMA statistics are available, only 81 radio stations broadcast full-time country-western programming. During the next two decades, this figure

inflated at an annual rate of over 20% before peaking at ³⁰ 2,311 full-time country-western stations in 1982. As a proportion of the total number of U.S. commercial radio stations, full-time country-western stations grew from 1.67% in 1961 to 26.91% in 1982. ³¹ In 1982, according to a radio format survey conducted by the National Radio Broadcasters Association, only adult-contemporary music commanded the ³² airtime of more stations than did country-western music.

As might be expected, the increasing number of radio stations broadcasting country-western music has been accompanied by a rapidly growing listening audience. According to research conducted by R. Serge Denisoff, in 1970 only 6% of a sample adult (18+) music audience ³³ preferred country-western music. In fact, while country-western was preferred to rock and roll (2%), and comparable to folk and folk rock (5%) and rhythm and blues (7%), it was sadly outdistanced by jazz (10%), Broadway shows and movie themes (24%) and classical and religious music (34%). The number of adults preferring country-western music grew rapidly during the next few years. By 1973, 17% of all record consumers, 21% of record buyers earning over \$12,000, and almost one of every three record buyers between the ages ³⁴ of 20 and 29, preferred country-western music. In 1978, the Nashville, Tennessee Area Chamber of Commerce commissioned Shockley Research, Inc., to determine the average American adult's image of Nashville. One section of

the Shockley Research survey addressed preferences in popular music. "Country music placed a strong second, at 33%, behind easy listening (42%) and ahead of rock (29%), as the favorite music of the cross section sampled. Among those who did not indicate country music as their favorite, 40% say they do listen to it to some extent."³⁵

Another basis for comparing audience preferences is found in the semi-annual Arbitron market share reports for various radio airplay formats.³⁶ Although published Arbitron data are not available for years prior to 1976, the market share ratings do document that a rapidly increasing number of Americans listen to country-western music. In the fall of 1976, country-western was the number four ranked radio format behind rock music, beautiful music, and middle-of-the-road (MOR) music, and commanded a market share rating of 7.76%.³⁷ In the spring of 1983, country-western peaked at number two behind rock music and ahead of adult-contemporary (AC), beautiful music and MOR, and commanded a market share of 12.63%.³⁸ In 1976, country-western music was listened to by less than a quarter of the number of people who listened to rock music, and less than half the number of people who listened to MOR.³⁹ In 1983, the country-western audience was 66% larger than the MOR audience, and had reduced the lead of rock music by more than 12 percentage points.⁴⁰

Finally, the country-western explosion is evident in sales data for recorded country-western music. In 1963, country-western records accounted for only 5% of total sales for recorded music in the United States. Seventeen years later, country-western records were accounting for almost 15% of the recording industry gross.⁴¹ In 1980, according to a survey conducted by the National Association of Recording Merchandisers, country-western recordings had become number two in total sales, trailing only an amalgam of music styles categorized as rock.⁴² It is clear, that country-western recordings have grown from minority status to a significant component of the recorded music industry.⁴³

The country-western culture class. Just as country-western music's growing popularity came as a surprise to observers of popular culture, so have its audience demographics failed to conform to general expectations. Herbert Gans interpreted the failure of the massification hypothesis to explain diversity in popular music to mean that audiences for popular culture are not an undifferentiated mass. Contrarily, Gans suggested that popular audiences form discrete taste cultures, or groups of similar people making similar choices about similar items.⁴⁴ These taste cultures are defined by their "demographic and structural parameters" and are characterized by "common consumption within those parameters."⁴⁵ Paul Hirsch explains taste cultures as they apply to modern popular

music. "Each major popular song style appeals disproportionately to a particular 'subculture' or listener segment of the mass audience. Members of each audience segment generally share a number of background characteristics in common."⁴⁶ Denisoff identifies these characteristics as age, ethnicity, geography, race, religion and social class.⁴⁷ The presumption, then, is that the growing popularity of country-western music should be attributable to a wider acceptance of country-western songs within the demographically distinct group to which they have traditionally appealed. Based on his review of several audience demographic surveys, Buckley described the traditional country-western audience in some detail. Audience members were likely to be Southern, clustered between the ages of 25 and 49, to have a high school education or less (more likely the latter), to be predominantly working class, and to earn an annual income of between \$5,000 and \$15,000.⁴⁸

Since the taste culture hypothesis predicts that growth in a popular music stream should occur primarily within its traditional social class, the rising popularity of country-western music should have been characterized by polarizing audience demographics. That is, growing popularity should have been positively correlated to increasing acceptance of country music by traditional demographic groups with little, if any, correlation to increasing acceptance by other groups. Such has decidedly not been the case. While

country-western has remained the music of preference within its traditional social class, the increased demand for country-western music has come primarily from new demographic groups.⁴⁹ As one record industry executive puts it, "It's no longer unfashionable to like country music. It's come out of the closet."⁵⁰ In fact, according to a recent audience demographic survey commissioned by the McGavren Guild, "13.4% of all country listeners are college graduates, 15.3% work in managerial capacities, [and] 11.9% earn more than \$50,000 annually."⁵¹ Based on the changing demographics which have accompanied the country-western explosion, Peterson and Di Maggio concluded that country-western music has broken from ethnic and regional tradition and that "no twisting of the data can equate country music with a distinct social class defined in terms of income and its correlates, occupation and education."⁵²

Just as popular music's failure to homogenize compromised the massification hypothesis, the changing demographics of the country-western audience have led popular culture theorists to modify the taste culture hypothesis. Several theorists have advanced an alternative concept of culture classes, or "groupings of individuals who share common consumption patterns, yet do not distribute themselves neatly with respect to the traditional indicators of taste cultures."⁵³ Peterson and Di Maggio see the country-western audience as a subculture defined by personal

54

choices rather than social forces. According to George Lewis, culture classes develop in areas where choices are influenced by more immediate sets of experiences than those associated with social construction, and thus, that different styles of popular music "represent indicators of alternative world views."⁵⁵ Thus, preferences in popular music reflect rhetorical as well as aesthetic choices. As Gritzner puts it, "country music serves as a barometer for certain aspects of American popular culture. As the mood of the nation changes, country music adapts to express popular opinion quite accurately -- if in its own terms."⁵⁶

The country-western decade. James Chesebro has noted that popular music is frequently discussed in terms of particular musical decades. "Such decade references," he indicated, "apparently reflect memorable and important temporal stages of passage. . . . More important, such a 'decade perspective' constitutes an important reflection of the way in which popular music is typically understood [and] decade references do generate some interesting insights into the nature of popular music."⁵⁷ For country-western music, the memorable stage of passage is undoubtedly the decade of the 1970s.⁵⁸ As the entertainment trade paper Variety described the period, "If there ever was a tumultuous decade for country music, it was the '70s. Old traditions, old stigmas began to shake loose and country music by the end of

the decade emerged a winner." Or, as Billboard put it, during the 1970s country-western music came of age.

The very indicators which document the country-western explosion support the notion that the 1970s are particularly important in the history of country-western music. The primary growth in the number of full-time country-western radio stations occurred between 1971 and 1979. During that period, the total number of stations broadcasting a full-time country-western format grew from 525 to 1,434 (an increase of almost 275%, with an annual growth rate of just under 14%), and the full-time country-western station as a proportion of all commercial radio stations grew from 7.76% to 18.07% (a growth of 1.29 points per year and a gross increase of over 230%). By comparison, since 1980 the gross number of full-time stations has grown at a more moderate 8.33% annual rate and the proportional rate has increased 1.1 points per year. Since the popularity peak of 1982, the gross number of full-time stations has decreased almost 1% and the proportional rate has fallen almost 2.5 points.

A similar picture characterizes the other major indicators of country-western popularity, audience share ratings and record sales. During the first four years for which published Arbitron ratings are available (1976-1979), the average country-western audience share grew 4.47%. However, during the last four years for which published ratings are available (1981-1984), the average audience

share declined 3.28%. Once a solid Number Two in the ratings race, country-western music has slipped to a tentative Number Three, hotly pursued by beautiful music,⁶² album-oriented-rock (AOR) and black/urban music. The 1984 audience share is still significantly higher than the 1976 share, and must be astronomically higher than 1970 when there were fewer than 600 full-time country-western stations. However, it is clear to interested observers that, as a successful radio format, country-western grew⁶³ primarily during the 1970s and peaked soon thereafter. Record sales data tell the same story. Between 1973 and 1980, annual country-western record sales increased by \$175 million. During that period, only rock music sold more⁶⁴ records than country-western. By the end of the decade, country-western crossed the \$500 million mark in annual retail sales and was attracting one of every seven dollars⁶⁵ spent on recorded music. In 1979, country-western was the only major music stream to record a retail sales gain, as country-western sales increased \$11 million in a market⁶⁶ which declined by \$500 million. In the last five years, the country-western music sales curve has flattened. Through 1981, country-western retail sales continued to climb, although the country-western percentage of recording⁶⁷ industry gross remained relatively stable. Since that time, country-western retail sales have declined, with⁶⁸ estimates running in the range of 15-20%. In a sharp

reversal of the industry's 1979 experience, Record Industry Association of America figures show that in 1984 country-western retail sales declined while the industry gross increased by 15%.⁶⁹ By 1984, according to the National Association of Recording Merchandisers, country-western music had slipped to Number Three in sales volume behind rock music and black music, and was accounting for only 9%⁷⁰ of the industry gross.

Entertainment industry executives recognize the obvious. While some once proclaimed that country-western would be the "No. 1 '80s Format," executives now seem to agree that the popularity of country-western music peaked,⁷¹ declined, then stabilized. Through this, country-western music has remained "unquestionably . . . a healthy, viable format."⁷² As Billboard indicated, the "country gold rush" is over, but "if country [has] reached its apex, it shows no signs of losing ground in the aftermath. Rather, country⁷³ seems to have found its center."

So, when did the country-western explosion ignite? When did country-western music reach its popularity peak? As Variety noted, it would be "dangerous, if not impossible⁷⁴ to pinpoint the actual turning point." It is clear that throughout the 1970s country-western constituted a major stream of popular music. In the beginning of the decade almost one in every ten commercial radio stations programmed a full-time country-western format. However, only five

years earlier there were less than 100 such stations. By the end of the decade, almost one in every five stations broadcast country-western music full-time. However, country radio did not reach its peak until 1982. Throughout the decade country-western music gained an increasing share of the popular music audience. However, while the last few years have seen a declining country-western audience, the curve did not begin to flatten until 1981. During the decade the country-western record industry captured an increasing amount of the money popular music fans spent on recorded music. However, retail sales figures did not begin to decline until 1982. The point is not that country-western music suddenly burst upon the popular music scene in 1970 to put in a disappearing act a decade later. The point is that country-western music grew up during the 1970s. As Jim Ray, the president of the Country Radio Broadcasters Association, described the decade, "It really legitimized country. . . . It finished off the myth that people who listen to country are a bunch of rednecks don't make any money."⁷⁵

Theoretical Perspective

In 1972, Ernest Bormann suggested the notion that the content of public communication is replete with messages which serve to provide participants with "a social reality filled with heroes, villains, emotions, and attitudes."⁷⁶

Bormann's concept presents a description of rhetorical transaction which gives valuable insight into the relationships between the content of public expression and the visions people share.

Bormann believes that people cope with their here-and-now condition by constructing subjective interpretations which account "plausibly for the evidence of the senses."⁷⁷ He explains, "Events are often complicated and chaotic. People dislike a senseless world, so they try to find an explanatory pattern within the chaos."⁷⁸ Bormann refers to such pattern as fantasy, or the "creative and imaginative interpretation of events that fulfills a psychological or rhetorical need."⁷⁹ According to Bormann, rhetorical transaction publicly proclaims the personal fantasies of the participants.

Bormann's primary interest has been in the convergence of these personal fantasies. In his initial discussion, Bormann professed particular interest in the way individual fantasies often chain out as more and more people participate in fantasy expression and come to recognize a common ground of values and attitudes. As he explained, "A member dramatizes a theme that catches the group and causes it to chain out because it hits a common psychodynamic chord or a hidden agenda item or their common difficulties vis-a-vis the natural environment, the socio-political systems, or the economic structures. The group grows excited, involved,

[and] more dramas chain out to create a common symbolic reality. . . ."⁸⁰ Group members may, in turn, take the fantasies to other groups and the dramas will continue to chain out and be taken up by a larger public. In going public, the fantasies create composite dramas which catch up large groups in a rhetorical vision of reality. As the vision emerges, those who share the fantasies in appropriate ways bond together through common symbolism to form a rhetorical community.⁸¹ In his most recent work, The Force of Fantasy, Bormann noted, "When we share a fantasy, we make sense out of what prior to that time may have been a confusing state of affairs and we do so in common with others who share the fantasy with us. Thus, we come to symbolic convergence on the matter and envision that part of our world in similar ways. We have created some symbolic common ground, and we can then talk with one another about that shared interpretation. . . ."⁸² He continued, "Shared fantasies are coherent accounts of experience in the past or envisioned in the future that . . . provide artistic and comprehensible forms for thinking about and experiencing the future. Fantasy themes are always slanted, ordered, and interpreted; they provide a rhetorical means for several communities of people to account for and explain the same experiences or the same events in different ways."⁸³

Bormann seems to be concerned with rhetorical visions primarily in their suatory context. "Much of what has

commonly been thought of as persuasion," he writes, "can be
 accounted for on the basis of group and mass fantasies."⁸⁴

As Bormann noted when he initially outlined fantasy theme
 analysis, rhetorical visions enable scholars to "account for
 the development, evolution, and decay of dramas that catch
 up groups of people and change their behavior."⁸⁵ Bormann
 continually refers to fantasy chains in rhetorical
 movements, persuasive campaigns, consciousness-raising and
 consciousness-sustaining communication, and debate and
 discussion, claiming "the force of fantasy not only accounts
 for the irrational and nonrational aspects of persuasion,
 but . . . provides the ground for the rational elements as
 well."⁸⁶

This view of rhetorical transaction, however, is also
 useful to critics concerned with rhetorical visions in their
 mimetic context. As Bormann indicates, his view of fantasy
 expression is grounded in symbolic convergence theory -- or
 the notion that audiences converge as they jointly identify
 with the fantasies which make up a rhetorical vision.⁸⁷ An
 individual buys into a vision because in its dramatizing
 messages he sees vestiges of his personal subjective
 reality. A vision chains out as a social subjective reality
 when and because groups of people share the fantasies
 expressed in the messages. The common fantasizing which
 leads to convergence is documented in the content of the
 messages which make up a rhetorical vision. As Bormann puts

it, meanings do not exist "to be expressed in communication but rather arise in the expression itself and come to be embedded in the drama of the fantasy themes that generated and serve to sustain them."⁸⁸ These meanings are important either in the frequency with which they appear in the messages of the group or in the qualitative significance of the messages in which they do appear.⁸⁹ Rhetorical critics can thus "describe the social reality contained in the shared consciousness as represented in the rhetorical vision constructed from a study of the fantasy themes and types, the analogies and figurative language in a body of discourse."⁹⁰

In a suatory context critics focus on fantasy themes as they chain out. The themes are put together into a rhetorical vision in hopes of uncovering how the fantasies sustain a group and arouse its members emotionally and drive them to action. Conversely, in a mimetic context critics focus on fantasy themes chained out. The themes are viewed as components of a rhetorical vision which expresses a subjective reality shared by the group. Mimetic criticism is less concerned with how a symbolic common ground was used to impell a group to action than it is with identifying the common ground and understanding the subjective social reality it represents. Bormann suggested something akin to a mimetic view of fantasy when he discussed the rhetorical vision of the Puritans. "If we examine the internal fantasy

of the community as revealed in the sermons of their ministers, we discover the characters of the drama, their emotional values, their actions, and their relationship to an over-reaching supernatural power. We come to a new understanding of the grubbing in the wilderness and we have an opportunity to be in possession of much more of the Puritan experience."⁹¹

This study proceeds from the assumption that the lyrics of country-western popular songs will reveal as much about the subjective social reality of the country-western audience as the content of sermons reveals about the Puritan experience. Popular songs express personal fantasies which have gone public. An audience which accepts a song is one which finds in the song a psychodynamic common ground. Alan Merriam explains that "song texts often reveal deep-seated values and goals stated only with the greatest reluctance in normal discourse. This may lead, in turn, to the discernment of an available index of the prevailing ethos of a culture, or to a sort of national character generalization."⁹² Merriam concludes, "Indeed, because of the freedom of expression allowed in song, texts seem clearly to provide an excellent means for the investigation of the psychological processes of the people who constitute a culture."⁹³

Methodology

This study proposes to describe the rhetorical vision of a significant segment of contemporary American society -- the country-western music audience. Two specific questions guide the research: (1) What statements do popular country-western songs make about the concerns and values of the country-western audience? (2) What do these statements reveal about the shared symbolic reality of this audience? The specific procedures have been adapted from Bormann's outline of the fantasy theme analysis approach to rhetorical criticism.

Content description. Bormann suggests that a scholar interested in discovering and evaluating the shared symbolic reality of a rhetorical community begin by collecting a number of dramatic incidents from the manifest content of the communication, "using video or audio tapes, manuscripts, recollections of participants, or his own direct observation."⁹⁴ In these incidents, the scholar looks for evidence that groups of people have shared fantasies. According to Bormann, "When similar dramatizing material such as wordplay, narratives, figures, and analogies crops up in a variety of messages in different contexts, such repetition is evidence of symbolic convergence."⁹⁵

The content used in this study was drawn from the lyrics of country-western songs listed on Billboard popularity ratings charts, a source music professionals

consider to be the most reputable popularity index in the music industry.⁹⁶ Billboard is the primary source for music popularity ratings used in popular music research.⁹⁷ Among its weekly ratings charts, Billboard includes a popularity chart devoted exclusively to country-western music. The country-western ratings are based on data collected from weekly surveys of 70-75 wholesale and retail sales outlets and 125 radio stations. The popularity assessment is weighted to reflect commercial sales, position on radio playlists, and amount of airplay.⁹⁸ Each October, Billboard publishes a "World of Country Music" supplement which includes a cumulative ratings chart for the 25 to 100 most popular country-western songs from the preceding year, as determined by highest position attained and length of stay on the weekly "Hot Country 100" charts.⁹⁹ These annual charts provide a reliable year-by-year index to the most popular songs in the country-western music stream, and seem to be an appropriate source for collecting the manifest content expressing the country-western rhetorical vision.

The specific sample used in this study included the top 25 rated country-western songs for each year from 1970 through 1979. The ten year sample initially projected a population of 250 songs. However, the annual charts included eight "double-A" recordings (both "A" and "B" titles listed under a single ranking). Including both songs

from double-A records in the sample yielded an adjusted population of 258 country-western popular songs.

Three sources were consulted for lyric transcriptions. The majority of the song lyrics were obtained from issues of Country Song Roundup, a fan magazine which publishes lyrics for popular country songs of the day. Additional lyrics were obtained from commercial song books. The remaining lyrics were personally transcribed from records secured from private record collections. Using this procedure, 257 lyric¹⁰⁰ transcriptions were obtained.

The 257 lyric transcripts were content coded according to guidelines suggested by Budd, Thorpe and Donohew for the "objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."¹⁰¹ The specific procedures were designed to correspond to the poetics of country-western lyrics. As unplotted narratives, country-western songs develop an unusual relationship between theme and dramatic development.¹⁰² Like traditional ballads, country-western songs include allusions to the elements of drama -- action, character and setting.¹⁰³ However, Thomas Adler notes that in country-western songs the dramatic elements are secondary in importance to the emotional impact derived from the drama. This emotional core, he suggests, is that which is emphasized and cherished in the song. "The emotional core is a sort of minimal unit of artistic expression. It is, in a sense, the reason for the

song's existence. . . ." ¹⁰⁴ Tristram Coffin indicates that the emotional core is the key to interpreting song texts. "As an emotional core, it dominates the artistic act, and melody, setting, character, and plot are used only as means to get it across. The core is more important to the singer and the listeners than the details of the action themselves." ¹⁰⁵ The emotional core of a song seems to be the artistic equivalent of what Kenneth Burke refers to as the "central moltenness, where all the elements are fused into one togetherness" which gives substance to rhetoric. ¹⁰⁶ Bormann terms this fusion a fantasy theme, a rhetorical construct he describes as "a narrative or story about real or fictitious people in a dramatic situation or setting other than the here-and-now communication of the group. . . ." ¹⁰⁷ In constructing an emotional core, songs frequently make secondary references to fantasies which may be neither central to nor completely developed in the core theme. Kris Kristofferson's "The Silver Tongued Devil and I" offers an example of such secondary reference:

I took myself down to the Tally-Ho Tavern
 To buy me a bottle of beer
 I set myself down by a tender young maiden
 Whose eyes were as dark as her hair
 And as I was searching from bottle to bottle
 For something unfoolish to say
 The silver tongued devil just slipped from the shadows
 And smilingly stole her away /108

The passage "And as I was searching from bottle to bottle/For something unfoolish to say" not only contributes to the core theme, it also offers a brief glimpse into a

second fantasy, one relating to the use of alcohol. In its original context, this fragment might be ambiguous. But, when placed in a new context comprised of other fragments relating to the same theme, this reference could become part of a full-blown fantasy theme which may be interpreted as if it were an unplotted narrative.

The manifest content of the lyrics were coded into
 109
 theme categories. First, each song was coded as a core theme, or the theme suggested in the emotional core of the song's lyrics. In this stage, each song was coded into a single category. Second, each song was subdivided into
 110
 lyric passages -- poetic equivalents of assertions. Each passage referring to a theme other than that developed in the emotional core was coded as a theme fragment and placed into a category appropriate to the reference. In this stage, songs were susceptible to multiple coding. While core themes and theme fragments were coded into a single collection of categories, each coded unit retained its identity as a core theme or theme fragment.

A bilevel system of theme categories was developed. First, coded units were placed in primary theme categories relating to theme type. Based on analyses of country-western lyrics reported by other researchers, three initial theme types were projected -- fantasies addressing the individual's relations with himself, fantasies addressing the individual's relations with others, and fantasies

addressing the individual's relations with his physical
¹¹¹ environment. Second, each primary theme category was
 subdivided into lesser theme categories relating to theme
topics. Rather than approaching this stage of the analysis
 with predetermined topics, theme topic categories were
 created as necessary to accommodate the topics suggested by
 the core themes and theme fragments. Generating categories
 from rather than for content is an acceptable and commonly
¹¹² practiced procedure in content coding. This technique
 avoids the pitfalls of inappropriate coding by creating
 categories suggested by the themes rather than identifying
¹¹³ themes suggested by the categories.

Content interpretation. Bormann indicates that once
 the critic has compiled the content of a rhetorical vision
 and searched the discourse for common themes which are
 representative of the interpretive scripts, he may then
 begin to "ask more specific questions relating to elements
¹¹⁴ of the dramas." Bormann is particularly helpful in this
 regard. While he did not attempt to construct an exhaustive
 list of critical questions, Bormann did suggest "some of the
 more general questions that a critic might choose to
 investigate," noting that "A critic need not, of course,
 raise all of such questions for a given piece of criticism
 but for some in-depth critiques of a single message the
 critic might ask more questions and search for more
¹¹⁵ details." Bormann indicates that from answers to such

questions scholars "can learn of the hopes and fears, the emotional tone, and the inner life of a group by examining how it deals with basic, universal rhetorical problems."¹¹⁶

A representative list would include questions such as these:¹¹⁷

Who are the personae? Are characters consistently cast in the same role? How concrete and detailed are the characterizations? What motives are attributed to the heroes and villains? Are the dramas ultimately legitimized by abstractions personified as characters?

Where are the dramas set? What are the typical plots? What acts are performed by the characters? For what behaviors are the heroes praised and the villains blamed? What emotions sustain the dramas?

How is the rhetorical community characterized? How are outsiders characterized? How do insiders fit into the prevailing culture? How does the community fit into the scheme of history?

How well does the vision celebrate a sense of cohesion? Does the vision provide the community with an account of themselves, their environment, the world, fate? How does the rhetoric serve to attract new members to the community? Does the rhetoric aid the community in dealing with people who have participated in other rhetorical visions?

Bormann argues that through fantasy theme analysis scholars may attempt to "explain the way members of a

rhetorical community, who share the same consciousness and rhetorical vision, discuss their problems, concerns, delights, hopes, fears, and dreams as they go about their daily business, their worship, and their social affairs." ¹¹⁸

He concludes, "once we participate in the rhetorical vision of a community or movement, even if we keep an aesthetic distance, we have come vicariously to experience a way of life that would otherwise be less accessible to us, we have enlarged our awareness, we have become more fully human. Certainly the discovery and appreciation of rhetorical visions should be one possible function of criticism." ¹¹⁹

Chapter Outline

Chapter I involved an introduction to country-western music as a significant communication experience, discussion of a perspective on rhetorical transaction which holds that the content of public communication expresses shared symbolic realities, and description of the critical methods used in reconstructing the country-western rhetorical vision.

Chapter II will outline a general theory of music communication. It will include a survey of communication research addressing the rhetorical implications of musical messages and, drawing from related research in anthropology, ethnomusicology, folklore and psychology, argue for an

expansion of the rhetoric of music to include musical messages in their popular context.

Chapter III will describe the features which give identity to the country-western rhetorical act and the audience with whom this act is shared. From the intersection of act and audience will be drawn a description of the country-western rhetorical event.

Chapter IV will present the results of the content coding of individual country-western songs and organize the themes and fragments into a coherent interpretive script.

Chapter V will apply the techniques of fantasy theme analysis to the interpretive script in order to describe the country-western rhetorical vision and the fantasies which give it force.

Chapter VI will summarize the study and present its conclusions and implications.

CHAPTER ONE NOTES

1. James W. Pennebaker, "Truckin' With Country-Western Psychology," Psychology Today 13 (November 1979), 18.

2. "Don't the Girls All Get Prettier at Closing Time," by Baker Knight (recorded by Mickey Guilley on Playboy Records, 1976). Pennebaker found "On a scale from 1 to 10, perceived attractiveness of the opposite sex rose steadily after 10:30 p.m., as the time remaining for finding a suitable pickup ran out." See Pennebaker, "Truckin' With Country-Western Psychology," 19.

3. Jens Lund, "Country Music Goes to War: Songs for the Red-Blooded American," Popular Music and Society 1 (Spring 1972), 227. For examples of scholarly research using country-western music see Ann Nietzsche, "Doin' Somebody Wrong," Human Behavior 28 (November 1975), 64-69; Patricia Freudiger and Elizabeth M. Almquist, "Male and Female Roles in the Lyrics of Three Genres of Contemporary Music," Sex Roles 4 (Number 1, 1978), 51-74; Paul J. Bach and James M. Schaefer, "The Tempo of Country Music and the Rate of Drinking in Bars," Journal of Studies on Alcohol 11 (November 1979), 1058-1059; Robert E. Beckley and H. Paul Chalfant, "Contrasting Images of Alcohol and Drug Use in Country and Rock Music," Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education 25 (Fall 1979), 44-51; Jens Lund, "Fundamentalism, Racism, and Political Reaction in Country Music," in The Sounds of Social Change, eds. R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A. Peterson (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 79-91; Charles F. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," Journal of Popular Culture 11 (Spring 1978), 857-864; and John Buckley, "Country Music and American Values," Popular Music and Society 6 (Spring 1979), 293-301.

4. Beckley and Chalfant, "Contrasting Images of Alcohol and Drug Use," 45.

5. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," 857.

6. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," 857.

7. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," 858-859.
8. Ernest J. Wraga, "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," Quarterly Journal of Speech 33 (December 1947), 451-457, reprinted in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective, eds. Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 104.
9. Richard A. Peterson, "The Production of Cultural Change: The Case of Contemporary Country Music," Social Research 45 (Summer 1978), 296-298.
10. Peterson, "The Production of Cultural Change," 297.
11. D. K. Wilgus, "Country-Western Music and the Urban Hillbilly," Journal of American Folklore 83 (April-June 1970), 172.
12. R. Serge Denisoff, "Massification and Popular Music: A Review," Journal of Popular Culture 9 (Spring 1976), 886-894.
13. Jose Ortega Gasset, Revolt of the Masses (New York: W. W. Norton, 1957), 18.
14. Dwight Macdonald, "A Theory of Mass Culture," in Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, eds. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), 62.
15. Richard A. Peterson and Paul Di Maggio, "From Region to Class, The Changing Locus of Country Music: A Test of the Massification Hypothesis," Social Forces 53 (March 1975), 498.
16. Richard A. Peterson and Russell B. Davis, "The Contemporary American Radio Audience," Popular Music and Society 6 (Spring 1978), 170.
17. "Billboard Arbitron Ratings," Billboard 91 (March 17, 1979), 34.
18. A number of researchers have been successful in correlating popular music streams with particular audiences. See Denisoff, "Massification and Popular Music," 890; Paul Hirsch A Progress Report on an Exploratory Study of Youth Culture and the Popular Music Industry (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1970), 50-51; Julia Mae Schmidt Kunz, "The Social Meaning of Song Style" (Ph.D.

dissertation, St. Louis University, 1978), 116-118; and George H. Lewis, "Cultural Socialization and the Development of Taste Cultures and Culture Classes in American Popular Music: Existing Evidence and Proposed Research Directions," Popular Music and Society 4 (Spring 1975), 227-229.

19. Daniel Kingman, American Music: A Panorama (New York: Schirmer Books, 1979), 307.

20. Wilgus, "Country-Western Music and the Urban Hillbilly," 161-162.

21. Kingman, American Music, 181.

22. John Greenway, "Country-Western: The Music of America," American West 6 (November 1968), 33.

23. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," 863.

24. Buckley, "Country Music and American Values," 293.

25. Peterson, "The Production of Cultural Change," 299.

26. Irwin Stambler and Grelun Landon, Golden Guitars: The Story of Country Music (New York: Four Winds Press, 1971), 106.

27. Wesley Rose, "A Crutch Called Crossover," Billboard 91 (June 23, 1979), 71.

28. "Country Radio Spells National Success Story," Billboard 83 (October 16, 1971), WOCM-28.

29. The actual figure for the total number of stations with country-western programming was 36.19%, based on a 1983 CMA Radio Survey showing that 3,187 of 8,807 licensed U.S. commercial radio stations broadcast "some" country-western music. The number of stations exclusively programming country-western music was 2,266, or 71.1% of the total. The CMA Radio Survey was provided in a telephone interview with Angela Mahoney of the Country Music Association, July 31, 1985. For the total number of licensed commercial radio stations see United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Broadcast and Non-broadcast Stations Authorized and Operators Licensed, By Class," Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1985 105th edition (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1985).

30. The annual growth rate was 22.6%. CMA Public Information Office, Country Radio Stations, Nashville, Tennessee, May 4, 1982. (Mimeographed).
31. Statistical Abstract of the United States, editions 83-105 (1962-1985).
32. "Adult-Contemporary Tops Radio Formats; Rock Aud Shrinking," Variety 309 (December 1, 1982), 1.
33. R. Serge Denisoff, Solid Gold: The Popular Record Industry (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1975), 7. Denisoff is inexact about when the research was conducted, however, he relates his findings to record sales data generated by a 1969 National Family Opinion survey commissioned by Columbia Records, and the context implies that Denisoff's data are from the same period.
34. Denisoff, Solid Gold, 464.
35. Gerry Wood, "Country Music Fan Emerges From Nashville Study," Billboard 90 (December 9, 1978), 3.
36. Arbitron market shares are based on the average quarter hour percentage of the total persons (12+) listening to radio broadcasts in metro markets, 6:00 am to midnight, Monday through Sunday, April/May and October/November surveys. James H. Duncan, Jr., American Radio, Fall 1976 Report, Volume 1 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Duncan Media Enterprises, 1977), 1.
37. Duncan, American Radio, Volume 1, 1.
38. Duncan, American Radio, Volume 7, A25. The relative rankings are somewhat deceptive. In 1979, soft rock was dropped from the rock category and added to MOR to form a combined MOR/AC category. In 1983 MOR and AC were split into separate format categories.
39. Duncan, American Radio, Volume 1, 1.
40. Duncan, American Radio, Volume 7, A25.
41. Kip Kirby, "Fanning the Flames," Billboard 93 (October 17, 1981), WOCM-4.
42. Kirby, "Fanning the Flames," WOCM-4.
43. Rose, "A Crutch Called Crossover," 71.

44. Herbert J. Gans, "Popular Culture in America: Social Problems in a Mass Society or Social Asset in a Pluralist Society," in Social Problems: A Modern Approach, ed. Howard S. Becker (New York: Wiley, 1966), 549-720.
45. Lewis, "Cultural Socialization," 229.
46. Hirsch, Progress Report, 50-51.
47. Denisoff, "Massification and Popular Music," 890-891.
48. Buckley, "Country Music and American Values," 298-299. Buckley noted that the country-western audience was historically Southern, but had "grown in recent years until, today, it is more national than regional."
49. Janet Guyon, "Record Firms See Profits by the Score As City Fans Love Country Music More," The Wall Street Journal, March 3, 1981, 36.
50. Guyon, "Record Firms See Profits by the Score," 36.
51. "Survey: Country Audience Is Large, Loyal, Upscale," Billboard 97 (March 16, 1985), 12.
52. Peterson and Di Maggio, "From Region to Class," 503.
53. Lewis, "Cultural Socialization," 228.
54. Peterson and Di Maggion, "From Region to Class," 504.
55. Lewis, "Cultural Socialization," 229.
56. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," 858.
57. James Chesebro et al., "Popular Music as a Mode of Communication, 1955-1982," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 2 (June 1985), 123-124.
58. A number of publications allude to the particular significance of the 1970s in the history of country-western music. See, Lee Rector, "Nashville Sees More Contemporary Influence as Country Music Aims to Broaden Scope in Next Decade," Variety 297 (January 23, 1980), 78; Kirby, "Fanning the Flames," WOCM-36; Robyn Wells, "Full-Service Radio Finds

Life After 'Three-In-A-Row'," Billboard 94 (October 16, 1982), WOCM-26, WOCM-34; and Bob Millard, "Country Holding Up Well Despite Overall Falloff in Record Biz," Variety 309 (January 26, 1983), 70.

59. Rector, "Nashville Sees More Contemporary Influence," 78.

60. Wells, "Full Service Radio Finds Life," WOCM-34.

61. The number of full-time country-western radio stations for 1961-1982 were taken from CMA Public Information Office, Country Radio Stations. The number of full-time stations for 1983-1985 were taken from the telephone interview with Angela Mahoney. The number of licensed commercial radio stations for 1961-1983 were taken from Statistical Abstract of the United States, editions 83-105 (1962-1985). The number of licensed commercial stations for 1984 and 1985 were estimated using the twenty-year (1964-1983) average annual growth rate for licensed radio stations of 3.01%.

62. Duncan, American Radio, Volumes 1-7. An "average audience share" was calculated as the mean rating for the April/May and October/November Arbitron periods. The spring 1984 ratings (the most recent ratings available) are: country 11.79%, beautiful music 11.02%, AOR 10.76 and black/urban 10.12%.

63. See Thomas K. Arnold, "Programmers Dig In After the Dust Settles," Billboard 95 (October 15, 1982), WOCM-18, WOCM-28; Bob Millard, "Country Music Sales Turn Sour: Adult Radio Stations Shutting the Door," Variety 317 (January 23, 1985), 1; Rollye Bornstein, "Country Radio '85: In One Era and Out the Other," Billboard 97 (March 9, 1975), 51; and Kip Kirby and Edward Morris, "Country Radio, Labels Mapping New Strategies," Billboard 97 (April 13, 1985), 1, 85.

64. Denisoff, Solid Gold, 464, and Kirby, "Fanning the Flames," WOCM-4.

65. John Lomax, "Country Music Continues Growth: Postwar 'Babies' Are New Fans," Variety 305 (January 13, 1982), 68.

66. Guyon, "Record Firms See Profits by the Score," 36.

67. Bob Millard, "Country Holding Up Well Despite Overall Falloff in Record Biz," Variety 309 (January 26, 1983), 69.

68. Andrew Roblin, "Labels Play Musical Chairs As Game Plan Shifts," Billboard 96 (October 13, 1984), WOCM-3.
69. Millard, "Country Music Sales Turn Sour," 1.
70. Fred Goodman, "NARM Survey," Billboard 97 (June 1, 1985), 74.
71. Robyn Wells, "Programmers Tout Country As No. 1 '80s Format," Billboard 92 (October 18, 1980), WOCM-20, and Bornstein, "In One Era and Out the Other," 51.
72. Roblin, "Labels Play Musical Row Chairs," WOCM-16.
73. Kip Kirby, "Standing On Higher Ground," Billboard 94 (October 16, 1982), WOCM-4.
74. Rector, "Nashville Sees More Contemporary Influence," 78.
75. Arnold, "Programmers Dig In," WOCM-28.
76. Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," Quarterly Journal of Speech 58 (December 1972), 398.
77. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 400.
78. Ernest G. Bormann and Nancy C. Bormann, Speech Communication: A Basic Approach, 3rd edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), 179.
79. Ernest G. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 5.
80. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 399.
81. Bormann and Bormann, Speech Communication, 85.
82. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 9.
83. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 10.
84. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 9.
85. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 399.
86. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 16. See also, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 399-402, and The Force of Fantasy, 13-17.

87. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 3.
88. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 406.
89. Ernest G. Bormann, "Fetching Good Out of Evil: A Rhetorical Use of Calamity," Quarterly Journal of Speech 63 (April 1977), 130.
90. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 24.
91. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 405.
92. Alan P. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 46.
93. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music, 201.
94. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 401.
95. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 6.
96. Richard A. Peterson and D. G. Berger, "Cycles in Symbol Production: The Case of Popular Music," American Sociological Review 40 (1975), 170; and John Wanzonried and Vincent Di Salvo, "Intensional and Extensional Orientations in Rock and Roll Music," Etc: A Review of General Semantics 32 (March 1975), 35.
97. In this author's survey of popular music studies, isolated use of ratings published by Cashbox and Variety were noted, but they were normally used to supplement rather than substitute for the Billboard ratings.
98. Telephone interview with Don Kmerer, Billboard Research Department, Los Angeles, August 11, 1982.
99. "Country Music Survey," Billboard 85 (October 20, 1973), WOCM-12.
100. The missing song was "Pine Grove," as recorded in 1971 by the Compton Brothers on the Dot Records label. The Billboard ranking for the record was number 25.
101. Richard W. Budd, Robert K. Thorpe and Lewis Donohew, Content Analysis in Communications (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 39-49.
102. Thomas Adler, "The Unplotted Narratives of Tom T. Hall," Journal of Country Music 4 (Summer 1973), 54.

103. Tristram P. Coffin, "Mary Hamilton and the Anglo-American Ballad as Art Form," in The Critics and the Ballad, eds. MacEdward Leach and Tristram P. Coffin (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 245.

104. Adler, "The Unplotted Narratives of Tom T. Hall," 53.

105. Coffin, "Mary Hamilton," 247.

106. Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley, California: University Press, 1969), xix.

107. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 4.

108. "The Silver Tongued Devil And I," by Kris Kristofferson, copyright Combine Music Corporation (Recorded by Kris Kristofferson on Monument Records LP "The Silver Tongued Devil," 1971).

109. A theme category is a "compartment" into which statements making similar assertions about similar subject matter (themes) are placed. A variety of different statements with essentially the same basic meaning can be classified under a single theme category. See Budd, Thorpe and Donohew, Content Analysis of Communications, 47-49.

110. An assertion is a single statement of meaning. See Budd, Thorpe and Donohew, Content Analysis of Communications, 48.

111. See, for instance, Patricia Averill, "Can The Circle Be Unbroken: A Study of the Modernization of Rural Born Southern Whites Since World War II Using Country Music" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975), 261; and, Lyn Thaxton and Charles Jaret, "Country Music and Its City Cousin: A Comparative Analysis of Urban and Rural Music," Popular Music and Society 6 (Number 4, 1979), 309-313.

112. Budd, Thorpe and Donohew, Content Analysis of Communications, 40-43.

113. Budd, Thorpe and Donohew, Content Analysis of Communications, 44.

114. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 401.

115. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 401-402. See also, Bormann and Bormann, Speech Communication, 87-88.

116. Bormann and Bormann, Speech Communication, 88.

117. These questions were drawn from lists Bormann includes in his various works. See Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 401-402; and Bormann and Bormann, Speech Communication, 87-88.

118. Bormann, The Force of Fantasy, 3.

119. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision," 407.

CHAPTER TWO

RHETORICAL INQUIRY AND THE POPULAR SONG

Music has long been recognized to be an important form of human expression. Plato, in the Republic, has Socrates warn Adiemantus "beware of change to a strange form of music, taking it to be a danger to the whole. For never are the ways of music moved without the greatest political laws being moved. . . ." ¹ According to translator Allan Bloom, this warning was grounded in the metaphysics of music. "[T]he poet can make men believe that they see and hear his characters. This constitutes his real power -- he enchants men so that they live the experiences he wishes to present." ² Similarly, R. Serge Denisoff noted that songs have figured prominently in the persuasive strategies for motivating social protest, citing the writings of Marx and Lenin in which music is discussed as equal, and possibly superior, to speechmaking as a means of promoting ³ consciousness. In his survey of music and American protest movements, Denisoff traced persuasive music communication from the secular use of Methodist hymns by assundry leftist groups in the 1820s to the appearance of songs protesting United States involvement in Vietnam during the late 1960s, paying particular attention to the role of music in the

4
American labor movement. Communication scholars, however, were slow to include music within their scope of inquiry. So obvious was this exclusion that James Irvine and Walter Kirkpatrick lamented that "Although a few historians, aestheticians, and anthropologists have attempted to account for the persuasive nature of music, few rhetoricians have concerned themselves with the matter."⁵ More recently, communication scholars have begun to show interest in musical messages, and there has accordingly evolved a body of academic literature from which a rhetoric of music communication may be drawn. It is the purpose of this chapter to review extant literature on music communication, discuss implications for rhetorical scholarship, and argue for an expansion of the rhetoric of music communication to include songs as artifacts of audiences as well as artifacts of artists and situations.

Growing Interest in Music Communication

The initial communication monograph treating music as discourse preceded Irvine and Kirkpatrick by a number of years. In 1955, semanticist S.I. Hayakawa compared popular songs to Kenneth Burke's description of poetry as "equipment for living."⁶ Hayakawa expressed interest in two functions of poetic symbols as they relate to emotional life: First, poetic symbols may serve to help an audience vicariously experience emotions and situations which are, as yet,

unencountered. Second, poetic symbols may help an audience organize and come to terms with past experiences. As such, Hayakawa argued, song is preparation and learning and thus may exert tremendous influence on patterns of emotional development. If the symbolic representations in songs are false or misleading they may contribute to unrealistic views of the world and inhibit emotional growth.⁷ By way of illustration, Hayakawa charged that popular love songs contribute to the IFD disease, "the triple-threat semantic disorder of Idealization (the making of impossible and ideal demands upon life), which leads to Frustration (as the result of the demands not being met), which in turn leads to Demoralization (or disorganization, or Despair)."⁸

More than a decade passed before scholarly concern with music communication was revived. Consonant with the communication discipline's timely interest in the rhetorical strategies of social protest, the renewed efforts centered on music's potential as an instrument of overt persuasion. In his doctoral dissertation, Steven (Kaye) Kosokoff examined the role played by music in the American labor, civil rights and peace movements, political campaigns and the New Left.⁹ Kosokoff argued that "songs have played an integral rhetorical role in many social-action movements in American history" and concluded that "The sheer weight of historical evidence establishes the thesis that song was and is used by activists concerned with persuasion."¹⁰ Music as

a tool of activism was likewise discussed by John Waite Bowers and Donovan Ochs in The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control. In their text, Bowers and Ochs examined strategies of solidification and polarization through which activists attempt to symbolically strengthen ties binding their group by reinforcing ideology and assuring "success through unity in the face of a strong but morally inferior opponent."¹¹ One tactic described as demonstrably effective in pursuing these strategies was the use of songs.¹²

Irvine Rein theorized similar success in attracting new members to a movement through music. "In total effect, while as yet there may be no scientific proof that popular music can influence conversion to ideas, political and cultural, it dins into our ears so constantly and bombards our minds so heavily that the possibility of such influencing cannot be shrugged off. Nor can we dismiss an even stronger possibility that repeated playings of music and lyrics when coupled with more direct forms of persuasion -- a political speech, for example -- will produce significant attitude change."¹³ Based on what he viewed as the magnetic properties of music, Rein endeavored to explain how songs might affect attitudes: (1) Audiences are likely to listen to recordings over and over, increasing the opportunities for persuasive impression. (2) The fusion of simple themes and repetitive lyrics in modern popular music makes it easy for audiences to grasp the ideas songs are

trying to communicate. (3) Since infectious music and lyrics become embedded in the subconscious mind, the subliminal persuasiveness of a song is always with an audience.¹⁴

There is "scientific proof" supporting Rein's hypothesis that songs can produce attitude change. In a study conducted in conjunction with her masters thesis, Linda Lou Nigro exposed subjects to musical messages concerning the plight of American Indians. Using a Prejudice and Rationality Scale, Nigro was able to document a positive shift in attitude toward Indians.¹⁵ Data directly supporting Rein's belief about the persuasiveness of songs combined with more direct messages was provided by an experiment reported in Kosokoff's dissertation. In the study, subjects were exposed to messages relating to three controversial topics -- Americans fighting in Vietnam, professional boxing and the eighteen-year-old voting age. The messages were presented to subjects as a public speech, a protest song, or a combination of speech and song. Kosokoff found that, for each of the three topics, the combined media of speechmaking and singing were able to produce significant attitude change in the predicted direction while the speechmaking medium alone effected similar attitude change in only one of three instances. In fact, for the eighteen-year-old vote message the speech/song form produced positive attitude change while the same

message presented solely in speech form contributed to a measurable boomerang reaction.¹⁶

Thus, while Kcsokoff felt compelled to argue in 1966 that past rhetorical analyses of persuasive communication had focused primarily on conventional written and spoken messages at the expense of singing persuasion, a subsequent body of literature evidence a growing interest in music communication.¹⁷ An implication for future rhetorical scholarship was expressed by Charles Steward in a paper presented to the 1979 meeting of the Speech Communication Association. "I believe social movement songs serve important rhetorical functions for social movements and contain enough substantive content to warrant classification as discourse [and are] a legitimate area of study for rhetorical critics and theorists."¹⁸

Functional Dimensions of Music Communication

Current literature on music communication provide a limited discussion of the rhetorical value of music. For the most part, this discussion implies that such value is drawn from the functions songs serve artists in their relationships with audiences. Irvine and Kirkpatrick lay the foundation for distinguishing between these functions in their discussion of music as a form of communicative interaction. Initially, they indicate, musical symbols are manipulated in the mind of the artist. On this level, the

song is a communicative act in which the composer and/or performer uses music to satisfy intrapersonal drives requiring interpersonal interaction. On a second level, manipulation occurs in the minds of the audience and the song becomes a communicative event relating the artistic act to an audience response.¹⁹ On both levels, songs are viewed as conscious discursive interaction. Thus, they are appropriate objects of scholarship whenever they serve legitimate rhetorical functions.

Persuasive function. The most apparent rhetorical function served by music communication is found in the ability, as documented by Nigro and Kosokoff, to use songs as overt instruments of persuasion. In a suatory context, artist and audience interact in a relationship Irvine and Kirkpatrick categorize as one of rhetorical intention.²⁰ They write, "If the artist is functioning within the rhetorical category of intent, the formulation of variables is carried on with one of two possible goals: to reinforce an existing attitude of [sic] value, or to alter existing attitudes or values in a persuasive manner. Within the rhetorical category of intent, the artist is directly and deeply concerned with the possibility of his personal musical art [sic] becoming a communicative event inviting a specific response from other persons."²¹ A similar description of music used as a tool of persuasion was provided by John Bloodworth. "We have those songwriters

who do have a definite instrumental purpose in mind, and who write lyrics to an audience in terms of an action they would like to see performed or a change they would like to see come about."²² Denisoff concurred in his discussion of magnetic songs. These are, he wrote, action-oriented songs which are intended to appeal to an audience in such a way as to attract new members to a cause or to reinforce the commitment level of adherents.²³

The communication scholar's interest in persuasive songs should be readily apparent. From a classical standpoint, Aristotle observed that discussing the various ways of persuasion is clearly within the legitimate province of rhetoric. "Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion. This is not a function of any other art."²⁴ This was, in fact, Kosokoff's point when he noted that scholars would be "hard-pressed to argue against the study of one previously-ignored rhetorical medium. That medium is the song. . . ."²⁵ This belief permeates literature on music communication. It seems, as Kosokoff implies, that when the artistic intention is persuasive the function of music communication is undeniably rhetorical.

Expressive function. A second potential relationship between artist and audience is described by Irvine and Kirkpatrick in their discussion of expressive intention.²⁶ When the artist functions within this category of intent,

creative expression is pursued for self-fulfillment with only tangential concern for whether the musical act becomes an event inviting response. Denisoff, likewise, recognizes expression as a legitimate motive for musical interaction. In discussing his category of "rhetorical songs," Denisoff indicates that music may stress "individual indignation and dissent but . . . not offer a solution in a movement. The song [may be] a statement of dissent which [says] 'I protest, I do not concur,' or just plain 'damn you.'" ²⁷

Denisoff identifies the protest songs of Bob Dylan as classic examples of this form. Expressive songs are not, however, thematically limited to declarations of protest. Kosokoff indicates, "Man is a singing being. He has created songs to express every human emotion. . . ." ²⁸ As such, music communication functions more frequently as an expressive than as a persuasive medium. ²⁹

Scholarly interest in expressive songs has been limited. In fact, much of the early literature on music communication summarily dismisses expressive works from consideration. ³⁰ Irvine and Kirkpatrick are particularly clear in this regard. In their discussion of the communicative value of music, the authors opine that when an artist is unconcerned with altering or reinforcing values his music is decidedly "non-rhetorical." ³¹ They do, however, argue that expressive songs are of potential value to rhetorical scholarship. In outlining their amplicative

paradigm of rhetorical song, Irvine and Kirkpatrick indicate that "expressive events may be either reinforcing or persuasive, and must be one or the other" to fall within the legitimate scope of rhetoric.³² Songs which are intentionally expressive must undergo metamorphosis in the minds of the audience and become existentially³³ persuasive. A similar position was articulated by Bloodworth, who saw value in expressive songs only in their potential for instrumental effect. He writes, "That is not to say that expressive communication in the above sense is mere babbling and only instrumental communication is effective. In the case of recent rock songs, we have no way to distinguish whether or not a song was originally written with an expressive purpose or instrumental purpose or both. But when a song is sung publicly or is recorded it becomes potentially goal- or effect-oriented as it gains an audience. The song never loses its expressive purpose, but it may gain an instrumental function as soon as it is heard by an audience."³⁴ Thus, songs which are not intended to be persuasive or reinforcing can be transmuted by the audience into a rhetorical form. From this perspective, the expressive song is a form of music communication which assumes legitimate rhetorical properties when transformed into a persuasive medium.

The argument may also be made that expressive songs fulfill legitimate rhetorical functions in the absence of

audience transmutation. According to Bormann, when people communicate they express personally constructed "realities" as dramatic fantasies.³⁵ While these fantasies may, intentionally or existentially, function persuasively, their expression is also a personal act. The rhetorical implications of personal expression may be explained in two ways. First, personal expression is a necessary stage of reality construction. As we communicate, our percepts are made available to us as well as to others and thus may be "refined."³⁶ Aronson explains that when reality is uncertain other people become a primary source of validation.³⁷ Second, personal expression serves to satisfy the drive to be understood. The psychological theories of Maslow and Katz, in particular, postulate that man derives personal satisfaction from the act of expression.³⁸ Music as a discursive, and particularly poetic, act is a means by which validation and value-expression may be achieved. As James Chesebro puts it, "The musical form itself is a condensation of these personal experiences. The music itself, then, becomes the medium or vehicle for transmitting the pattern of personal experiences."³⁹

Commercial function. There is a final potential relationship between artist and audience which may prompt musical interaction. In this relationship, artistic intention may be accurately described as pecuniary -- the musical message is a commercial venture of the artist.

Music in this setting takes form, but not value, from songs of expression. The commercial song is neither intentionally nor existentially persuasive, nor does it satisfy a psychological desire for expression. What the artist intends is to make a commercial success of the music as entertainment. Bloodworth explains, "the commercial influence upon music as entertainment must also be remembered. . . . This commercialism has been attacked and condemned by the critics of rock but many new and struggling artists cannot resist the notoriety, fast money, and status [it offers]."⁴⁰ The pervasiveness of this commercial influence was expressed by G. P. Mohrmann and F. Eugene Scott in their analysis of popular music during World War II. According to Mohrmann and Scott, during this period the medium controlled the message to such a degree that the persuasive and expressive potential of music communication was mitigated by the rhythms, tempos and lyrics of popular swing.⁴¹

The rhetorical value of these songs is found in the process which accounts for their commercial success. The appeal of popular songs can be explained through Kenneth Burke's concept of identification.⁴² Burke argues that man aspires to be consubstantial, or together in substance, with other men. Man's effort to be consubstantial (identify) is essentially a rhetorical process; the ambiguous intersection of natural division and latent

identification creates an "invitation" for symbolic interaction. This concept of rhetoric sets well with our understanding of commercial music. The commercially successful song may be distinguished from unsuccessful songs in that when the former presents a message formed from the concerns, or view, of the artist, those feelings are described in terms with which the audience can identify. Music as a consubstantial experience was discussed by Mark Booth as fostering "some degree of identification between singer and audience. When this happens the performance is for the audience. . . ; the singer's words are sung for us in that he says something that is also said somehow by us, and we are drawn into the state, the pose, the attitude, the self offered by the song." ⁴³ The relationship between this rhetorical process of identification and the commercial success of music communication was discussed by Hal Levy. "In addition to the point of view, a song writer must consider the matter of identification, the relating of listener to singer. Depending on the nature of the song and the sex of the singer, the listener might identify with the singer and project himself into the singer's role, or he might identify with the theoretical person to whom the singer is singing. Either way, this is a large part of the vicarious enjoyment the listener gains from a good song well sung." ⁴⁴ Thus, a song which begins as an artist's personal expression becomes

through identification a vicarious expression by the audience. As with the transformed expressive song, rhetorical interest is not defined by the nature of the musical act as much as it is by the musical event. Unlike this counterpart, however, the value of commercial music is not found in the event as a rhetoric of persuasion. Rather, it is found in the event as a rhetoric of identification.

Critical Dimensions of Music Communication

Thus far, the rhetorical attributes of music communication have been assessed as they relate to artistic intent. This assessment suggests that music communication lies well within the established province of communication scholarship. Whether musical messages function persuasively, expressively or commercially, songs exhibit legitimate rhetorical properties.

A functional view of music communication is valuable in that it supports the general claim that songs exhibit characteristics which may interest rhetorical critics. The view does not, however, provide grounds for judging whether particular songs are worth scholarly attention. Arguing, for instance, that songs deserve special attention when they are persuasive devices presumes that critics intuitively understand artistic intent. Turning to musical form or audience reaction offers little relief. As Bloodworth notes, commercial songs may, upon being heard by

an audience, achieve an unintended instrumental effect. Conversely, Denisoff's review of American protest music suggests that persuasive and expressive songs often become commercially successful.⁴⁶ This uncertainty leaves critics with a number of unanswered questions: Do the songs invite response? Are the invitations intentional or existential? Do audiences respond? Do audiences respond to songs or other stimuli or both? Arguments justifying criticism on the grounds that songs are persuasive (or expressive or commercial) require answers to these (or similar) questions.

This situation can be resolved by treating music communication as a special case of public speaking. As do public speeches, songs involve speakers (artists) formulating messages (lyric content), selecting appropriate media of expression (genus music, species music style, i.e., folk, rock, country, etc.) and directing the messages through the media to intended audiences (performance publics).⁴⁷ Accordingly, rhetorical music criticism should, like speech criticism, address the relationships between speaker, message, medium and audience.⁴⁸ The speech-song analogy provides critics with grounds for identifying worthy songs. Traditional communication scholars select speeches according to what the critic hopes to learn from critical analysis. Thus, the analogue suggests that the worth of particular songs is defined by

critical intent, an identifiable notion. Thus, a rhetoric of music should be as concerned with the critical as with the functional dimensions of music communication.

Artist-centered criticism. According to Ernest Wrage, the "standard approach to public address" concentrates on individual speakers, their communicative techniques and strategies, and subsequent influence upon history.⁴⁹

Barnett Baskerville expressed a similar view, describing traditional speech criticism as involving the "study of individual speakers -- their personalities, platform virtuosity, and rhetorical techniques. . . ." Wrage and Baskerville identify two characteristics of traditional criticism. First, critics study speakers rather than speeches. Such was made clear by Wrage, who wrote that the traditional critic "focuses upon the speaker and the speaking activity" rather than "upon the speech and its content."⁵¹ Second, critics make statements which lead, in Baskerville's terms, "to enhanced understanding and appreciation [of the speakers] or to normative critical statements [about the speaking]."⁵² Since traditional critics examine speeches in order to better understand speakers and their speaking, scholarly interest is defined by the relationship between particular speeches, speakers settings. A speech presented by someone else at some other time would be of little interest. Or, in the case of music

communication, interest evaporates as songs are performed by other artists in other settings.

The propriety of extending traditional public address to include an artist-centered perspective on music communication is demonstrated by its popularity as an approach to rhetorical music criticism. An early example may be found in Cheryl Thomas' article about pacifist-folksinger Joan Baez.⁵³ Thomas selected Baez as a subject due to the singer's prominence as spokesperson for a number of pacifist causes. Thomas writes, "Joan Baez has become an advocate of social change, fighting first the draft and the Vietnam War and then expanding her arguments to encompass American society's dependence on violence in general. She has spoken for 'revolutionary non-violence,' an organized collective form of resistance to established policies, and attempted to persuade others to accept it."⁵⁴ Thomas drew three conclusions about Joan Baez as a music communicator: (1) The forms and lyrics of the songs Baez performs in concert are structured to serve as tools of communication. (2) The predominant theme of these songs is persuasive, seeking acceptance of revolutionary non-violence. (3) Baez relies heavily on several rhetorical techniques in her use of music: She uses songs about religion and tradition in order that they may carry over as authoritative sources supporting her arguments for pacifism. She uses emotional association by tying into

reactions to songs about events of historical or contemporary significance to the audience. Finally, the lyrics of her songs are often ambiguous, leaving them open to individual and personal interpretation.

A similar critical perspective was employed by Lawrence Medcalf in his doctoral dissertation on singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. As did Baez, Dylan made an interesting subject because he was a prominent social critic during the turbulent sixties. According to Medcalf, "Bob Dylan was, without a doubt, one of the most influential spokesmen of the young throughout the past decade and a half." Dylan's prominence was related to his having "turned out a stream of songs that told an uneasy generation why the American dream had turned into 'desolution now.'" Dylan differs with Baez in that during the middle years of the 1960s his musical messages began to focus more on personal expression than on persuasive themes. Medcalf attempted to determine whether or not in so doing, Dylan, the popular rock artist, had forsaken the causes championed by Dylan, the folksinger. Based on an analysis of songs from albums released during the transition, Medcalf concluded that Dylan changed lyric style but not the critical stance of his songs. Medcalf noted two rhetorical strategies which influenced the new style. First, Dylan abandoned the "finger pointing" which had characterized his earlier songs responding to specific social situations. Subsequently, he began to drift away

from songs dominated by logical appeals toward more pathos-oriented general social comment. Second, with his shift to a rock medium, Dylan began to forge a new image in an attempt to "deliberately maximize" his personal ethos, a persuasive factor Dylan seemed to ignore in earlier years. About the success of these changes, Medcalf wrote "Dylan's choice of rhetorical strategies during the period . . . were extremely successful to a point, and yet also disastrous. His continued demonstration of political consciousness escaped most critics as well as all but his most devoted followers."⁶⁰

The changing rhetorical strategies of Bob Dylan were also the focus of an article by Alberto Gonzalez and John Makay.⁶¹ Noting that his conversion to "Born Again Christianity" had prompted Dylan to turn away from secular issues and concentrate on songs expressing religious themes, Gonzalez and Makay proposed to examine the lyrical and musical tactics of Dylan, the gospel singer. Their analysis focused on a rhetorical technique the authors considered an integral part of Dylan's new strategy -- rhetorical ascription. "The palatability of Dylan's gospel songs (for his secular audience) is significantly predicated upon a listener's ability to associate their lyrical and musical features with Dylan's pre-conversion songs."⁶² Drawing from the first religious songs performed by Dylan, Gonzalez and Makay assessed the ascriptive value of both the lyrics and

the music of Dylan's gospel songs. Rhetorical ascription was found to play a major role in both dimensions. The authors noted that Dylan's gospel lyrics rely on ascriptive redundancy. As an appeal to secular audiences, the lyrics imitate the form of earlier Dylan songs. As an appeal to religious audiences, the lyrics borrow from traditional gospel themes. Musicologically, the gospel songs rely heavily on the "sound" which audiences have, through the years, come to associate with Dylan's performances.

Gonzalez and Makay concluded that "the rhetorical potential of Dylan's songs of Christian devotion is enhanced by the capacity of his lyrics to evoke powerful associations with his previous compositions and Biblical themes."⁶³

Furthermore, "The musical analysis of Dylan's religious songs strongly suggests that the applied variable of high ascriptive value . . . works to create interest, and to clarify and emphasize the messages and ideas which compose Dylan's artistic depiction of Christian salvation."⁶⁴

The musical messages of rock superstar Stevie Wonder were assessed in an article by Eric Weisman.⁶⁵ Like Baez and Dylan before him, Stevie Wonder has been described as a charismatic performer who is capable of exerting a tremendous influence on popular audiences. Weisman notes that Stevie Wonder "directs public attention to heroes, martyrs and saints."⁶⁶ His songs reflect a "deep emotional sincerity, a mood of eternal optimism, and the attitude

that all things good are possible if only we would allow
the love of goodness to guide us." ⁶⁷ According to Weisman,
the Wonder charisma is derived from a gestalt of the
singer's personal ethos, the lyric content of his songs,
and the music style of his performances. Stevie Wonder has
a solid reputation in the music industry, reflected in his
fourteen Grammy Awards, and is respected as an artist who
performs "with the unmitigated immediacy of a messenger who
devoutly believes." ⁶⁸ Like most popular recording artists,
Stevie Wonder sings primarily about love. However, his
lyrics transcend romance and sexuality. Weisman likens the
singer's repertoire to Plato's hierarchy of love, noting
traces of passion, romance, soul, social justice, knowledge
and a belief in the sanctity of life which permeate the
lyrics of Stevie Wonder songs. When he performs, Stevie
Wonder borrows liberally from many musical genres to create
an eclectic music style which can be appreciated by
audiences with tastes as diverse as rock, gospel and jazz.
His musical messages, unbound by thematic and stylistic
traditions, are "able to break boundaries of ethnicity,
religion, geography, age, class and race." ⁶⁹ Weisman
concludes, "His lyrical corpus encompasses the Platonic
spectrum of love, and his music is crosscultural in its
appeal. Wonder is a good man singing well. His songs
engage the romantic imagination, and inspire the 'proper

tendency' of the soul -- movement toward goodness, justice,
⁷⁰
 and divinity."

In his doctoral dissertation on the Beatles, Keith Semmel made a somewhat similar assessment of the British
⁷¹
 rock group. More like Stevie Wonder than Baez or the early Dylan, the Beatles relied exclusively on expressive musical messages. While their songs were more descriptive than critical, the Beatles' significance as spokesmen during the decade of the sixties exceeded that of the many critical artists of the period. Semmel described the Beatles as "the most remarkable cultural and sociological phenomenon of their time," and concluded that "In retrospect, it is no exaggeration to suggest that for a great deal of the 1960s the Beatles were possibly the most
⁷²
 famous men in the world." Semmel attempted to describe the "Pepperland Perspective" envisioned by the Beatles and expressed to a massive audience through their popular songs. Semmel described this rhetorical vision as the combination of three distinct fantasies -- the Romantic fantasy which addressed "affairs of the heart" and was concerned with ways of loving, the Social fantasy which addressed "affairs of society and culture" and was concerned with ways of living, and the Expressionistic fantasy which addressed "affairs of the mind" and was concerned with attitudes and ways of thinking or
⁷³
 believing. The vision which these fantasies comprised

was described by Semmel as "a symbolic reality of a unique nature. The rhetorical vision was, overall, an optimistic portrait of human existence which recognized its hardships but refused to abandon the human potential."⁷⁴ In expressing their perspective on loving, living and believing, the Beatles "offered their audience a vision of a world in which fantasy and reality confronted each other face to face and fantasy was proclaimed victor."⁷⁵

A final article provides a slightly altered form of artist-centered criticism, addressing as subject the producer rather than the singer of musical speeches. In focusing on movie director John Ford, Lane Roth examined the way music communication can be used to assist thematic development in feature films.⁷⁶ Ford serves as a particularly interesting subject, first because he has been a celebrated filmmaker for over four decades (accumulating in that time six Academy Awards and four New York Film Critic's Awards), and second, because he, with predictable regularity, films dramatic characters singing. It is Roth's thesis that the films of John Ford exemplify how the selection and placement of songs in popular movies can become an integral part of a director's cinemagraphic expression. After analyzing a varied sample of Ford's films, Roth concluded that the director used song lyrics to define relationships of characters to each other and to their environment. These lyrics both support the

photographic images directly and comment ironically on them through their incongruity, celebrating Ford's persistent ideas of community and nature.

Situation-centered criticism. An alternate approach to speech criticism was suggested by Edwin Black in his treatment of movement studies. As described by Black, movement studies differ with speaker studies in two important respects. First, movement studies focus on the substance rather than the techniques of rhetorical encounters. According to Leland Griffin, rhetorical analysis of movements identifies fundamental issues as they crystallize, effective arguments and appeals as they emerge, organizations devoted to disseminating the arguments and appeals as they mature, and relevant audiences as they develop -- all of which help to describe the history of a movement. Black explains that movement studies use "techniques fashioned for the analysis of argument on a large scale, for widening the scope of the rhetorical critic from the individual performance to the sweep of a persuasive campaign . . . suggesting a reconstitution of the subject matter of rhetorical criticism from the individual speaker or the individual speech to the persuasive movement. . . ." According to Lloyd Bitzer, critics may be interested in speeches as artifacts of particular circumstances. "Neither the presence of formal features in the discourse nor persuasive effect in a reader or hearer can be regarded as

reliable marks of rhetorical discourse: A speech will be rhetorical when it is a response to the kind of situation which is rhetorical."⁸¹ Thus, this second model may be appropriately termed situation-centered, for criticism concentrates on actions rather than actors in dramatic encounters and encompasses the many speakers and speeches responding to a general rhetorical situation.

Once again, communication scholars have extended an accepted critical perspective to music communication. The initial example is found in a doctoral dissertation by James Seward which analyzed four popular songs addressing American attitudes toward United States involvement in Indochina.⁸² Seward began with two premises -- first, there was a major shift in the general attitudes of Americans toward the Vietnam War during the latter 1960s, and second, four particular songs thematically express that shift. Seward found a primary illustration of this shift when comparing "The Ballad of the Green Berets," recorded by Sergeant Barry Saddler in February, 1966 with "Ohio," recorded by the rockgroup Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young in June, 1970. Seward opines that both songs were obvious attempts by the artists to share their personal reactions to the war with what they perceived to be a sympathetic public. In "The Ballad of the Green Berets," Saddler, a veteran of the Vietnam conflict, sang to a generally hawkish America, expressing admiration for the brave and

patriotic soldiers fighting the war. By contrast, "Ohio" addressed an isolated domestic event related to the war. On May 4, 1970 hundreds of students at Kent State University in Ohio participated in an unauthorized rally protesting President Nixon's decision to increase bombing activity in Cambodia. Ohio National Guardsmen fired shots into the crowd, killing four protesters and injuring nine others. According to Seward, "Ohio" was both an emotional reaction to the Kent State incident and a general comment on the domestic turmoil generated by growing dissatisfaction with continued involvement in Indochina, "an opinion . . . which the composers might have felt was shared by other Americans."⁸³ The view that the national attitude was shifting from popular assentment to widespread dissension was supported by Seward's analysis of two additional songs, "War" and "Stop The War Now," recorded by Black artist Edwin Starr in late 1970 and early 1971. It is Seward's opinion that a probable motive for recording these songs was to musically express the growing vocal Black voice of dissidence and to offer a peace perspective on the Vietnam conflict. Thus, Seward argued that the music associated with the anti-war movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s provide a record of major events of the movement -- the early hawkishness, the Kent State debacle, and the assimilation of the Civil Rights activists.

A slightly different view of the relationship between popular songs and attitudes toward war was addressed by Mohrmann and Scott in their article on popular music and World War II.⁸⁴ According to the authors, references to the war appeared frequently in songs during the first half of the 1940s. Their analysis of the titles and lyrics of such songs illustrate the ineffectiveness of attempts by government to use the popular media to mold and reinforce "proper attitudes" in the American public. During the war, both government and private agencies debated how "to put popular music at the service of propaganda or morale. . . ."⁸⁵ Mohrmann and Scott listed various directorships of patriotic music within the commercial music industry, the Music War Committee of the American Theatre Wing, the Committee to Defend America, the Office of War Information and the Music Advisory Council of the Joint Army-Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation as groups involved in this effort. After analyzing songs which appeared on various record popularity charts from 1941-1945, the authors drew three conclusions about the music and attempts to influence it. First, the comments made in popular songs were not stridently militaristic. Second, the images created in the songs conformed to popular expectation -- they served to blunt and distort the reality of the war. Finally, while there was considerable sentiment to mold popular songs to reinforce desirable

attitudes toward the war, industry profit and public pleasure interfered. Mohrmann and Scott concluded, "the songs reinforced the ways that the society perceived itself. They did so directly in whatever form they restated American beliefs and aspirations; they did so indirectly by being the basis for escape and entertainment that was integral to those beliefs and aspirations. Validating American values and institutions, the popular song reassured the nation. . . ." ⁸⁶

A third example of situation-centered criticism is found in Jill Weiner's doctoral dissertation on the rhetoric of contemporary feminist song. ⁸⁷ Unlike Seward and Mohrmann and Scott, Weiner chose not to focus on music as an expression of (dis)content with a particular situation. Rather, Weiner focused on music as a persuasive force in the history of a social movement. ⁸⁸ According to Weiner, a primary rhetorical strategy of the feminist movement has involved reclaiming and rewriting women's history, with music playing an integral role in the reinterpretation. In Weiner's analysis, contemporary feminist song is described as fulfilling a basically reinforcing persuasive function, contributing to the continuity and stability of a new feminist culture. Two arguments were made. First, feminist song is non-discursive, attracting a primary audience already embracing feminist ideology. Second, feminist song is corroborative;

while feminist discourse argues that women can and should fulfill a role of Subject rather than the role of Other propagated by patriarchal myth, feminist song celebrates a counter-myth of Subjectivity as the natural state of womanhood. Weiner summarized, "Feminist song does for woman what . . . man always did for himself: that is, feminist song erects a 'verile myth' which reflects and projects womanhood."⁸⁹

A similar critical perspective was taken by David Carter in an article describing the musical tactics employed by the International Workers of the World in their attempt to unionize American laborers during the early decades of the twentieth century.⁹⁰ According to Carter, no labor organization "aroused more passions, stirred more controversy nor sang more loudly"⁹¹ than the IWW. Arguing that music communication was an integral element of the organization's rhetorical strategy, Carter proposed to assess the ideology of songs selected from issues of the IWW publication, The Little Red Songbook. Carter found that the songbook reinforced the primary theme of the 1905 IWW Manifesto -- the working class is separated from the wealth, oppressed by the wealthy, and helpless in the face of advancing industrialization. "In their redundant, sarcastic, humorous, and crass fashion, the songs amplified the principal concepts of the IWW ideology and made concrete the issues, the people, and events involved in the

unskilled workers' united clash with the industrialists and the capitalist system."⁹² Along lines suggested by Bowers and Ochs, Carter concluded that "the messages of the songs contributed to the solidification of the IWW membership and the polarization of the IWW from the mainstream of public opinion. By giving focus to the enemy and hope for a brighter future for the worker, the songs became rallying points for the IWW sympathizer, providing the worker with courage to organize, to fight, and to hope."⁹³

The final example of situation-centered criticism focuses on musical artifacts from two social movements -- the labor movement of the early twentieth century and the anti-war movement of the 1960s.⁹⁴ In his 1981 article, Ralph Knupp set out to identify rhetorical techniques common to songs expressing social discontent. Working with samples of fifteen songs connected with each movement, Knupp produced a profile suggesting three rhetorical characteristics common to protest songs. First, protest songs are reactive. Their lyrics tend to focus on adversaries and criticize intolerable circumstances rather than addressing positive characteristics of the movements they support. Second, protest songs are simplistic. They "thrive on ambiguities, sweeping assertions, and panoramic criticisms rather than on specific issues, policies or arguments."⁹⁵ Finally, protest songs are expressive. Their themes assert the fantasies of the protesters and

seem resigned to solidifying the group at the expense of appealing to new adherents. Knupp concludes, "The rhetorical patterns in protest songs suggest that they are largely in-group activities. They are too negative and ambiguous to be directly attractive to anyone other than movement members of (sic) sympathizers. By ordinary standards, protest songs are more assertive than deliberative. While this characteristic limits their use in appealing to outsiders, it is the heart of their ability to inspire movement members with hope [in] the face of a bleak present."⁹⁶

Audience-centered criticism. As an alternative to artist-centered and situation-centered criticism, rhetorical critics may choose to examine music communication as it reflects the concerns of the public to whom it is directed, focusing on songs which are, intentionally or existentially, popular. Such criticism may best be termed audience-centered because critical interest is defined by the nature of the audience rather than by speakers or situations. Audience-centered criticism is based on the commonsense notion that the music which is popular with a social group reflects the beliefs and values which shape the group and thus the music. Wraga accepted this premise as it relates to traditional public address. "Because speeches are instruments of utility designed in the main for the popular mind, conversely and

in significant ways, they bear the impress of the popular mind. It is because they are pitched to levels of information, to take account of prevalent beliefs, and to mirror tone and temper of audiences that they serve as useful indices to the popular mind." ⁹⁷ This view of rhetoric can be explained through the interconnections between fantasy expression and identification. Bormann theorizes that fantasy expression plays an important role in public discourse. When individuals or groups communicate with larger publics there is the possibility that their preconscious fantasies will chain out as audiences recognize shared perceptions of reality. ⁹⁸ As explained earlier, it is this process of identifying with expressed fantasies which accounts for a message's popularity. Wrage assumes that the substance of these messages must reflect the popular fantasies and thus that rhetorical scholars should be able to gain insight into a public's prevailing values and attitudes. ⁹⁹ Wrage argues that audience-centered criticism differs with traditional criticism in focus, procedure and knowledge to be ¹⁰⁰ gained. Rather than looking at speeches as instrumental or expressive acts and attempting to explain how speakers use speeches to affect audiences, audience-centered criticism views speeches as consubstantial events and examines the relationships between speeches and audiences.

Messages are treated as repositories of the fantasy themes which comprise a public's vision of reality.

The argument that audience-centered criticism may be extended to include criticism of music communication is grounded in the ethnomusicological theories of Alan Lomax and Alan Merriam, and the psychiatric observations of Frances Hannett. For a number of years, Lomax has argued that song style reflects and defines a society's way of life. Although his work has been limited to the idiom of folk music, much of what Lomax observes supports a general theory of music communication. In the introduction to his collection of folk songs of North America, Lomax argues that music functions for social as well as personal expression. "Music is a magical summing-up of the patterns of family, of love, of conflict, and of work which give a community its special feel and which shape the personalities of its members. Folk song calls the native back to his roots and prepares him emotionally to dance, worship, work, fight, or make love in ways normal to his place."¹⁰¹ Fundamental to Lomax's social theory of music is the belief that song styles are unique to the social groups which produce them. When compiling texts of folk songs for his collection, Lomax professes to have been "profoundly impressed by the comparative paganism and resignation of Britain, as contrasted with the Puritanism and free aggressiveness of America" reflected in the way British folk songs had been

consciously and conscientiously adapted to harmonize with
 102
 American folk values. Lomax argues that, since song
 styles are unique to particular social groups, music
 provides a valid description of social structure. Song
 styles, he indicates, appear to be one of the most
 conservative of culture traits. While new tunes or rhythms
 or harmonies may be introduced over time, "in its overall
 character, a musical style will remain intact. Only the
 most profound social upheavals -- the coming of a new
 population, the acceptance of a new set of mores -- or
 migration to a new territory, involving complete
 acculturation, will profoundly transform a musical style,
 and even then the process takes place very slowly." 103

While Lomax's definition of song style is fundamentally
 musicological, he does allow that the "total human situation
 which produces the music" affects substance as well as sound
 and is reflected in the "psychological and emotional content
 as expressed in the song texts and the culture's
 interpretation of this traditional poetry." 104 In
 illustration, he refers to the relationship between the
 psychological fantasies of Nineteenth-Century frontier women
 105
 and the songs they favored.

In the popular mind a gulf was fixed between pleasure and
 righteousness, thus inflaming the old wound of guilt and
 sexual anxiety which has so often characterized our
 civilization. Although the young democracy gave women more
 political rights and social status than they had known for
 centuries, nineteenth century prudery designed to rob them
 of sexual pleasure. A majority of our ancestors believed

that only bad women enjoyed sex: a dutiful wife suffered it for the sake of her husband. Thus, the women of the frontier, whose lives were hard, lonely, and comfortless at best, found solace in romantic or vengeful fantasies. Their favourite ballads and love songs were shrouded in gloom, drowned in melancholy, and poisoned by sado-masochism.

Lomax concludes that "the chief function of song is to express the shared feelings and mold the joint activities of some human community. . . ." ¹⁰⁶ The music favored by this community "reflects and reinforces the kind of behavior essential to its main subsistence efforts and to its central and controlling social institutions." ¹⁰⁷

Merriam expresses a similar belief that songs mirror society. Like Lomax, Merriam argues that music involves collective emotion and functions for its expression. ¹⁰⁸

Social songs are "the result of human behavioral processes that are shaped by the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the people who comprise a particular culture." ¹⁰⁹

Accordingly, music serves as a repository of the concerns of the society in which it is found, both communicating and reflecting normative values. ¹¹⁰

Merriam pays particular attention to the lyric elements of song style, observing that "music cannot be defined as a phenomenon of sound alone. . . ." ¹¹¹ Song texts, he indicates, reveal much

about a society. "In discussing song texts, we have had occasion to point out that one of their outstanding features is the fact that they provide a vehicle for the expression of ideas and emotions not revealed in ordinary discourse." ¹¹² Merriam observes that the language of song

is often more permissive than other forms of discourse. Music thus functions as a safety valve for expressing deep-seated values and aspirations which would otherwise be stated only with the greatest reluctance.¹¹³ Merriam concludes, "In music, as in the other arts, basic attitudes, sanctions, and values are often stripped to their essentials. . . . In this sense, music is a means of understanding peoples and behavior and as such is a valuable tool in the analysis of culture and society."¹¹⁴

A wealth of behavioral data indirectly support the social theory of music. Lomax, using data drawn from other researchers, found that song styles shift consistently with certain facets of social structure and were thus good indicators of such aspects of society.¹¹⁵ Merriam cited a number of anthropological community studies which observed songs being used as vehicles for expressing feelings not acceptably verbalized in other contexts.¹¹⁶ A number of researchers have noted relationships between the themes of American rock music and changing concerns of the youth subculture. Both Shapiro and Rosenstone, for instance, observed that the appearance of "hard" themes in 1960s rock corresponded with teenagers' developing social and political awareness.¹¹⁷ In a different vein, Johnstone and Katz found a distinct difference in the musical tastes of teenage girls from two Chicago neighborhoods, with subjects from the "wealthier and more solidly middle class"

neighborhood preferring songs with a more positive emotional outlook than did their counterparts from a neighborhood of lower socio-economic status.¹¹⁸

The only direct attempt to test social music theory was provided by Julia Kunz in her doctoral dissertation on the social meaning of song style.¹¹⁹ Kunz noted that Lomax had tested his theory in cross-cultural groupings separated in time and space and suggested that songs could likewise reflect the life styles of sub-cultural or sub-societal streams in a heterogeneous society. Using samples which varied within social parameters of age, ethnic background, geographic background and socio-economic status, Kunz had subjects listen to songs recorded in distinct classical, country-western, rock and soul music styles and then respond to an extensive questionnaire relating to song interpretation and style preferences. From her data, Kunz concluded that music is received in a "social envelope." Within a heterogeneous society, songs are socially identified by music style, particular styles carry similar social meanings for individuals sharing a common socio-cultural stream, and song style preferences are related to interpreted meaning and social background.¹²⁰

Frances Hannett has taken this audience-centered perspective on song another step, arguing that popular music serves psychological functions for individual audience members in contexts unassociated with public

121
performance. Hannett's specific interest is in the psychoanalytic significance of "haunting melodies" -- melody phrases unconsciously snatched from songs to linger in the mind and later emerge as a medium of psychological expression. Hannett argues that haunting melodies are the "voice of the preconscious and must be understood in the same way as a dream fragment, a fantasy, or a repetitive act."¹²² In illustration, Hannett suggests that early morning whistlers are often expressing the mood of the moment. Usually, only a phrase or two is whistled and the whistler often cannot consciously recall the lyrics which accompany the tune. However, if the appropriate lyrics for the phrase could be identified they would prove to explicitly describe the psychological state which prompted the whistling.¹²³ Hannett notes Theodore Reik's suggestion that inward singing carries "secret messages" and is never accidental.¹²⁴ By way of an explanation, Hannet refers to Freud's observation that "the tunes which suddenly come into a man's head can be shown to be conditioned by some train of thought to which they belong, and which for some reason is occupying his mind without his knowing about it. It is easy to show that the connection with the tune is to be sought either in the words which belong to it or in the source from which it comes."¹²⁵ Hannett indicates that this preconscious expressive function of music has been confirmed by personal clinical observation. Accordingly,

Hannett believes that people grow attached to songs expressing emotions with which they can identify. To Hannett, this means that hit songs reveal an undercurrent of common concern affecting large numbers of people.

Published lyrics reveal an explicit and implicit preoccupation of song writers with the same theme. Since these lyrics were 'hits,' it is concluded that their mass appeal depended on a general readiness to accept this theme. The poignant and haunting quality of these lyrics and tunes reveals the prevalence of a depressive mood in American society during the last half century. It seems that the sales appeal of popular songs of this period is not to be found in their sex appeal but rather in their expression of this depressive mood or of correctives for it.

Thus Hannett, as do Lomax and Merriam, supports the claim that popular songs reflect the hidden perceptions of popular audiences.

Taken as a whole, the social theory of music suggests that songs function as communicative events. In addition to serving the ends of artistic expression, music is a medium of vicarious expression by audiences as collectives and individuals. Popular music is shaped, in both substance and sound, by the societal or sub-societal groups which make it popular. By examining this substance, rhetorical scholars should, like Wrage's speech critic, gain insight into the cognitions and affections of the public mind.

Although audience-centered rhetorical music criticism has not received the scholarly attention accorded to artist-centered and situation-centered criticism, its potential has

not been ignored. For instance, despite the fact that her dissertation focused on decidedly unpopular music, Weiner noted that rhetorical scholarship could profit from studying popular songs. "Mythological analysis of song has implications not only for underground and political audiences but for the popular culture as well. Criticism of popular song, for example, implicitly exposes popular mythology among the song audience. The rhetoric of identification for this mass audience which comprises a segment of popular culture can thus be revealed."¹²⁷

Medcalf admitted in his analysis of Bob Dylan that the study of the "song-poets" of the sixties could lead to a new understanding of the period since "individuals like Dylan may mirror social behavior of the decade. . . ."¹²⁸

Similarly, Mohrmann and Scott suggested that the music popular during World War II projected common American values. The lyrics of these songs, they concluded, "are instructive. They reveal general cultural values [and] attitudes toward war. . . ."¹²⁹

Additionally, several rhetorical critics have examined music communication from perspectives which, while not overtly audience-centered, are concerned with music as an artifact of popular culture. This research has concentrated almost exclusively on rock and roll music. The initial example is found in Hayakawa's article on the semantics of popular song. Using an undefined sample of

song texts, Hayakawa attempted to examine the worlds of Negro blues and white popular music in order to discover their underlying assumptions and implied attitudes. Hastening to point out that he was distinguishing between the audiences on socio-economic and experiential rather than racial grounds, Hayakawa concluded that the two song styles exhibit radically different orientations toward reality. Popular song lyrics tend to exhibit an almost pathological intensional orientation, tending "toward wishful thinking, dreamy and ineffectual nostalgia, unrealistic fantasy, self-pity, and sentimental cliches masquerading as emotion."¹³⁰ Conversely, blues lyrics are predominantly extensional, making unsentimental and realistic statements about living "humble, laborious, and precarious lives of low social status or no status at all. . . ."¹³¹

James Tungate's doctoral dissertation on popular songs of the fifties focused on the romantic fantasies¹³² transmitted and reinforced in rock and roll music. Tungate examined Cash Box magazine's top ten popular songs for each year from 1950-1959, concentrating on those songs expressing romantic love themes. As did Hayakawa, Tungate found that the songs expressed simplistic and unrealistic views on romance. The love songs of the fifties, he indicates, resembled a long, simplified soap opera. "There was life with love: dancing, silk and lace, smiles,

valentines. There was death without love: loneliness,
tears, disillusionment, thoughts of suicide. . . ." ¹³³

Tungate noted that, while the melodic support for these lyrics changed from strings and brass in the early fifties to guitars in the late fifties, "the stereotyped characters and formula plots remained hardy to the final chord." ¹³⁴

In his doctoral dissertation, John Wanzenried provided an analysis of rock and roll music which included songs with non-romantic themes. ¹³⁵ Wanzenried began with Hayakawa's thesis that song lyrics exhibit intensional or extensional semantic orientation. Using songs popular between 1955 and 1972, Wanzenried attempted to provide an orientation profile of popular song lyrics before, during and after the transition from the rock and roll music of the fifties to the hard rock of the sixties. Based on a content analysis of songs ranked number one by Billboard magazine during the eighteen-year span, Wanzenried found a dramatic shift in the orientation of popular music during the period. Wanzenried concluded that important changes in the messages of popular music occurred from 1955-1972, shifting from an overwhelming dominance of intensional themes in the fifties and early sixties to a lack of dominance by either orientation in the late sixties and early seventies, with 1965 marking the radical change in ¹³⁶ semantic orientation.

In a more limited analysis of rock music, Bloodworth focused solely on extensionally-oriented popular songs, arguing that they were a primary medium of communication for the youth of the sixties and early seventies. Using a selection of songs popular during the period, Bloodworth illustrated his belief that the youthful audience formed a counter culture united by common feelings of social alienation. Bloodworth claimed that the rhetoric of this counter culture was one of pessimism and anxiety, universally rejecting the status quo and polarizing youth and the establishment. Its themes were alienation, disillusionment, change and dissent. Bloodworth concluded, "the rock songs of that period were declarations of the counter culture's dream for a recast America and a changed world."

The most inclusive analysis of rock and roll music was reported by Chesebro. Using a sample constructed from Billboard magazine's fifteen most popular hits for each year from 1955 through 1982, Chesebro attempted to outline the thematic history of American popular music. Based on implied relationships between popular music audiences and the personae portrayed in hit songs, the sample was subdivided into five categories: ironic songs, mimetic songs, leader-centered songs, romantic songs and mythical songs. After evaluating the lyric themes comprising each category and the chronological clustering of the

categories, Chesebro was able to discern five overlapping eras in the recent history of rock and roll music. During the era of Interpersonal Romance (1955-1959), popular songs focused almost entirely on idealized notions of romance, "with little recognition that nonintimate relationships with parents, friends, and co-workers as well as other societal groups, institutions, and external circumstances affect intimate relationships."¹³⁹ During the era of Dynamic Equilibrium (1959-1964), themes were more diverse, promoting "sets of concepts which evenly represented pragmatic and personal issues, models for integrating everyday experiences, and ideals to control the directions of human dramas."¹⁴⁰ During the era of Ironic Leadership (1965-1976), popular music moved in seemingly incompatible directions. In the early years of the period, popular songs celebrated leadership with lyrics promoting trust, respect and community. However, the latter years of the period were marked by a loss of faith in leadership which "paralleled the frustration expressed by many younger Americans . . . when the Vietnam War reached its peak, the 'Movement' died, and the Watergate Affair occurred."¹⁴¹ During the era of Ironic Romance (1974-1979), popular music returned to romantic themes. However, unable to shake the cynicism which marked the previous era, songs of the period reflected a "negative attitude toward the possibility of establishing and maintaining a healthy intimate

relationship with another person." ¹⁴² Finally, during the era of Pragmatic Skepticism (1980-1982), popular music seemed to reach an equilibrium between ironic, leader-centered and romantic themes. The songs of the era appear to be "the musical mode of those who value achievement, success, and material security as primary determinants of an 'ideal' human relationship. ¹⁴³

These analyses of popular music present a penetrating and revealing picture of American youth during the past three decades. Throughout the fifties and into the sixties, young audiences were almost exclusively interested in personal matters -- primarily romantic entanglements. The perceptions mirrored in rock and roll songs were largely unsophisticated and unrealistic, leading, according to Hayakawa, to youthful frustration and despair. By the mid-sixties, romance ceased to dominate the concerns of young Americans. More aware of the world around them and disillusioned by the establishment's inability to regulate social and political affairs, American youth withdrew from the mainstream of society into a counter culture complete with its own values and aspirations. The popular music of the period reflected this reorientation, stressing the counter culture's dissatisfaction with and rejection of the old order. During the seventies and into the eighties, popular songs once more focused on personal concerns. However, the cynicism and skepticism of earlier years

remained an integral theme of rock and roll music. As Chesebro concluded, "popular music is predominantly an expression of the attitudes of younger Americans who have, during the last twenty-eight years, become increasingly ironic in their view of human relations."¹⁴⁴

Steven Smith provides the single example of this critical perspective applied to a musical genre other than rock and roll in his article on the geo-political orientations of contemporary country music.¹⁴⁵ Smith notes that the lyrics of country songs reveal "a distinctly Southern rhetoric beneath the veneer of what appears to be a national medium."¹⁴⁶ According to Smith, his extensive sample of recent country-western hits depicts a life cycle quite familiar to Southerners -- dissatisfaction with the South, a Northern odyssey and a desire to return home. Smith concludes, "the social geography presented by the lyrics of country music either builds or reinforces the party line of the most recent 'New South' prophets. [N]on-Southern states mentioned are seen as being cold, crowded, hurried, stressful, [and] impersonal. . . . On the other hand, the South is viewed as a region of strong family ties and close personal relationships, with a sense of place and community, good food, improving race relations, and prospects for future economic progress."¹⁴⁷

Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature assessing the rhetorical implications of music communication. Traditionally, music communication has been assessed in respect to its functional dimensions -- the functions music fulfills for artists as they relate to audiences in persuasive, expressive and commercial contexts. The argument was made that in each of these contexts music communication serves legitimate rhetorical functions. The conclusion drawn from this argument was that music communication is a legitimate subject for rhetorical scholarship.

A second argument was made suggesting that rhetorical critics should be as interested in the critical dimensions of music communication as in the functional. This argument was grounded in the belief that music communication may be viewed as a special case of public speaking. From this perspective, scholarly interest in particular musical rhetorical acts or events is defined according to what scholars hope to learn from criticism rather than what artists hope to accomplish from musical interaction. Two popular critical models were reviewed, artist-centered criticism and situation-centered criticism. Both models are derived from accepted approaches to rhetorical criticism and are supported by a body of rhetorical critical studies.

A third critical model was introduced in this chapter. Audience-centered criticism, so called because it focuses on music communication as a vicarious expression by popular audiences, was derived from Ernest Wraga's notion that the content of popular public messages reflects the concerns of the audiences to whom they are directed. The argument that this model may be extended to include music communication was based on work in ethnomusicology as well as professional psychiatric observation. The model was also supported by comments from communication scholars who foresaw potential for audience-centered studies, and by rhetorical critical studies generally consistent with the assumptions of audience-centered criticism.

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

1. Plato Republic, 424c, trans. Allan Bloom, The Republic of Plato (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 102.
2. Bloom, The Republic, 359.
3. R. Serge Denisoff, "Folk Music and the American Left," in The Sounds of Social Change: Studies in Popular Culture, eds. R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A Peterson (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 107. See also, Denisoff, "Protest Movements: Class Consciousness and the Propaganda Song," Sociological Quarterly 9 (Spring 1968), 229.
4. Denisoff, "The Evolution of the American Protest Song," in Sounds of Social Change, 15-25.
5. James R. Irvine and Walter Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations," Quarterly Journal of Speech 58 (October 1972), 273.
6. S.I. Hayakawa, "Popular Songs vs. The Facts of Life," Etc. 12 (1955), 83-95, reprinted in Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, eds. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), 393-403.
7. Hayakawa, "Popular Songs vs. The Facts of Life," 400.
8. Hayakawa, "Popular Songs vs. The Facts of Life," 395. Hayakawa attributes the IFD concept to Wendall Johnson, People in Quandries (New York: Harper, 1946), 14-20.
9. Steven Arnold (Kaye) Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song: Singing Persuasion in Social Action Movements" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1966), 2-3.
10. Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song," 2-3.
11. John Waite Bowers and Donovan J. Ochs, The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1971), 21.

12. Bowers and Ochs, The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control," 20-22.
13. Irving J. Rein, Rudy's Red Wagon: Communication Strategies in Contemporary Society (Glenview, Illinois: Scott-Foresman, 1972), 78.
14. Rein, Rudy's Red Wagon, 77-78.
15. Linda Lou Nigro, "Popular Song Lyrics and Attitude Change: An Experimental Approach" (Masters thesis, University of Georgia, 1972).
16. Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song," 62-29. The data were also reported by Stephen Kosokoff and Carl W. Carmichael, "The Rhetoric of Protest: Song, Speech, and Attitude Change," Southern Speech Communication Journal 35 (Summer 1970), 295-302.
17. Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song," 1-2.
18. Charles J. Stewart, "The Rhetorical Functions of Music in Social Movements," paper presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, San Antonio, Texas, November 13, 1979. (Mimeographed)
19. Irvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 274.
20. Irvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 277.
21. Irvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 277.
22. John David Bloodworth, "Communication in the Youth Counter Culture: Music as Expression," Central States Speech Journal 26 (Winter 1975), 306.
23. Denisoff, "The Evolution," 17-18.
24. Aristotle Rhetoric, 1355b 25-30, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, in Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle, ed. Friedrich Solmsen (New York: Modern Library, 1954), 24.
25. Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song," 2.
26. Irvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 277-278.
27. Denisoff, "The Evolution," 18.
28. Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song," 2.
29. Kosokoff, "The Rhetoric of Song," 2.

30. This is true, at least by implication. The literature evidence a concern with songs primarily as they relate to persuasive communication.
31. Irvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 277.
32. Krvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 282.
33. Irvine and Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form," 284.
34. Bloodworth, "Youth Counter Culture," 306.
35. Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: the Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," Quarterly Journal of Speech 58 (December 1972), 396-407.
36. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, The Social Construction of Reality (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 37-38.
37. Elliot Aronson, The Social Animal (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1972), 25.
38. Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 89-97, and D. Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," Public Opinion Quarterly 24 (1960), 174-176.
39. James W. Chesebro et al., "Popular Music as a Mode of Communication, 1955-1982," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 2 (June 1985), 118.
40. Bloodworth "Youth Counter Culture," 305-306.
41. G. P. Mohrmann and F. Eugene Scott, "Popular Music and World War II: The Rhetoric of Continuation," Quarterly Journal of Speech 62 (April 1976), 154.
42. Kenneth Burke, The Rhetoric of Motives (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1969), 19-22.
43. Mark Booth, "The Art of Words in Song," Quarterly Journal of Speech 62 (October 1976), 246-247.
44. Hal Levy, "The Popular Song," in Encyclopedia of Popular Music, ed. Irwin Stambler (New York: St. Martins Press, 1965), 270.
45. Bloodworth, "Youth Counter Culture," 306.
46. Denisoff, "The Evolution," 21-24.

47. The four component view of the speech act/event was borrowed from David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 72. In Berlo's model, S-M-C-R are each influenced by a variety of factors, suggesting a communicative process of some complexity. Thus, the four component view is not at all at odds with descriptions of rhetorical encounter such as Bitzer's rhetorical situation and Burke's pentad of act, scene, agent, agency and purpose. See Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," Philosophy & Rhetoric 1 (January 1968), 5-6; and Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1969), xv.

48. The notion that component relationships give focus to rhetorical criticism was borrowed from Burke, A Grammar of Motives, 15-20. For a similar view, see Lawrence Rosenfield, "The Anatomy of Critical Discourse," Speech Monographs 25 (March 1968), 50-69.

49. Ernest J. Wrage, "Public Address: A Study in Social and Intellectual History," Quarterly Journal of Speech 33 (December 1947), 451-457, reprinted in Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective, eds. Robert L. Scott and Bernard L. Brock (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 107.

50. Barnett Baskerville, "Must We All Be 'Rhetorical Critics'?" Quarterly Journal of Speech 63 (April 1977), 109.

51. Wrage, "Social and Intellectual History," 107.

52. Baskerville, "Rhetorical Critics," 112.

53. Cheryl Irwin Thomas, "'Look What They've Done To My Song Ma': The Persuasiveness of Song," Southern Speech Communication Journal 39 (Spring 1974), 260-268.

54. Thomas, "The Persuasiveness of Song," 260.

55. Thomas, "The Persuasiveness of Song," 263-267.

56. Lawrence Donald Medcalf, "The Rhetoric of Bob Dylan, 1963-1966" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1979).

57. Medcalf, "The Rhetoric of Bob Dylan," 162.

58. Medcalf, "The Rhetoric of Bob Dylan," 3.

59. Medcalf, "The Rhetoric of Bob Dylan," 158-160.

60. Medcalf, "The Rhetoric of Bob Dylan," 161.
61. Alberto Gonzalez and John Makay, "Rhetorical Ascription and the Gospel According to Dylan," Quarterly Journal of Speech 69 (February 1983), 1-14.
62. Gonzalez and Makay, "Rhetorical Ascription," 2.
63. Gonzalez and Makay, "Rhetorical Ascription," 14.
64. Gonzalez and Makay, "Rhetorical Ascription," 13.
65. Eric Robert Weisman, "The Good Man Singing Well: Stevie Wonder as Noble Lover," Critical Studies in Mass Communication 2 (June 1985), 136-151.
66. Weisman, "The Good Man Singing Well," 137.
67. Weisman, "The Good Man Singing Well," 149.
68. Weisman, "The Good Man Singing Well," 138.
69. Weisman, "The Good Man Singing Well," 148.
70. Weisman, "The Good Man Singing Well," 149.
71. Keith David Semmel, "The Pepperland Perspective: A Study in the Rhetorical Vision of the Beatles, 1962-70" (Ph.D. dissertation, Bowling Green State University, 1980).
72. Semmel, "The Pepperland Perspective," 1.
73. Semmel, "The Pepperland Perspective," 23.
74. Semmel, "The Pepperland Perspective," 206.
75. Semmel, "The Pepperland Perspective," 208.
76. Lane Roth, "Folk Song Lyrics As Communication in John Ford's Films," Southern Speech Communication Journal 46 (Summer 1981), 390-396.
77. Roth, "John Ford's Films," 393.
78. Edwin Black, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 19-22.
79. Leland Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," Quarterly Journal of Speech 38 (April 1952), 184-188.
80. Black, Rhetorical Criticism, 20-22.

81. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 9-10.
82. James Edwin Seward, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Four Songs in the Rhetoric of the United States' Involvement in Indochina, 1966-1970" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1974).
83. Seward, "Involvement in Indochina," 154.
84. Mohrmann and Scott, "Popular Music and World War II," 145-156.
85. Mohrmann and Scott, "Popular Music and World War II," 147.
86. Mohrmann and Scott, "Popular Music and World War II," 155.
87. Jill Robyn Weiner, "The Family of Woman: A Mythological Analysis of the Rhetoric of Contemporary Feminist Song" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979).
88. In this context, "social movement" is used in the manner suggested by Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 184. "(1) Men [women] have become dissatisfied with some aspect of their environment; (2) they desire change . . . and desiring change, they make efforts to alter their environment; (3) eventually, their efforts result in some degree of success or failure; the desired change is, or is not, effected. . . ."
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CHAPTER THREE
THE COUNTRY-WESTERN RHETORICAL EVENT

The critical perspective assumed by this study falls under the rubric of audience-centered criticism, professing interest in country-western music as a popular rather than as an expressive or persuasive communication experience. The study assumes that country-western popular songs reflect the world- and life-views of the audience with whom they are popular and anthologically express a country-western rhetorical vision. This perspective necessarily focuses on music as a communicative event, a product of interaction between a communicative act and its audience. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe the act which evokes, and identify the audience which constructs, the country-western rhetorical event.

The Act

Folklorist D. K. Wilgus noted the difficulty in describing country-western popular songs when he wrote, "I find it quite difficult to discuss hillbilly [country] music because no one can determine exactly the limitations of the subject."¹ Even country music professionals seem unable to agree when describing country-western popular music. Little

illustrates their dissensus more clearly than reactions to the 1974 Country Music Association awards. According to Richard Peterson, a number of top country personalities withdrew from the Association following the awards presentations because they felt that the most prestigious honors had gone to artists who were not legitimate country entertainers.² For their part, the CMA appears unwilling to resolve the controversy, "perhaps feeling that such action would restrict the conception of country music rather than explain it."³ Whatever the reason, it seems clear that critics interested in the rhetorical implications of this particular stream of popular music are destined to encounter difficulty when trying to describe country-western rhetorical acts.

Based on his review of literature describing various streams of popular music, George Lewis identified three distinguishing characteristics of musical rhetorical acts: (1) Acts may be distinct in the means by which the songs are presented. (2) Acts may be distinct in the musicological character of the songs. (3) Acts may be distinct in the lyric content of the songs.⁴ These three aspects of musical rhetorical acts provide a basis for describing country-western songs.

Means of presentation. A survey of literature attempting to define country-western music produces a number of generalizations relating to the means by which country

songs are presented to popular audiences. Conceptually, these generalizations suggest two features which may characterize country-western songs -- the real and contrived personae of country-western performers and the primary performance media through which country-western songs are shared.

The most ambitious effort to define country music by describing country-western performers was undertaken by Patricia Averill.⁵ Based on her analysis of country-western songs recorded between 1928 and 1968, Averill defined modern country music as a type of popular music featuring male solo vocalists.⁶ For the time frame covered by Averill's survey this description is reasonably accurate. When Kitty Wells recorded "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels" in 1952, she became the first female performer to have a record top the country-western popularity charts. Nine years passed before another female would record a Number One hit, and in the entire decade of the sixties there were only fourteen Number One country hits recorded by female performers (eight of them by a single artist -- Tammy Wynette).⁷ By the mid-1970s, however, dominance by male solo vocalists eroded. Billboard magazine's annual rankings of country records and artists illustrate just how outdated Averill's description has become.⁸ In the last decade, twenty-two percent of the annual Top Ten country hits have been recorded by female artists. Three of these records, Dolly Parton's 1978

recording of "Here You Come Again," Barbara Mandrell's 1979 "Sleeping Single In A Double Bed," and Shelly West's 1983 "Jose Cuervo," topped annual popularity charts. Female artists have also invaded the annual Top Ten artists rankings. During the last decade, Rosanne Cash, Donna Fargo, Janie Fricke, Crystal Gayle, Barbara Mandrell, Anne Murray, Dolly Parton, Sylvia and Tanya Tucker have each claimed a place among a year's ten most popular performers.⁹ It is likewise inaccurate to continue to describe popular country performers as soloists. In the last ten years, twenty percent of the Top Ten hits have been recorded by duos or singing groups. In addition, Alabama, Dave and Sugar, The Kendalls, The Statler Brothers and The Oak Ridge Boys have each climbed into the Top Ten artists rankings.¹⁰ In fact, in the last decade, forty-two percent of the Top Ten recordings have been performed by, and twenty-eight percent of the Top Ten artists have been, female vocalists, vocal duos or vocal groups. Thus, while a large number of male solo artists continue to enjoy popularity as country performers, it is no longer accurate to describe popular country-western artists as solo male vocalists.

Country performers have also been frequently identified by age. According to Billboard, country music recording companies have traditionally shunned young performers in favor of older artists who could identify with a middle-aged public.¹¹ Such no longer seems to be the case. Willie

Nelson, a renegade from the ranks of the middle-aged, has demonstrated that there is a considerable contingent of young fans in the country audience.¹² In an effort to appeal directly to that audience, country music producers have begun to sign increasing numbers of young performers to recording contracts.¹³ As a result, artists such as Jessi Colter, Freddy Fender, Crystal Gayle, Emmylou Harris, T.G. Sheppard and Gene Watson have become country "stars."¹⁴

In addition to sex and age, country-western artists have also been distinguished from other popular music performers by the image they instill in their audiences. Averill suggests that when a song is considered country it is often because the artist performing it personifies a contrived mental image of country performers.¹⁵ Drawing from biographies found in 1969-1970 celebrity lists, Averill concluded that country performers come from "country" backgrounds. In her population of almost 500 country-western musicians, Averill found that 76.5% were born in rural communities and that 76.2% were born in Southern states.¹⁶

Again, Averill's performer descriptor is outdated. For instance, music critic John Rockwell has observed, "[T]he supposed country charts in recent years have often been topped by such artists as John Denver, Olivia Newton-John, and Linda Ronstadt. They may be singing outwardly country songs, but they are hardly country in . . . their

biographies. . . ." ¹⁷ Not only is the country image no longer biographically distinct, it is becoming increasingly difficult to categorize country performers through their association with traditional country music institutions. As Rockwell notes, the ties between contemporary country stars and the Nashville recording industry are somewhat tenuous. ¹⁸ Many new performers, (e.g., Linda Ronstadt, the Eagles, and the Marshall Tucker Band) have come to country music after ¹⁹ having first established themselves as rock musicians. With these crossover country artists enjoying widespread success, a number of traditional performers (e.g., Mickey Gilley, Ronnie Milsap and Tanya Tucker) have fashioned themselves to be country-rock or country-pop ²⁰ professionals. Others, like Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Tompall Glaser and Jessie Colter, resist ²¹ association with either Nashville or rock institutions. Folklorist Archie Green refers to these performers as the "cowboys" of country music. He writes, "Some of these musicians have accepted the label 'cowboy' as a defiant badge of distinction . . . drawn to the image of cowboy as outlaw or rebel breaking with Nashville and other ²² established institutions." There is no more visible a distinction between contemporary country-western artists and the traditional country persona than in the area of dress. Costuming has long been recognized to be an integral element of image construction. As David Emblidge noted, "Most rock

stars in the late 1960s created as part of their act an image of alienation from the urban, middle class mainstream. Their costumes tell the story: Hendrix the dandy, Joplin the sequined sex machine, Jagger the court jester in top hat and rooster tail, [and] the Beatles in a whole wardrobe of put-on costumes."²³ As with rock stars, some country performers' dissatisfaction with a traditional image is reflected in their choice of costuming. According to one observer, "A new crop of performers has hit the country scene. Forsaking trick clothes and slick hairdos for blue jeans and hippie coifs, singing songs marked less by nasal wails than by elements of folk, pop, and rock, they are helping to bring country out of the honky-tonk and into the heartland."²⁴ The archetype for the new image country singer is Willie Nelson, the Country Music Association's 1979 Entertainer of the Year and a perennial member of Billboard's Top Ten artists list. As critic Nat Hentoff describes Nelson, "Without any of the spangles and extravagantly decorated costumes of old-time country superstars, Willie comes on in well-worn, eating-in-the-kitchen clothes, long hair ending in a pony tail, a red beard, and a most authentically easeful way of being with the audience."²⁵ Other performers have followed Nelson's lead, substantially altering their image in order to appeal to a larger audience, including such "name" artists as Waylon Jennings, Dolly Parton, Charlie Rich, Kenny Rogers,

Eari Scruggs and Hank Snow. The renegade image, however, has merely become an alternative to rather than a replacement for the traditional Nashville image. Craig Scott, program director for Akron, Ohio radio station WSLR, has commented that the new country performers are just "trying to get the younger people interested -- which is fine . . . it was just a matter of time. What's interesting to note is that the traditional country stars like Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn are still big draws. . . ."²⁷

Thus, while it may once have been accurate to describe country-western music by referring to a standard performer persona -- a middle-aged male vocalist from a Southern or rural background with ties to traditional Nashville institutions and images -- such is no longer the case. Among a listing of country music's most popular performers one will find males and females, old and young, traditional and renegade. It seems that, while country-western performers may be readily described, these descriptions no longer help identify the country-western rhetorical act.

A number of efforts to describe popular country music infer that country-western songs may be identified by focusing on the media through which the songs are shared with popular audiences. Wilgus posits that country music has been associated with three media without which, in his opinion, "the tradition might have withered."²⁸ In order of chronological importance, the media are live performances,

radio broadcasts and commercial recordings. According to Wilgus, long before broadcasting and recording companies recognized the commercial potential of country-western music, the country tradition was carried on through live public performances. However, Wilgus admits that the role of live performances in the growth and development of popular country music has been overshadowed by those played by records and radio. Other authors agree, citing public performances when discussing the historical development of country music but focusing on records and radio as the primary media of contemporary country music. In Averill's assessment, for instance, "country music is the product of the radio and recording industries."²⁹ Of the two, most authors rate radio as the medium most directly responsible for the advent of popular country music.³⁰ Specifically, contemporary country music has been described as a phenomenon of the "all-country" station. George Carney explains, "The most novel feature of the upswing in country music is the all-country radio stations (sic). In areas where other types of music predominated on radio, a great demand for country music programming existed. The station that emphasized the country sound, therefore, tapped an unexploited but eager audience."³¹ As a primary intermediary between producers and consumers of country music, the all-country radio station has tremendously influenced what is produced, and thus consumed, under the

guise of country music. According to Peterson, "Many music-makers in the industry tried to accommodate to the changing definition of country music implicit in the new country radio since record sales depended on radio air play. Songwriters, publishers, producers, arrangers, and all those record-industry people involved in the flow of music to the market melded their efforts to fit with the new country-radio sound."³² Thus, Averill concluded, "[I]f there is a national [country] musical style, one would expect that it would appear most often on the radio, less often in record sales, and least often in live performances."³³

There are two reasons why one must exercise great caution in assuming that country-western music is primarily shared through broadcasts on all-country radio stations: (1) Radio's dominant position among the traditional performance media has gradually eroded. (2) Recent trends in motion picture and television music selection have provided country-western artists with alternative performance media.

Whereas Carney once spoke of the all-country radio station tapping an "unexploited audience," it is no longer correct to assume that radio listeners must turn to country stations to hear country music. One sign that non-country stations are increasingly programming country music is found in Billboard's weekly "Hot 100" popularity charts. These charts, based on airplay by stations representing diverse

programming formats, include great numbers of country-western songs -- with as many as 90% of the top songs on the country charts also making the "Hot 100."³⁴ More direct evidence is provided by the Country Music Association's radio surveys. According to 1982 CMA figures, less than 62% of the stations broadcasting country music program an all-country format. Of the remainder, 3 in 10 program up to five hours daily.³⁵ Even these figures understate the pervasiveness of country music in non-country programming. Much of the country "flavor" of contemporary radio is identified as pop or rock. In 1976, for instance, Rockwell observed, "Rock owes much of its continued vitality to its willingness to absorb influences from the most sources, and country music has long since become a staple of present-day rock, with such bands as the Byrds, the Eagles, the Grateful Dead, Poco, and the New Riders of the Purple Sage leading the way."³⁶ Concomitant with this diffusion of the country product has come increasing recognition by the more record-oriented rock and pop music audiences. With greater numbers of record buying consumers listening to country songs, commercially recorded music has become a more important performance medium. While the country music divisions of major recording companies have long been considered stable profit centers, country record sales were traditionally low -- the profits were a result of low production costs and absolute market domination by a few companies.³⁷ Now

however, country-western record sales have grown to a point where country music accounts for a substantial portion of the recording industry's multi-billion dollar gross sales. In fact, in 1979, when recording industry revenues dropped by \$500 million, sales of country-western records increased by 2.6%.

Just as commercial record sales have become increasingly important to the dissemination of country-western performances, so have live public appearances resurged. In 1975, Billboard reported that "Live country music is now seen and heard all over the United States. New York City has its own country club and there have been a series of successful concerts in Madison Square Garden. [C]ountry artists play most of the major halls in Southern California as well as across the nation, and it is difficult to find a major city in the United States today that does not have at least one club offering country music on a regular basis." During the latter half of the 1970s, this trend continued to a point where The Wall Street Journal reported that almost 80% of the shows booked by one major West Coast concert promoter included country music.

Not only have the traditional media of records and public performances become more important to country-western music, new performance media have developed. In 1971, director Peter Bogdanovich picked 24 songs from country catalogues to use as authentic background music in The Last

Picture Show, a motion picture which was subsequently nominated for a number of Academy Awards, including Best Picture.⁴² Other film-makers quickly followed suit, and within a few years country singers and songwriters had put together an impressive list of movie credits. By 1980, a number of Hollywood's most popular performers had appeared in movies backed by country music -- George C. Scott and Faye Dunaway (Oklahoma Crude), Robert Redford and Jane Fonda (The Electric Horseman), Burt Reynolds (W.W. And The Dixie Dance-Kings, Smokey And The Bandit, Smokey And The Bandit II), Clint Eastwood (Every Which Way But Loose, Every Which Way You Can, Bronco Billy), and John Travolta (Urban Cowboy).⁴³ Several films are particularly important in the recent history of country music movies. Robert Altman's award winning 1975 film Nashville focused public attention on Nashville and the country music industry.⁴⁴ The 1978 film Convoy and the 1980 film The Gambler borrowed story lines from popular country-western recordings and cast country singers Kris Kristofferson and Kenny Rogers in the respective lead roles.⁴⁵ In 1980, Sissy Spacek won an Academy Award for her portrayal of country superstar Loretta Lynn in the film adaptation of Lynn's autobiography Coal Miner's Daughter.⁴⁶ In 1984, Robert Duvall won an Academy Award for his portrayal of a down-and-out country singer in the film Tender Mercies.⁴⁷ Country music's crowning Hollywood achievement was probably the 1980 box office smash

Honeysuckle Rose. The movie starred one of country music's most popular entertainers, Willie Nelson, and dramatized the trials of country-western musicians. The film's music received Academy Award nominations for Best Musical Score and Best Original Song.

48

Although not on a par with radio, records and concert appearances, the cinema has become an important medium for country-western performances. Films introduce audiences to songs which may be later added to radio, record and concert repertoires. In fact, it is not at all unusual for songs originating in the movies to vault from films to the popularity charts. For instance, the title song from the 1978 movie Every Which Way But Loose was a number one hit for Eddie Rabbitt. In addition, the film provided hit material for Charlie Rich ("I'll Wake You Up When I Get Home") and Mel Tillis ("Send Me Down to Tucson"). Urban Cowboy helped spur Johnny Lee high on the charts with his recording of "Lookin' For Love," and Willie Nelson followed his 1979 hit "My Heroes Have Always Been Cowboys" from The Electric Horseman with "On The Road Again" from Honeysuckle Rose. According to Ed Salamon, program director for radio station WHN in New York City, movies give tremendous immediate exposure to country songs. As he told Billboard, "movies have made country music much more accessible. More than 1.5 million people in New York alone saw Coal Miner's Daughter the first few weeks it was out. That's much more

exposure than an LP can generate during the same time span."⁴⁹

The cinema is not alone as a developing medium for country-western performances. Television, which has been referred to as "the least imaginative of the major media of communication in its use of music," has begun to depend heavily on country artists for its programming.⁵⁰ According to Billboard, country artist Johnny Cash paved the way in 1969 with his successful network musical-variety program.⁵¹ Since that time, a host of country performers have been given opportunities to ply their trade on network and syndicated musical-variety and talk shows.⁵² With the demonstrated popularity of country artists as guest performers, television producers have shown a greater willingness to focus programs entirely on the country-western product, giving birth to country music shows like "The Dolly Parton Show," "Pop Goes the Country," and "Austin City Limits."⁵³ This trend toward country-oriented programming led Billboard to report in 1980, "The cinematic triumph . . . is almost equalled by country music's increased penetration into the regional and national TV market. Local, regional and network TV [have] continued to become fertile ground for the growth of country music."⁵⁴ The regularity with which country-oriented programming appears on local, regional and national TV schedules was noted in a 1980 Country Music Association survey which

reported that more than 75% of the nation's television stations broadcast network or syndicated country programs. For many of these stations, the lure of the country audience is sufficient to justify airing blocks of popular country music programs shown in sequence. One of the early entrants into the country music television market, "The Porter Wagoner Show," in syndication for more than twenty years, has been rated the number one adult program in over 75% of its markets. Another of the country music staples is "Hee Haw," which, according to Billboard, has been booked "into every major market in the country" and peaks at almost 30 million viewers. Almost as popular as this regular weekly fare are the network broadcasts of the annual Academy of Country Music and Country Music Association awards programs, and the syndicated Music City News awards program which "is an acknowledged leader among syndicated shows with an audience estimated to reach 11 million homes."

Like motion pictures, television has developed into an important medium for country-western performances. According to one reviewer, "if you think television didn't have a lot to do with [the popularity of country music] you're in disagreement with a number of artists clamoring to get on it. They have seen "Hee Haw" and it works. In true country music style, they know their audience and they know their audience watches the tube." This feeling is shared by recording artist Barbara Mandrell, herself the host of a

network musical-variety program. "I think country is growing because never before have there been so many network variety television shows that use country product. That allows country music to reach homes that have never been exposed to it. Some of them will like it without even realizing that it's country music."⁶¹

As with artist personae, attempts to identify country-western popular songs according to the media through which country images and messages are shared with popular audiences seem inaccurate to the extent that they provide a historical rather than a contemporary description of country music. While radio remains the dominant medium, personal record collections and concert performances now account for a substantial portion of the contact between country-western artists and their audiences. In addition, cinematic and televised country music performances, while decidedly secondary in importance, now occur with sufficient frequency as to require their inclusion in any discussion of the media with which country music is popularly associated.

Musicological character. The musicological character of a popular song plays an important role in its success as a rhetorical act. According to a number of theorists, the music style of a song serves as its language. The language-style analogy was discussed by Leonard Meyer in Emotion and Meaning in Music.⁶² According to Meyer, style functions as musical syntax, representing learned behaviors

which serve as communicative common ground for performers and audiences. Meyer indicates, "without a set of gestures common to the social group, and without common habit responses to those gestures, no communication whatsoever would be possible. Communication depends upon, presupposes, and arises out of the universe of discourse which in the aesthetics of music is called style."⁶³ Various music streams develop as diverse dialects of the musical language, and messages phrased in a particular dialect are eventually channeled to audiences which appreciate and understand that dialect. Wilson Coker elaborated on this thesis in Music and Meaning.⁶⁴ Coker explains that music conveys meaning affectively as well as syntactically. The affective element is related to the audience through qualities of movement and mood created by manipulating musical symbols. As Chesebro puts it, "by virtue of its use of melody, rhythm, chord structure and progression, instrumentation and so forth, [music] is designed to invoke the emotional state, state of consciousness or mental state as it is experienced within the self and others."⁶⁵ According to Coker, audiences either relate or fail to relate to music according to their ability to identify with the particular style of musical expression. "[W]hen we hear those telltale qualities and sorts of peculiar movement reproduced in music, we identify them as the particular qualities and special combinations that are appropriate to specific attitudes we have felt and

ways we and others have behaved. Either we recognize the expressive qualities of musical gestures and, hence, recognize the peculiar attitudes revealed and signified, or we fail to grasp any affective-connotative meaning of the qualities."⁶⁶ As it relates popular music communication, this discussion suggests that audiences select musical messages according to whether the messages are "phrased" in a music style with which they identify. Accordingly, artists may direct messages to particular audiences through their choice of song style. This concept is consistent with efforts to use music style as a descriptor for teenage-oriented popular music, guided by the assumption that "the music [style] itself is attraction enough for a large part of the rock audience."⁶⁷ Robinson and Hirsch provided a modicum of empirical support for this thesis as a byproduct of their survey of Michigan teenagers. Based on their finding that 70% of their subjects chose songs more for beat than for meaning, Robinson and Hirsch concluded that teenagers are "much more interested in sound than in meaning."⁶⁸

As might be expected, a number of efforts to distinguish country-western from other streams of popular music have focused on varying aspects of music style. These discussions have produced a number of generalizations about the country-western dialect. Conceptually, these

generalizations fall into two categories -- instrumentation and vocalization.

Descriptions of country-western instrumentation focus primarily on the choice of instruments used in country arrangements. Most authorities seem to agree that early country music was dominated by stringed instruments, particularly the acoustic guitar, mandolin, stringed bass, banjo, autoharp and fiddle.⁶⁹ The selection of these instruments was probably related to the folk art roots of country music. According to Wilgus, early country music was steeped in a hillbilly, banjo-minstrel tradition. The instruments used were, in true folk art fashion, portable, simple to play and home made or inexpensively available through mail-order houses.⁷⁰ Kingman alleges that the music style of hillbilly bands was naturally dominated by the fiddle. "As the only string instrument capable of producing a sustained tone, as played with the bow, it takes the lead, not only in fiddle tunes intended for dancing, but in the long preludes and interludes in the songs and ballads. The straight, penetrating, vibrato-less tone and the sliding up into the longer held notes are characteristic, and are akin to the way in which the human voice, too, is handled."⁷¹ To many, traditional country-western music may be distinguished from other streams of popular music by this reliance on a fast moving, "resiny" fiddle lead.⁷²

In the 1930s, the hillbilly tradition began to give way to the influence of commercially successful Western honky-tonk artists like Jimmy Rogers and Bob Wills.⁷³ According to Wilgus, the fusion of traditional hillbilly and Western swing music generated a music style which became "the basic stratum of current country-western music."⁷⁴ The new country bands differed from their traditional counterparts in both the choice and number of instruments. The piano became a staple in many bands. The fiddle lead began to disappear as percussion-slapped bass, tenor banjo and drums predominated. In order to be heard in the larger ensembles and the noisy atmosphere of the honky-tonk, acoustic guitars gave way to electrified pedal steel and "straight" guitars. The larger bands, like Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, added⁷⁵ trumpets, trombones and saxophones.

The development of this new country-western music style was somewhat arrested by the Grand Ole Opry. Originating from Nashville in 1925 and broadcast over clear channel radio WSM, the Opry quickly became the most important country music program in the nation. Country-western performers flocked to Nashville in hopes of gaining national exposure on the Opry.⁷⁶ However, to the Opry, "fiddles, guitars, banjos, mandolins and autoharps were the tools of country pickin'" and only certain stringed instruments were allowed on the stage of Ryman Auditorium.⁷⁷ Instruments which were popular with many commercial country-western

bands were only slowly assimilated into the Grand Ole Opry music style, often not until public pressure to hear country "hits" forced the issue.⁷⁸ Thus, a new instrument appearing on the Opry stage was not as much innovation as it was recognition that the instrument had been assimilated into the country-western dialect. It was not until 1955, for instance,⁷⁹ that Ernest Tubb debuted the electric guitar. Drums did not make it to the Opry stage until manager Jim Denny agreed to allow the Everly Brothers to use a snare drum (a full set of drums "smacked too much of rock and roll"⁸⁰) in the mid-50s. Horns finally made it after the success of Johnny Cash's 1963 recording of "Ring of Fire."⁸¹ Some instrumentation trends thrived without the grudging acceptance of the Opry management. Symphonic strings made their appearance in the early 1950s recordings of Red Foley, although the innovation was not particularly popular until adopted by other artists, notably Patsy Cline and Brenda Lee.⁸²

Today, many country-western recordings are "lush and complex," studio arrangements combining symphonic strings⁸³ and percussion, horns, and even background choirs. Other arrangements reflect the influence of small performing bands and rely heavily on acoustic and electric guitars and drums.⁸⁴ At the same time, the "traditional" fiddle-and-banjo style flourishes in the music of groups like The Charlie Daniels Band and The Earl Scruggs Review.⁸⁵ Such

diversity makes it impossible to define the country-western dialect by focusing on instrumentation. As recording star Waylon Jennings puts it, "If instruments and beats made our music then we'd be in trouble anyway."⁸⁶

Considerably less has been written about country-western vocalization. The descriptions which are available address three aspects of vocal style -- the syntactic, the melodic and the emotive. By far the most complete analysis of country vocal style was provided by Kingman. In discussing the syntactics of country-western popular songs, Kingman indicates that early country singers were easily identified by their rural Southern dialect. He gives such usages as "a-going," "a-coming," "rise you up," and "yonder" as examples of hillbilly idioms which made it into the music.⁸⁷ Just as early hillbilly instrumentation was influenced by fusion with Western honky-tonk music, Kingman suggests that the nationalization of country-western music led to a country vocal style which dropped its distinctive regional dialect in favor of standard English.⁸⁸ In recent years, country-western syntax has continually refined -- songs are now phrased in a more complex and poetic vocabulary. As songwriter Don Robertson puts it, "It's really the same stuff in a new dress. The language is tonier, the vocabulary has increased, [and] the syntax is better. . . ."⁸⁹ Stambler and Landon, for instance, contrast the syntax of Roy Acufi's recording of Dorsey

Dixon's 1930s classic "Wreck On The Highway" ("I heard the crash on the highway, but I didn't hear nobody pray") with Glen Campbell's 1968 recording of John Hartford's "Gentle On My Mind" ("Though the wheatfields and the junkyards and the clothes lines come between us").⁹⁰ The hillbilly idioms, however, have not entirely disappeared. According to Kingman, "In more recent country music there are a few vernacular survivors, such as the well-nigh universal 'aint' and the dropping of the final g's of the ing suffix (ramblin', cheatin') which have become virtual cliché."⁹¹

Melodically, country vocal style is commonly described as a nasal Southern drawl, typified by a high, strained and impersonal voice.⁹² However popular this notion may be, it is inaccurate. Early Western singers, notably Jimmy Rodgers, impressed with jazz performers, began to imitate that dialect's more personal, "bluesy" approach to singing.⁹³ This soulful singing, called a "blue yodel," was rapidly assimilated into the country style. Kingman writes, "The high, tense, rigid vocal quality was later modified somewhat, particularly under southwestern influence. The tendency for the voice to 'break' as if under the stress of the song's emotions, was introduced as a more subjective style crept into the music. . . ."⁹⁴ One folksy aspect of country-western vocal melody which seems to have survived is the flawed, obviously unprofessional quality of the singing. Part of country's common appeal is that audiences can easily

identify with performers who sound "more like the guy or gal
 next door" than professional singers.⁹⁵ As recording artist
 Porter Wagoner puts it, "I don't try to show off a so-called
 beautiful voice, because I don't feel my voice is beautiful.
 I believe there is a different kind of beauty, the beauty of
 being honest, of being yourself. . . ." ⁹⁶ Hentoff's
 description of Willie Nelson is more to the point. "His
 voice is grainy but cuts clear; and in no way does it try to
 overpower or surprise the listener with virtuoso effects.
 Willie just gets inside your head and then plays on your
 memories as if he were softly chording a guitar."⁹⁷

A characteristic which seems to be a standard element
 of country-western vocal style is the emotive quality of the
 singing. Country performers sound more sincere than other
 popular singers, creating the impression that they believe
 what they are singing.⁹⁸ This "realness" of country singing
 was addressed by Waylon Jennings. "The soul of the music is
 in the singer and I don't believe anybody can really sing
 country as well as the old boy who's lived it."⁹⁹ Kingman
 effectively summarized the emotive quality of country music.
 "Essential to any consideration of vocal style is that utter
 sincerity of delivery without which country music is not.
 [T]he sincerity and total immersion in the song and its
 subject . . . is absolutely central to the meaning of
 country singing."¹⁰⁰

Generalizations about the musicological character of country-western music suggest that contemporary country-western is a dynamic, indistinct dialect. In one respect, the dialect reflects a surviving strain of the hillbilly sound, often called "bluegrass," retaining much of the traditional style of instrumentation and vocalization.¹⁰¹

The dialect also includes the the heavily commercialized mainstream "Nashville Sound," characterized by lush studio recordings.¹⁰² Somewhere in between, there is "progressive country," described as "an amalgam of highly personalized modes of blues, rock and folk."¹⁰³ There are also strains of "country-rock," a spin-off from progressive country which is more heavily influenced by hard rock sounds.¹⁰⁴ The point is, no strain is more or less country-western than the others. Nor is any particular strain necessarily more or less popular than the others. In 1979, for instance, the bluegrass-influenced Charlie Daniels Band took three top prizes in the Country Music Association's awards presentations.¹⁰⁵ In the same presentations, progressive country's Willie Nelson claimed the prestigious Entertainer of the Year award.¹⁰⁶ The same year, Nashville Sound artists Ronnie Milsap, Conway Twitty and Mel Tillis earned places on the Billboard Top Ten artists list.¹⁰⁷

The contemporary country-western popular song is, then, musicologically diverse. As Gritzner puts it, "It is truly the outgrowth of a blending of styles representing a cross-

section of American music. A Saturday night Grand Ole Opry show might include samples of Appalachian bluegrass, Louisiana 'Cajun' music, East Texas honky-tonk, Mexican border melodies, mountain spirituals, western swing, Negro rock'n'roll, and alas, a touch of pop." ¹⁰⁸ The only universal in the music style of popular country-western songs relates to the realness of the performances. Country singers present a musical image with which popular audiences can readily identify -- unpolished and sincere. The instrumentation and vocalizations which characterize the various dialects serve to direct the musical messages to particular subgroups within the country audience. They do not, however, define the parameters of the music stream.

Lyric content. The final distinguishing characteristic of popular music streams, lyric content, seems likely to provide valid generalizations about the country-western musical act. One thing on which performers, critics and academics seem to agree is that popular country-western is primarily a lyric music. ¹⁰⁹ In fact, Edward Armstrong goes so far as to suggest that, in country music, "words are accented at the expense of melodic, rhythmic, and tonal complexity." ¹¹⁰ The role evidently played by lyric content in country-western songs clearly distinguishes this music stream from other forms of popular music. One is reminded of Robinson's and Hirsch's taste survey of Michigan teenagers, which found that a Top-40 song's popularity is

more likely to be determined by sound than meaning and that few teenagers are able to "correctly" interpret lyric content.¹¹¹ Perhaps this different orientation toward lyrics helps explain why the researchers also found that country-western was the music style least popular with the teenagers surveyed.¹¹² This unusual relationship between words and music was best expressed by country songwriter John Hartford. "When I write a song," he indicated, "I really write a picture. I use the music for emphasis, sort of like a soundtrack behind a movie. . . ." ¹¹³ Unlike means of presentation and music style, lyric dominance is a constant factor through the various periods and dialects of country music. Stambler and Landun explain, "Some of the outward trappings of the songs have changed, but the shape of country music really is the same. The songs still contain the deep meaning they always had despite new audiences and arrangements."¹¹⁴

The initial generalization about the lyric content of country-western popular songs is found in the themes which the songs address. Country themes stand in contrast to the "wishful thinking, dreamy and ineffectual nostalgia, unrealistic fantasy, self-pity, and sentimental cliches masquerading as emotion" which characterize most popular music.¹¹⁵ Country-western songs describe the human comedy, addressing and exploiting common human problems.¹¹⁶ The lyrics focus on essential problems encountered by

individuals in attempting to cope with their social and physical environment.¹¹⁷ According to Averill, the basic unit of abstraction in country-western songs is the situation which generates the lyrics. These situations center "upon the relations of the individual with himself, with other people, with God and with places."¹¹⁸ Thus, the lyric narrative of a country-western song is "everyman's story."¹¹⁹ Country-western songs describe "situations that most people over twenty have been involved in."¹²⁰ The themes of these situations are universal: Love and hate, happiness and sorrow, poverty, religion, country, tragedy -- raw human emotions which other forms of popular music infrequently address.¹²¹ Audiences are attracted to country-western music because they can identify with the intrinsic human feelings to which the songs give voice.¹²²

A second generalization may be found in the way in which these themes are expressed. Country-western lyrics are basically simple and unpretentious. Gritzner describes this as the "soul" of country music, "its rough-hewn lyricism, its directness and simplicity, and its refreshing lack of elegance, aristocratic airs, and pretense."¹²³ Country themes are expressed unambiguously, the narratives are developed without sham or exaggeration and are stated in terms which make them understandable to the average person. Such lyrics are emotionally evocative. According to one critic, country songs all have "that same deep-in-your-gut

honesty that makes you hold your head high with pride, wrench your fist at injustice, brush a tear from your eye, or smile at genuine humor. And this honesty is perhaps the essence of country music's popularity. . . ."¹²⁴

The final generalization about the content of country music may be found in the lyric form of the songs. Unlike many forms of popular music, country-western songs are basically narrative. They attempt to tell a story within the confines of the three-to-four minute period imposed on the songs by radio programming practices.¹²⁵ Early country-western songs took their form from traditional ballads, or narratives attempting to tell a complete story, usually unfolded in a unilinear manner.¹²⁶ In the last thirty years, however, country songwriters have begun to modify the traditional ballad formula. Contemporary country-western songs are now more likely to imply than to tell stories. Averill suggests that the new formula is metaphorical rather than complete and unilinear. The songs usually open with a stanza or chorus which identifies an image and proceeds through verses which elaborate upon the original metaphor rather than developing a logical story line. Thus, the song is able to intensify the emotion evoked by the narrative, not by further detailing a situation, but rather by reinforcing the image "in figurative language which has been defined by the context so that it can be appreciated by the most naive listener."¹²⁷ Thomas Adler refers to these

pseudo-ballads as "unplotted narratives." They maintain, he indicates, the basic narrative aspect of the traditional ballad but they resemble "a sequence of descriptions more than they do an artistically arranged tale."¹²⁸ There would seem to be a direct relationship between the emotional themes of country-western songs, their directness of expression, and the growing popularity of the unplotted narrative form. The time frame forced on popular music is inappropriate for traditional ballads -- it is difficult to unfold a complete story in four minutes. Unplotted narratives tend to lessen the importance of story line and heighten the impact of the emotional core of a ballad. Country-western is basically an emotional music stream, and the unplotted narrative form allows a song to intensify an audience's emotional reaction to the theme despite the disunified narrative of the short song.¹²⁹

Thus, literature addressing the lyrics of country-western popular songs suggest three characteristics common to the country-western rhetorical act: The lyrics deal with emotional issues surrounding everyday life, emotional orientations are expressed through direct and unpretentious language, and the songs are structured in a form which clarifies and intensifies emotional reactions to the songs. Kingman effectively summarized the content of country-western songs. "Country music . . . reveals itself in a readiness to treat almost any human situation in song, and

to deal unflinchingly with any aspect of life that genuinely touches the emotions." ¹³⁰

The Audience

A number of demographic surveys help identify the contemporary country-western audience. Generally, these surveys focus on some or all of the following social characteristics: age, gender, race, education, occupation, income, and geographic background. One such audience survey was reported by McCarthy, Peterson and Yancey. ¹³¹ In 1969, the researchers surveyed 700 adult heads of households in Nashville, Tennessee. One aspect of the survey concerned music preferences. Based on the responses of those subjects who identified themselves as country music fans, the report reached the following conclusions: (1) Country-western fans are more likely to be white than black. While only 5 percent of the black respondents preferred country music, almost 45 percent of the white respondents were identified as country music fans. (2) Country-western music is more likely to be preferred by adults with limited education than by adults with a higher education. While 75 percent of the respondents with less than a ninth grade education preferred country music, only 16 percent of the respondents with college degrees were identified as country music fans. (3) Country-western music is more likely to be preferred by adults with rural Southern roots than by adults raised in

Northern urban communities. Three arguments supported this conclusion. First, of the subjects with less than a high school education, about 65 percent of those raised in the South preferred country music, while only 30 percent of those raised in the North considered themselves country music fans. Second, although specific percentages were not cited, the report indicated that respondents who were reared in small towns or on farms were more likely to be identified as country music fans than were respondents who were reared in large cities. Finally, incidental support was found in the Country Music Association's list of full time country format radio stations. Of the ten states with the largest number of all country stations, eight (Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana and Virginia) were in the South.¹³² Based on these data, the Nashville Report concluded, "[I]n Nashville, at least, the music has its strongest appeal to the southern white working and lower class."¹³³

A more comprehensive description of the demography of the country-western music audience was provided by Peterson and Di Maggio.¹³⁴ Their report included data drawn from radio audience surveys, concert audience surveys, record buyer surveys, and general public questionnaire surveys¹³⁵ conducted between 1968 and 1975. Given the diverse nature of the data considered, the Peterson and Di Maggio Report provided few specific demographic statistics.

However, the following statements were made about the construction of the country-western audience: (1) The country-western audience is concentrated in the 25-49 age bracket. Not only did the surveys find few teenage country music fans, they found fewer over-50 fans for country music than for any music stream other than Top 40. (2) The country-western audience is almost exclusively white. (3) The country-western audience is less educated than other popular music audiences. The surveys found that country music fans were less likely to have completed a high school education and far less likely to have earned a college degree than fans of other music streams. (4) The country-western audience is over represented in lower-prestige occupations. The surveys found few country music fans employed in professional occupations and, relative to other popular music audiences, country music fans were under represented in executive and managerial occupations. By contrast, the surveys found country music fans highly concentrated in service and skilled and unskilled blue-collar occupations. (5) The country-western audience is concentrated in lower economic strata. The surveys found that country music fans fell predominantly into the \$5,000 to \$15,000 family income range, with a reported mean of \$12,000.

A more revealing survey was conducted by the Pulse Corporation in 1970. ¹³⁶
¹³⁷ This survey is of particular value

for three reasons. First, it relied on a broad-based sampling procedure, using area-stratified random samples of approximately 1000 respondents each from 44 of the top 65 radio markets in the nation. Second, it provided a convenient basis for comparison by including, in addition to country-western demographics, data relating to the construction of the audiences for Top 40, middle-of-the-road, beautiful music, and soul music streams. Finally, the report generated a single statistic, called a "listener index," which recorded how the audience for a particular music stream compared to the overall radio audience. The Pulse Corporation Report reached the following conclusions about the country-western audience: (1) Country-western music is most popular with a young mid-life audience.

Country music fans were considerably over represented in the 25-35 age group, slightly over represented in the 36-49 age group, proportionally represented in the 18-24 age group, and considerably under represented in the 50-64 and 65-and-over age groups. (2) Country-western music is substantially more popular with a male audience than with a female audience. Over 60 percent of the country audience was male, and while country-western was the most popular music stream with the male audience, it was the least popular stream with the female audience. (3) Country-western music is most popular with minimally educated audiences. While country music fans were over represented in the grade school and

high school educated groups, they were considerably under represented in the college educated group. (4) Country-western music is most popular with blue-collar audiences. Country music fans were considerably over represented in the craft and semi-skilled occupation groups, slightly over represented in the unskilled occupation groups, slightly under represented in the managerial and clerical and sales occupation groups, and considerably under represented in the professional occupations. (5) Country-western music is most popular with middle-income audiences. While country music fans were over represented in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 and \$10,000 to \$15,000 income groups, they were under represented in the less than \$5,000 and over \$15,000 income groups. ¹³⁸ While the Pulse Corporation Report did not specifically discuss race, neither did it contradict surveys finding the country-western audience to be predominately white. Although the Pulse Corporation agreed that country-western fans were over represented in the lower socio-economic strata, there were three low socio-economic contingents for which country-western was only the second most popular music stream -- the grade school educated, the unskilled worker, and the less than \$5,000 income groups. For each of these contingents, the number one music stream ¹³⁹ was black-oriented soul music. Thus, it is possible that the Pulse Corporation sample was racially imbalanced in the low socio-economic contingents, with a heavy loading of

white respondents in the high school educated, craft and semiskilled worker and lower-middle-income groups and a heavy loading of black respondents in the remaining low strata groups. In this case, the Pulse Corporation data would be consistent with data on racial music preferences.

The Nashville, Peterson and Di Maggio and Pulse Corporation reports present a fairly consistent picture of the traditional country-western audience. The demographics of this traditional audience were consistent with taste culture theory in that country music fans seemed to be similar people making similar choices about similar items. Through the early years of the 1970s, the country-western audience could be reliably distinguished from audiences for other popular music streams according to age (early mid-life), gender (male), race (white), education (minimal), occupation (blue-collar), income (lower middle), and geography (rural/southern background).

Taste culture theory holds that the growing appeal of a popular art form is restricted to audiences retaining traditional demographic features. As it relates to popular music, the theory predicts that the growing popularity of a music stream will be characterized by increasing acceptance within a traditional audience but only an incidental increase in the number of fans from other demographic groups. Contrarily, culture class theory holds that popular audiences are bound by personal rather than social factors

and can be identified only by consumption habits. Thus, this theory predicts that the growing popularity of a music stream can be associated with a diffusion of audience demographics. As Peterson and Di Maggio note, such has been the case with country-western music.¹⁴⁰ Audience surveys conducted during the popularity explosion of the 1970s indicate that the country-western audience has assumed less rigid demographics. Education, occupation, income and geography are no longer reliable correlates, and age and gender differences are becoming less distinct.

In 1977, the Country Music Association commissioned an Arbitron survey of popular music audiences in 26 American radio markets. The CMA Report concluded that the educational background of the country-western music audience was similar to that of the radio audience as a whole.¹⁴¹ A 1978 report by Shockley Research, Inc., illustrated just how completely the education correlate has eroded. While the 1969 Nashville Report noted that 75 percent of the country-western audience had less than a ninth grade education, the Shockley Report found that the figure had dropped to 8 percent. Further, the Shockley Research survey found that 37 percent of the country-western audience had high school degrees, 20 percent attended college but did not graduate, 11 percent had undergraduate degrees, and 6 percent attended graduate school.¹⁴² In 1980, Simmons Market Research Bureau surveyed adults who listen to country music radio stations.

Not only were the Simmons Bureau Report educational attainment data similar to those reported by Shockley Research, the Simmons Bureau Report noted little difference between the educational level of the country-western audience and that of the total U.S. population. For instance, 38.4 percent of the country-western audience graduated from high school, compared to 38.2 percent for the general population; 13.8 percent of the country-western audience attended one-to-three years of college, compared to 16.5 percent of the general population; and, 11.8 percent of the country-western audience graduated from college, compared to 14.8 percent of the general population.¹⁴³

The Simmons Bureau survey also documents a substantial erosion of the occupation correlate. While the 1968-1975 Peterson and Di Maggio data noted a positive relationship between preferring country-western music and being employed in a low prestige occupation, and the 1970 Pulse Corporation data showed country music fans to be significantly over represented in the blue-collar occupations, the Simmons Bureau data suggested that the occupational construction of the country-western audience is reasonably similar to that of the general population. The similarity is particularly noteworthy for the clerical/sales occupations (15.2 percent country to 14.7 percent general population), and the manager/administrator occupations (6.3 percent to 7.2 percent). Even in the professional/technical fields the

country-western audience does not stray too far from the norm, with a 8.3 percent rating compared to the general population's 10.7 percent.¹⁴⁴

A significant change has also been documented for the income correlate. The 1969 Nashville survey found an inverse relationship between income and preferences for country-western music, and the 1970 Pulse Corporation Report noted that the "great preponderance" of the country-western audience fell into the \$5,000 to \$15,000 income range. By contrast, the 1977 CMA Report indicated that, compared to the average radio audience, a disproportionately high percentage of country music listeners are found in high (\$55,000 and over) income brackets.¹⁴⁵ The Shockley Research Report was more specific. While 50 percent of the 1978 country-western audience had incomes of less than \$15,000, 33 percent earned from \$15,000 to \$24,999 and 17 percent earned more than \$25,000.¹⁴⁶ Again, the Simmons Bureau comparisons between country music fans and the general population disputes earlier correlations between preferences for country-western music and low economic status. The 31.4 percent of the country music audience earning from \$15,000 to \$24,999 compares favorably to the 26.5 percent of the general population in this income bracket, as does the 26 percent to 31.1 percent comparison in the more than \$25,000 brackets.¹⁴⁷

Recent radio station location data also dismiss the geographic correlate. While the 1969 Nashville Report found the preponderance of country-western format radio stations located in Southern states, contemporary CMA radio surveys indicate that the primary growth in country radio programming has occurred in non-Southern regions. In 1977, Billboard reported that "country stations sprang up in states previously considered unlikely."¹⁴⁸ According to the article, CMA statistics indicate that between 1978 and 1979 the number of country-western format radio stations significantly increased in each of nine geographic regions: The New England region showed the largest increase at 37%, followed by West North Central at 35%, South Atlantic at 33%, Mountain at 28%, West South Central at 25%, Pacific at 23%, East North Central at 21%, and Middle Atlantic at 19%.¹⁴⁹ One possibility is that the popularity of country-western music in non-Southern states is associated with a migration of Southern born audiences to Northern regions. However, radio location data fail to support this assumption. In testing the migration hypothesis, Peterson and Di Maggio compared the percentage of Southern born population to the proportion of country-western format radio stations in non-Southern states. They concluded that "there is no consistent nationwide association between the two variables [and thus] the simple effects of migration, if

they were ever present, were not clearly apparent by
150
1973."

Recent audience demographic surveys have found correlations between preferences for country-western music and two traditional audience descriptors -- age and gender. There is little question that country-western music appeals more to young mid-life listeners than to either younger or older audiences. However, country music seems to be making significant gains in all age groups. The Simmons Bureau population comparisons are again illustrative. While 44.8 percent of the 1980 country-western audience fell into the 25-44 year-old age groups, 14.5 percent of the audience was aged 18-24 (compared to 17.9 percent of the general population), 16.8 percent of the audience was aged 45-54 (compared to 14.8 percent of the general population), and 24 percent of the audience was aged 55 or older (compared to 28.4 percent of the general population).¹⁵¹ Thus, the Pulse Corporation data suggesting that country-western music appeals mostly to listeners aged 25-50 still reflect the construction of the country-western audience. However, the age correlate has weakened considerably since 1970. A similar pattern has emerged for the gender correlate. In 1978, Peterson reported that "country music radio listenership is predominantly male, more so than for any other musical format."¹⁵² However, country-western music is not as unpopular with the contemporary female audience as it

was when the Pulse Corporation reported that females rated country-western as their least favored music. A 1979 Billboard Arbitron survey illustrates the growing popularity of country-western music with female listeners.¹⁵³ For each of four age groups surveyed, country-western music showed a higher audience share rating for male listeners than for female listeners. However, the differences were not nearly so pronounced as a decade earlier. Of particular interest are audience share ratings for the 18-24 and 25-34 year-old age groups. For the first group, the 4.36 female share compared favorably to the 4.78 male share. For both sexes, country-western music ranked sixth of the twelve music formats listed. For the second group, the male share was 10.77, the female share was 9.88, and country-western ranked number one with male listeners and number two with female listeners. At age 35, contemporary statistics began to resemble those for traditional audiences. For 35-44 year-old listeners, the male share was 6.32, number three and the female share was 2.68, number six. For 45-54 year-old listeners, the male share was 5.45, number three, and the female share was .39, number eleven. Thus, country-western music remains more popular with male listeners than with female. However, in 1979, the second highest audience share rating for country-western music was with a female audience. Furthermore, country-western was no longer the least favored music style with female listeners. For the female audience

as a whole, country-western music had higher share ratings than mellow music, progressive rock, oldies, disco and classical music. Additionally, in the prime 25-34 year-old age group, only contemporary music had a higher share rating with females than had country-western music.

The final correlate of the traditional audience, race, was not addressed by the CMA Arbitron, Shockley Research, Simmons Bureau and Billboard Arbitron reports. The most recent data available come from the Peterson and Di Maggio compendium which reported that the country-western audience was almost exclusively white. This may, or may not, still be the case. If the racial balance of the performing community is any indication, the country-western audience is still predominantly white. Since 1975, only one black artist, Charley Pride, has appeared on the annual Top Ten artists list or had a record appear on the annual Top Ten hits list. However, Pride's success has been substantial. In addition to recording the number nine hit of 1978, Pride has appeared on the artists list in five of the past ten years, and was the number one country-western singles artist in 1983.¹⁵⁴

Thus, the demographics of the country-western audience altered substantially between 1975 and 1980. Traditional education, occupation, income and region distinctions are no longer accurate. Age and gender distinctions, while still valid, are not as important as in 1970. Race, once a

salient correlate, has not been reported in nearly a decade. Compared to the traditional audience, contemporary country-western fans are not as likely to be mid-life males, and considerably less likely to be undereducated, underpaid Southern blue-collar workers. The contemporary country-western audience seems to fit George Lewis' description of an evolving culture class, a group who do not necessarily share any of the traditional demographics, "but who are united in their contemporary discovery of a common (and evolving) musical style."¹⁵⁵ As such, the contemporary country-western audience was probably best described by Peterson and Di Maggio as a broad segment of middle-class America.¹⁵⁶

The Event

Musical rhetorical events are products of interaction between performers and audiences. They are distinguished from musical rhetorical acts in that rhetorical transaction is defined by audience response rather than artistic intent. An event is, according to Irvine and Kirkpatrick, an extension of the act which precipitates it.¹⁵⁷ In the case of contemporary country-western music, the act is derived from a body of songs popular audiences regard as "country music." The country-western rhetorical event is that which audiences point to, relate to and respond to in country music.

Literature describing the country-western rhetorical act indicate that traditional musical variables are largely unimportant in distinguishing contemporary country music from other popular music. Prior to the country-western explosion of the 1970s, the act was narrowly defined by artistic choices, falling into a convenient niche determined by set images, media, style and content. Coinciding with the growing popularity of country music was a gradual blurring of the distinctions between country-western and other musical rhetorical acts. Contemporary country music has shed many of its traditional trappings, yet has retained an essence which preserves the identity of the country-western rhetorical act.

The country-western rhetorical act is not a function of personae or preferred media. Popular country performers both sustain the traditional Nashville image and project contemporary pop and renegade images. Country performers continue to rely on radio broadcasts in sharing their musical messages, but commercial records and live performances have resurged as performance media and cinema productions and television broadcasts have become increasingly important in disseminating country-western songs.

The country-western rhetorical act is only remotely a function of music style. Country music is no longer limited in its selection of musical instruments. Neither do

country-western songs universally subscribe to the rhythms and tempos of classic hillbilly music. Additionally, both the syntactic and melodic qualities of country-western singing have evolved in a direction which have rid country music of its traditional "low-art" image. Contemporary country-western is an indistinct musical dialect. Country performers have borrowed heavily from other music streams, and vice-versa, to the point where country-western songs now exhibit several "sounds" -- bluegrass, Nashville, progressive, country-rock, etc. The one quality of the country-western musical dialect which seems to have survived involves the way songs are vocally interpreted. Country-western singers sound decidedly sincere and unprofessional. Thus, the country-western vocal style remains faithful to its folk roots, perpetuating a sense of music as communication rather than music as entertainment.

The country-western rhetorical act is, first and foremost, a function of lyric substance. As Buckley notes, "Lyrics are the more important consideration in country music. [U]nlike some other musical forms, there are no allegories and no double-meanings. Both performer and audience clearly understand the meaning of the song."¹⁵⁸

Thematically, country-western songs address common problems of contemporary life. The lyrics expressing these themes are simple and direct, and phrased in terms with which the country-western audience can easily identify. The lyric

arrangements generally take the form of unplotted narratives, presenting disunified stories evoking emotional association between performance and audience.

The audience identifying with these songs seems as diverse as the songs themselves. Through the early 1970s, country music fans were demographically distinct. Strong correlations were frequently found between preferences for country-western music and socio-economic indicators of age, gender, race, education, occupation, income and geography. The audience was dominated by middle-aged, rural Southern, white males with little education and poor paying blue-collar jobs. The demographics of the contemporary audience, however, compare favorably with that of the general population. Country music fans are still more likely to be middle-aged males than females or younger or older males, but the likelihood is not so overwhelming as it once was. As to the remaining demographic descriptors, Peterson and Di Maggio conclude that the country-western audience has broken away from traditional social, ethnic and regional bounds and can no longer be equated with a particular social class.¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, the contemporary audience is fittingly described as a culture class, meaning that membership is defined by consumption rather than demography.

The country-western rhetorical event is the phenomenon of contemporary country-western music. The event is born of audiences choosing, finding meaning in and identifying with

country-western songs. The event is reflected in those songs deemed by the audience to be popular songs, and recorded in the lyrics of songs appearing on industry popularity charts.¹⁶⁰ As Wilgus explains, "What is country-western becomes what is listed in that category of the charts. . . . It is not altogether relevant for us to offer a differing categorization based on stylistic and content analysis when we are at the same time studying evolution and mutation in style and content."¹⁶¹ Denisoff and Levine question the validity of popularity surveys, noting that some researchers have argued that ratings charts may reflect the sentiments of radio program directors and record industry executives rather than music audiences.¹⁶²

However, this criticism ignores the influence audience tastes exert on the decisions of media managers. Jean-Pierre Vignolle explains that industry and audience are connected in a way which makes music consumers co-producers of music meaning. Music professionals do not hesitate to turn to the public in order to define or modify the music. Thus, Vignolle concludes, "the product and the target are created simultaneously, one for the other."¹⁶³ Finally, there is precedent for resolving the particular problem of identifying the country-western rhetorical music event by using popularity surveys. Buckley argues that, inasmuch as country-western has not been agreeably defined by music professionals, the event may be legitimately identified as

comprising those songs which appear on country-western popularity charts, since these surveys "provide a general index of the public's perception of 'country.'" ¹⁶⁴

In these songs, scholars should expect to find a rhetorical transaction indexing the way a broad segment of the American public views themselves, the people they encounter, and the world in which they live. The songs made popular by interaction between act and audience, then, express the country-western rhetorical vision.

CHAPTER THREE NOTES

1. D. K. Wilgus, "The Hillbilly Movement," in Our Living Traditions, ed. Tristram P. Coffin (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 263. The inability to clearly describe country music is a frequent topic for articles appearing in country-western fan magazines. See "Anne Murray: I'm The Same Now As I Always Was," Country Song Roundup 27 (July 1975), 12; "Jimmy Dean: Don't Ask Him If He's Country," Country Song Roundup 27 (May 1975), 34; "John Hombrick: A Different Kind Of Country," Country Song Roundup 25 (October 1973), 33; P.J. Russell, "Waylon Jennings: Some People Say I'm Not Country," Country Song Roundup 27 (February 1975), 33; Rick Bolsom, "Kris Kristofferson: He's A Walking Contradiction," Country Song Roundup 29 (November 1977), 13-14; and Bob Battle, "Willie Nelson: Patron Saint of Outlaw Country," Country Song Roundup 29 (August 1977), 26.

2. Richard A. Peterson, "The Production of Cultural Change: The Case of Contemporary Country Music," Social Research 45 (Summer 1978), 292.

3. Gerry Wood, "Crossover Country's Magic Key For 1978," Billboard 90 (January 7, 1978), 74.

4. George H. Lewis "The Pop Artist And His Product: Mixed Up Confusion," in Side Saddle On The Golden Calf: Social Structure and Popular Culture in America, ed. George H. Lewis (Pacific Palisades, California: Goodyear Publishing, 1972), 307. These characteristics are sufficiently broad as to subsume descriptors suggested by other authors. For instance, Irvine and Kirkpatrick offered as "key musical variables" the ethical reputation of the source, the nature of the instrumental source, lyric structure, melodic structure, rhythm, the nature of the chord structure and progression, and the structure of the communicative situation, the latter functioning in the transition from act to event. The six act oriented variables, as will be evident later in this chapter, fall conveniently within the Lewis categories. See James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations," Quarterly Journal of Speech 58 (October 1972), 274-277. Excepting descriptors related to audience and situation, the same may be said for the Berlo SMCR, the Bitzer rhetorical situation, and the Burke pentad.

5. Patricia Anne Averill, "Can The Circle Be Unbroken: A Study of the Modernization of Rural Born Southern Whites Since World War I Using Country Music" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975), 184-188. See also, Patricia Averill, "Folk and Popular Elements in Modern Country Music," Journal of Country Music 5 (Summer 1974), 43-54.

6. Averill, "Folk and Popular Elements in Modern Country Music," 43.

7. Shirl Newley, "Crossover," Songwriters Review 34 (May 1979), 7.

8. The lists are taken from Billboard's 1975-1984 "World of Country Music" issues, which rank records and artists according to position and length of stay in weekly "Hot Country Singles" listings during the preceeding year.

9. Gayle made the list in seven of the ten years, including the number one spot in 1980. Parton made the list three times and Tucker made the list twice.

10. Alabama made the list four times, while The Kendalls achieved the highest ranking for a singing group in 1978 when they were ranked number one.

11. Bill Williams, "Near 100 Labels Now Involved In Country Music," Billboard 86 (October 19, 1974), WOCM-66.

12. "Country Goes Pop," Music Journal 36 (January 1978), 13.

13. Williams, "Near 100 Labels Now Involved," WOCM-66.

14. Bob Kirsch, "Country Music Exploding In All Areas," Billboard 87 (October 18, 1975), WOCM-62.

15. Averill, "Folk and Popular Elements in Modern Country Music," 46.

16. Averill, "Can The Circle Be Unbroken," 184-188. Averill defines "rural communities" as non-SMSA and the "Southern states" as Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

17. John Rockwell, "Blues, and Other Noises in the Night," Saturday Review 3 (September 4, 1976), 37.

18. Rockwell, "Blues, and Other Noises in the Night," 37.

19. Kirsch, "Country Music Exploding," WOCM-63.
20. Charles F. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," Journal of Popular Culture 11 (Spring 1978), 861.
21. Bob Kirsch, "The Country 'Outlaws'," Billboard 87 (October 18, 1975), WOCM-36.
22. Archie Green, "Midnight and Other Cowboys," JEMF Quarterly 11 (Number 3, 1975), 137-45.
23. David Emblidge, "Down Home With The Band: Country-Western Music And Rock," Ethnomusicology 20 (September 1976), 542.
24. "Country Goes Pop," 10.
25. Nat Hentoff, "Willie Nelson: Country 'Outlaw'," The Progressive, (January 1981), 47.
26. Gritzner, "Country Music: A Reflection of Popular Culture," 86; Chet Flippo, "Country Music Sees The Promised Land," Rolling Stone 305 (November 29, 1979), 28.
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34. Doug Hall, "2 Out of 3 Agree: Country Into More Contemporary Music," Billboard 91 (October 20, 1979), 20.

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36. Rockwell, "Blues, and Other Noises in the Night," 38.
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40. Kirsch, "Country Music Exploding," WOCM-62.
41. Guyon, "Record Firms See Profits By The Score," 32.
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44. Gerry Wood, "The Exploding, Evolving Nashville Scene," Billboard 87 (October 16, 1975) WOCM-65.
45. Gerry Wood, "Most Topsy-Turvy, Frustrating, Successful Year in Country Music," Billboard 90 (October 21, 1978), WOCM-54; Flippo, "Country Music Sees The Promised Land," 28.
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CHAPTER FOUR

THE LYRIC CONTENT OF COUNTRY-WESTERN POPULAR SONGS

A 1975 album released by country-western artist David Allen Coe included a cut titled "You Never Even Call Me By My Name."¹ In a bridge between verses two and three Coe describes the song as "the perfect country-and-western song," ostensibly because its final verse includes each of the lyric elements popularly associated with country music.²

Well, I was drunk the day my mom got out of prison
And I went to pick her up in the rain
But before I could get to the station in my pickup truck
She got runned over by a damned old train

"You Never Even Called Me By My Name" notwithstanding, lyrics from the country music of the 1970s demonstrate that popular country-western songs address topics more diverse than just "momma . . . or trains . . . or trucks . . . or prison . . . or gettin' drunk."³ It is the purpose of this chapter to describe the lyric content of the 257 country-western songs used in this analysis in terms of the themes and theme fragments which comprise the fantasies of contemporary country music.

Core Themes

Content analysis of the sample country-western songs revealed four basic song types -- songs about relations with

others, songs about relations with self, songs about relations with the world, and novelty songs. By far, the most common songs were interpersonal (type one) songs. These songs produced two major themes (see table 1).⁴ The most frequently addressed interpersonal theme (in fact, the most frequently addressed theme of any type) involves romantic love. More often than not the reference is negative, with the singer professing to be unsatisfied with the status of his (her) love life.

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 Table 1 -- Type One (Interpersonal) Themes
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	Songs	Pct
Romantic love theme.....	182	70.82
Severed romance.....	80	31.13
Established romance.....	77	29.96
Illicit romance.....	22	8.56
Miscellaneous.....	3	1.17
Character theme.....	16	6.23
Love mate.....	10	3.89
Miscellaneous.....	6	2.33
Family love theme.....	2	0.78
Totals.....	200	77.82

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 The romantic love theme addresses three primary topics, each focusing on a particular romantic situation. The first situation involves lovers who, through either design or

circumstance, are separated from each other. Severed romance is generally pictured as one-sided love, often the result of unilateral separation (i.e., one party prematurely quit the relationship.) While these songs generally lament the passing of an affair without revealing why it passed, some songs do hint at the circumstances: Sometimes lovers abandon painful, unsatisfying relationships. More often, however, lovers simply abandon old relationships for new. The abandoned normally seem to take losing out in stride, bearing little ill will toward their ex-mates, as the opening verse of "Hello Darlin'" illustrates.⁵

Hello darlin', nice to see you
 It's been a long time
 You're just as lovely as you used to be
 How's your new love, are you happy
 Hope you're doing fine
 Just to know this means so much to me

In a few songs roles are reversed as a singer tries to lure a potential lover away from a relationship with another. These songs seem to sidetrack disapprobation by describing the established relationship in grossly negative terms while characterizing the singer as a romantic liberator. An excellent example of this contrast is found in the first and last verses of "Ann (Don't Go Runnin')." ⁶

Ann, don't go runnin' to him
 He's not worth the tears you're cryin'
 Girl, can't you see he's lyin'
 Ann, he'll only hurt you again
 I can't stand to see you cry
 I love you, Ann

Ann, please try to understand I want the best for you
 I know my love can heal the hurt he's put you through
 You've seen the rain, now come walk in the sun
 Let go of the past
 What's done is done
 Ann, please understand me, Ann

In a slight variation of this situation, fulfilling union is stymied by a love object's failure to understand how satisfying it would be to become involved with the singer. Once again, the songs attempt to characterize the singer as an able lover, as in "Baby, my love train's comin'/It's really on fire and hummin'." ⁷ Not all severed relationships involve unilateral separation. "Rocky," for instance, laments the death of a loved spouse. ⁸ In "Yellow Ribbon," ⁹ the singer has been in jail. In "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man," the lovers are kept apart by social pressures, a la Romeo and Juliet. ¹⁰ Irrespective of the circumstances, however, country singers seek reunion. In almost nine of every ten severed romances the protagonist is decidedly unhappy with separation and pleads for or fantasizes about conciliation. In fact, in only three songs does a singer seem satisfied by separation.

The second romantic topic describes established relationships. Unlike severed relationships, established unions are more frequently viewed as positive states than as negative. Little information is given about these relationships, however. The typical established romance song focuses on the singer's reaction to a relationship without identifying why the singer feels that way, merely

implying that "good" relationships are filled with love and "bad" relationships are loveless.

The final romantic topic focuses on the nature rather than the status of love affairs. These songs describe illicit romance -- affairs involving lovers who have established relationships with others. In general, these songs are about illicit liaisons involving the singers rather than their legitimate mates, they reference continuing rather than casual affairs (although a number of songs do describe one-night-stands), and they are more likely to describe the affairs as positive relationships than as negative. One particularly striking feature of these songs is that, while seventeen of the songs reference affairs which are clearly adulterous, only three suggest that infidelity might be wrong. Further, in each song expressing this judgment, the affair is nonetheless described in positive terms. In fact, the few songs which do describe illicit relationships in negative terms do so because the affairs, rather than their circumstances, are unfulfilling. Ultimately, the moral issue is confused much as it is in songs which approve of coveting. Romantic situations are described in simplistic terms, with the clear implication that there is little dishonor in abandoning dying relationships. This moral presumption is evident in "After The Fire Is Gone."¹¹

We know it's wrong for us to meet
 But the fire's gone out at home
 And there's nothing cold as ashes
 After the fire is gone

Your lips are warm and tender
 Your arms hold me just right
 Sweet words of love you remember
 That the one at home forgot

The second major interpersonal theme addresses country personae rather than their relationships. Consistent with country music's apparent preoccupation with romance, the majority of these character songs describe love mates, usually in positive terms. Sometimes, the tribute is limited to the mate's abilities as a lover. As Charley Rich puts it, "She makes me glad I'm a man."¹² Generally, however, the characterization focuses more on mate as person than mate as lover. For example, in "You're My Best Friend," Don Williams describes his wife in terms clearly reflecting the significant role she plays in his life.¹³

You placed gold on my finger
 You brought love like I've never known
 You gave life to our children
 And to me a reason to go on

When I need hope and inspiration
 You're always strong when I'm tired and weak
 I could search this whole world over
 You'd still be everything I'd need

You're my bread when I'm hungry
 You're my shelter from troubled winds
 You're my anchor in life's ocean
 But most of all you're my best friend

Dolly Parton's recording of "Jolene" presents a slight twist, describing the woman with whom she vies for her mate's affection.¹⁴ As with other romantic characters the

description of Jolene is ostensibly positive ("Your beauty is beyond compare.") However, contented tag lines like "Most of all you're my best friend" are replaced by a melancholy "I'm begging of you, please don't take my man/Please don't take him just because you can." Character songs describe non-romantic personae as well. The sample includes positive characterizations of a cowboy, a grandmother, and a pathetic old lady, and negative characterizations of a philanderer and a busybody.¹⁵

Type one songs also introduce one minor theme -- familial relationships. Both family love songs take the same general direction. In "No Charge," Melba Montgomery sings about how children take parents for granted.¹⁶ Donna Fargo corroborates this from a child's perspective in "You Were Always There."¹⁷ The two family love songs are strongly analogous to those songs which characterize love mates. They reduce human complexity to myopic characterizations, thereby revealing a simplistic view of family relationships.

Type two country-western songs express intrapersonal themes, either describing specific emotional orientations, revealing self concepts or identifying personal philosophies (see table 2). The single major intrapersonal theme addresses the emotional outlook of country personae. Each of these songs describes a particular life situation, focusing on the emotional state of the song's characters.

The primary condition to which these characters respond is a harsh day-to-day existence. As a rule, the characters seek some degree of emotional escape, often finding respite in

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 Table 2 -- Type Two (Intrapersonal) Themes
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	Songs	Pct
Emotional outlook theme.....	18	7.00
Nostalgia.....	7	2.72
Loneliness.....	5	1.95
Regret.....	3	1.17
Sympathy.....	2	0.78
Jealousy.....	1	0.39
Self concept themes.....	8	3.11
Negative image.....	6	2.33
Positive image.....	2	0.78
Philosophical themes.....	3	1.17
Totals.....	29	11.28

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 nostalgic and pastoral fantasies. Roy Drusky's recording of¹⁸
 "Long, Long Texas Road" illustrates one such escape fantasy.

I've been up and I've been down
 I've worked the fields, I've plowed the ground
 I've taken strain and pressure till I thought I might explode
 Now I yearn for childhood days
 Of model planes and lemonade
 When the day stretched out before me like a long, long Texas
 road

The second condition involves having to live without love relationships. Country music characters who must live without love are universally pictured as lonely and

despairing, as Joe Stampley suggests in "Take Me Home
19
Somewhere."

I just left the bar and it's midnight
Lord know's I'm a lonely man
All my life I've been a dreamer
Things haven't worked out like I'd planned
Yeah, I've had my share of good times
And a lot of good women
But the life I'm living, I know it just ain't right
I love warm red wine and lots of people laughing
But you can't take them home with you at night

As the presumption for illicit romance might suggest, lonely
characters often find escape in casual sexual relations.

The desire to hide from the blues, if only for an evening,
is evident in the opening verse of "Help Me Make It Through
20
The Night."

Come and lay down by my side
Till the early morning light
All I'm taking is your time
Help me make it through the night

Minor emotions displayed in intrapersonal songs include
regret, jealousy, and sympathy for the plight of others.

One minor intrapersonal theme focuses on self concept,
with the vast majority of the songs unfavorably character-
izing the singer. Two songs do reveal positive self images.
In one song Crystal Gayle displays a relatively balanced
21
view of herself and her failures in love.

Some you lose, some you win
They say that's the way it's always been
First you laugh, then you cry
Oh, but I guess that's life
So you live and you learn
And never look back at the bridges you burn
And you change somehow
Oh, I'm a little bit wiser now

In another song, Freddy Fender cautions his mate "If you don't straighten up I'm gonna walk right out of that door/And if you don't believe me, oh yes, you'll lose a good thing."²² More common, however, are songs which describe the singers in negative terms. For instance, Linda Ronstadt pictures herself a proverbial chump, singing that she has "been made blue. . . lied to. . . turned down. . . pushed 'round. . . cheated. . . [and] mistreated" ²³ Jerry Wallace dramatically describes himself as a love slave in "To Get To You."²⁴

Burning bridges behind me to get to you
 Breaking all ties that bind me to get to you
 I hold your love far above what I go through
 I'd give all I own for a steppin' stone to get to you

The least flattering of these songs, however, is probably T.G. Sheppard's recording of "Tryin' To Beat The Morning Home."²⁵

Drunk and cold, can't get no help from nobody
 I'd sell my soul to find one more drink in that bottle
 They say I'm worthless, that all hope for me is gone
 Heaven help me, I'm tryin' to beat the morning home
 Lord, don't let the daylight show the shame that's on my
 face
 Just let me hide in my disgrace

In general, the self concept theme portrays country singers as losers -- perhaps in life, for certain in love. Even the two songs suggesting healthy self concepts focus on how the singers deal with failure. The self concept theme does not seem to include a success component.

A final, albeit it minor, intrapersonal theme addresses philosophical topics. In one song Kris Kristofferson makes

26

a clear statement of Christian faith.

Lord, help me Jesus I've wasted it so
 Help me Jesus, I know what I am
 But now that I know that I've needed you so
 Help me Jesus, my soul's in your hands

Religious faith is likewise the focus of "All His Children."²⁷

When you're standing alone with the mountains and the sea
 Where the arms of the world open wide
 There the truth is as plain as the falling rain
 And as sure as the time and the tide

In a departure from the cowboy character songs for which he was best known, the late Marty Robbins raises eerie questions about predestination and reincarnation in his sequel hit "El Paso City."²⁸

Can it be that man can disappear from life and live in
 another time
 Does the mystery deepen 'cause you think that you yourself
 lived in that other time

Somewhere in my deepest thoughts familiar scenes and
 memories unfold
 These wild and unexplained emotions that I've had so long
 but I have never told
 Like everytime I fly up through the heavens and I see you
 there below
 I get the feeling sometime in another world I must have
 lived in El Paso

El Paso, city by the Rio Grande
 Could it be that I could be the cowboy in this mystery
 That died here in that desert sand so long ago
 El Paso, city by the Rio Grande
 A voice tells me to go and see, another voice keeps telling
 me
 That maybe death awaits me in El Paso

Although few in number, the philosophical songs do indicate that country music is not exclusively romantic in orientation. Further, "El Paso City" suggests that the country psyche may be more complex than other themes imply.

Type three country-western songs express themes relating to world view. The single major world view theme addresses the general quality of non-romantic life (see table 3). The vast majority of these songs paint pictures

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 Table 3 -- Type Three (World View) Themes
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	Songs	Pct
Quality of life theme.....	15	5.84
Hard life.....	13	5.06
Good life.....	2	0.78
Money theme.....	3	1.17
Political theme.....	3	1.17
Media theme.....	1	0.39
Totals.....	22	8.56

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of a hard and unyielding existence. A number of situations are used to represent the difficulties country personae encounter in everyday life. For instance, the inevitability of calamity is symbolized by drought in "Lizzie And The Rain Man."²⁹ Worklife experiences are often used in depicting life's trials. In "If We Make It Through December" the symbol is untimely unemployment.³⁰ Contrarily, in "Take This Job And Shove It" Johnny Paycheck's difficulties are manifested in the job he does hold.³¹ Homelife scenes are also used to symbolize discontent. In "One's On The Way,"

Loretta Lynn displays both envy and frustration in contrasting her own plight with her perception of how the "other half" lives.³²

I'm glad that Racquel Welch just signed a million dollar pact
 And Debbie's out in 'Vegas whipping up a brand new act
 Now the TV's showing newlyweds a real fine game to play
 But here in Topeka the screen door's a 'bangin'
 The coffee's boiling over and the wash needs a 'hangin'
 One wants a cookie and one want's a 'changin'
 And one's on the way

Hard life songs suggest two general corollaries to this world view. The first attributes life's trials to questionable values in contemporary society. In "Lord, Mr. Ford" enslavement to progress is the culprit.³³

Well Lord, Mr. Ford, I just wish that you could see
 What your simple horseless carriage has become
 Well, it seems your contribution to man
 To say the least got out of hand
 Well, this world was once a garden spot
 But now it's one big parking lot

In a similar vein, Waylon Jennings criticizes ambition and plastic success in his thinly veiled denigration of the country music industry.³⁴

Lord, it's the same old tune, fiddle and guitar
 Where do we take it from here
 Rhinestone suits and new shiny cars
 It's been the same way for years
 We need a change

The second corollary suggests that one can escape to a more fulfilling lifestyle. On an obvious level, a better life presumes returning to the pastoral values of country society. The escape may be philosophical, as it is for Tom T. Hall when he goes "lookin' for the truth."³⁵ Or it may

36

involve a physical odyssey to a "Promised Land."

Suprisingly, one singer seems to be trying to escape the country life others seek. In "Kentucky Gambler," Merle Haggard abandons his country home to find fame and fortune in the bright lights and fast life of the city.

37

I wanted more from life than four kids and a wife
 And a job in a dark Kentucky mine
 A twenty acre farm with a shacky house and barn
 That's all I had and all I left behind
 But at gamblin' I was so lucky and so I left Kentucky
 And left behind my woman and my kids
 Into the gay casino in Nevada's town of Reno
 This Kentucky gambler planned to get rich quick

Below its surface, however, even "Kentucky Gambler" supports the country life myth. In the song's final verse, the singer loses his fortune and wants to go home, only to find "There ain't nobody waiting in Kentucky." In context, the closing tag "And it seems to me a gambler loses much more than he wins" both values country life and comdemns the city, expressing the fundamental tenets of a country life myth. Although two songs take exception to the hard life thesis, they are in concert with its corollaries: An unpleasant life is associated with urban values and escape is found in country values.

38

When people say that life is rough
 I wonder compared to what
 Some are wanting more and more's getting less
 I just want what I've got
 Some want to live on a hill, others by the sea
 Some want to live inside high walls
 I just want to live free

Two minor world view themes also deserve comment. The relationship between wealth and happiness is the focus of

the first, offering insight into the country version of "money can't buy everything." The songs reveal a pervasive fear that lovers may be more attracted to money than to love, as Don Williams suggests in "I'm Just A Country Boy."³⁹

I'm never gonna kiss the ruby lips
Of the prettiest girl in town
I'm never gonna ask if she'd marry me
For I know she'd turn me down

In contrast, Lynn Anderson has this message for a lover she perceives to be more interested in a comfortable life than a satisfying one. "I could sing you a tune and promise you the moon/But if that's what it takes to hold you I'd just as soon let you go."⁴⁰

The second minor theme focuses on political issues. Two of the political songs offer grossly contrasting views of dissent. Merle Haggard's "Fightin' Side Of Me" is an excellent example of the early 1970s "love it or leave it" brand of patriotism. After ostensibly standing up for democratic principles of free thought and free speech ("I don't mind them switching sides/And standing up for the things they believe in"), Haggard offers the following diatribe against Vietnam protesters.⁴¹

I read about some squirrelly guy
Who claims that he just don't believe in fightin'
And I wonder just how long the rest of us
Can count on being free
They love our milk and honey
But they preach about some other way of life
And when they're running down our country, man
They're walking on the fightin' side of me

Contrarily, C.W. McCall's number one hit "Convoy" casts the

singer in the role of dissident. Drawing from widespread resistance to the 55 mph speed limit and the "battle" between radar-equipped highway patrol and CB-equipped truck drivers, the song espouses a political philosophy of resistance to unpopular authority.

42

Well, we laid a strip for the Jersey shore
 And prepared to cross the line
 I could see the bridge was lined with bears
 But I didn't have a doggone dime
 I says, "Pig Pen this here's Rubber Duck
 We just ain't a'gonna pay no toll"
 So we crashed the gate doing ninety-eight
 I says "Let them truckers roll, ten-four"

The final political song suggests a far different strain of politics. In "A Week In A Country Jail," Tom T. Hall lampoons his view of justice. He willingly confesses his crime ("I was sitting at a red light when these two men came and got me/And said that I was speeding through their town"), pokes fun at his jailer ("Well I had to pay him double 'cause he was the man in charge/And the jailer's job was not the best in town"), and then takes aim at the judge ("Next morning that old judge took every nickle that I had.") The song implicitly denounces authority as discriminate and dishonest yet encourages neither acquiescence nor disobedience. The evident humor Hall finds in his plight suggests a sense of tolerance which constasts sharply with the divisive philosophies of other songs.

Type four country-western songs include all of those songs which fail to fit into the three primary theme typologies. These songs are each "novelty" items, or songs

depending upon cuteness for their popular appeal. Novelty songs differ from other songs in that, while they assume the unplotted narrative form, their story line fails to develop an overt core theme. The typical country novelty song describes a predicament which humorously backfires on the singer, focusing on the comedic situation rather than the singer's reactions. In "When You're Hot, You're Hot," Jerry Reed and friends are arrested for taking part in a back alley crap game. The good news is that the judge turns out to be an old fishing buddy. The bad news is that Reed owes him money. Of course, only Reed is sentenced.⁴⁴ In "One Piece At A Time," Johnny Cash tries to beat the system by sneaking a car out of an automobile plant, part by part -- in a dinner pail. The result is "a '49, '50, '51, '52, '53, '54, '55, '56, '57, '58, '59 automobile. . . ."⁴⁵ Bobby Bare's "Marie Laveau" tells about a handsome young man who offers to marry the legendary New Orleans voodoo queen in exchange for a spell to make him rich. When he ultimately backs out of the bargain, "She go EEEAAAH, another man done gone."⁴⁶ These examples are not intended to suggest that novelty songs are lyrically bankrupt, only that any value is to be found in inferences drawn from theme fragments.⁴⁷ Thus, their role in revealing the fantasies of country-western music is limited to providing fragments rather than identifying overt themes.

Theme Fragments

The topics addressed through fragmented references in the sample country-western songs largely correspond with the core themes of country music. As expected, however, the fragments reference a considerably wider range of topics, thus lending greater breadth, depth and balance to a lyric portrait of country-western music. This effect is notable in four respects. First, the fragments help balance the thematic references between interpersonal, intrapersonal and world view theme types.⁴⁸ On an overt level, country music lyrics seem overwhelmingly concerned with interpersonal matters. However, when fragmented references are considered, intrapersonal and world view themes become important components of country music (see table 4). In

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 Table 4 -- Theme Fragments (By Type)
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	Core Pct	Frag Pct
Type One (Interpersonal).....	77.82	64.98
Type Two (Intrapersonal).....	11.28	73.15
Type Three (World View).....	8.56	57.20

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fact, nearly as many songs make fragmented references to intrapersonal themes as make core reference to interpersonal, and a strong majority of the songs contain

world view fragments. Thus, the combination of core and fragmented references index a relatively balanced collection of topics. Considered in depth, country-western songs seem strongly concerned with both matters of self and relationships with others, while evidencing a more than casual interest in the external world.

In a second respect, the fragments yield added insight into each of the major themes of country music. The primary theme of country music assesses romantic love. While country-western views on romance are extensively developed in songs directly addressing that theme, fragmented references to love do add to the picture (see table 5). The primary contribution the fragments make is to suggest that

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 Table 5 -- Romantic Love Theme Fragments
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	Songs	Pct
Physical romance.....	48	18.68
Established romance.....	18	7.00
Illicit romance.....	16	6.23
Severed romance.....	9	3.50
*Totals.....	74	28.79

*Totals include songs coded into multiple categories

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sex plays an important role in romance. Physical love is suggested in a number of ways. In some songs the reference to sex is veiled, as in "Say you'll stay with me tonight/Say you won't regret the morning light." ⁴⁹ Other times it is

straightforward, such as "I want you out of my head and
back in my bed."⁵⁰ Occasionally the reference is graphic,
as in "He lights the flame of desire and makes me want
him."⁵¹ Generally, however, sex is implied by references to
holding each other, lying together, or spending the night
together. Country songs almost universally characterize sex
as a positive experience. While this experience is
sometimes described in physical terms, "Lord, it feels
almost like another hurricane just ripped the coast," the
metaphysics of sex clearly account for its role in country
relationships.⁵² In the vast majority of songs referring to
sex, physical love is metaphoric of metaphysical love. In
established relationships, sex symbolizes complete and
satisfying union. In severed relationships, estranged sex
represents estranged love. The metaphor is also apparent in
the way sexual references are worked into descriptions of
illicit affairs, as romantic allusions give way to sexual
innuendo in characterizing both legitimate and illegitimate
love. Sex also symbolizes escape -- escape from
unfulfilling relationships and escape from loneliness. As
Loretta Lynn puts it, "Somebody somewhere don't know what
he's missing tonight/Lord, here sits a woman just lonesome
enough to be right."⁵³ Finally, a sole negative connotation
associated with physical love is that it may symbolize
weakness. Just as sex may give meaning to relationships,

the lure of "easy loving" may destroy them. Estrangement is as often a result of sex as sex is a victim of separation.

In addition to introducing sex as a significant topic, the fragments help flesh out the picture of illicit romance. The theme fragments, as do the core references, generally focus on first person affairs. However, while core references mostly describe continuing affairs the fragments focus on one night stands. Also, while a far lower percentage of the affairs are described in either positive or negative terms, the fragments do more frequently reference negative judgments than positive. The fragmented descriptions of illicit affairs continue to reflect a double standard: Affairs involving significant others (second person affairs), and affairs involving unconnected characters (third person affairs) are described in negative terms. While references to first person affairs are fairly evenly split between positive and negative judgments, the negative first person songs describe only discontinued affairs (past affairs or one night stands) while current and continuing affairs are described in positive terms. Finally, there are three references to adultery. Immorality is implied in only one of these songs and, consistent with a double standard, that song describes a third person relationship. As with core references to political dissent, there seems to be one standard for judging self and another for judging others.

Unlike core references, the fragments do make an attempt to explain why some established relationships are satisfying and others are not. Almost all of the positive references to existing relationships are in character songs celebrating love mates. When these songs assess relationships, they do so in personal terms, such as "She's the foundation I lean on," "With her I'm no longer half, but whole," and "She don't understand him but she does the best that she can."⁵⁴ Unsatisfying relationships are generally appraised in physical terms, as in "the thrill is all gone when they cut down the lights."⁵⁵ Country singers admit neither praise nor blame for enduring romance. Relationships are satisfying when mates are emotionally fulfilling and unsatisfying when they are not.

The second major theme amplified through fragmented references involves characterizing country personae (see table 6). As with core references, most of the fragmented characterizations deal with love mates. The two primary qualities of good mates (good lover and good person) remain unchanged. However, the number of songs describing mates as good lovers suggests that this role is more important than core references imply. Good lovers are described in a number of ways: Good lovers are physical lovers, as in "You make good things happen to me" and "Your touch, it thrills me so."⁵⁶ Good lovers are willing lovers, such as "She's never far away or too tired to say I want you."⁵⁷ And, good

lovers give themselves completely, giving "more love, better love, sweeter love, true love" because "no other . . . can do what you can when it comes to loving me." ⁵⁸ The good person characteristic is also more fully developed through fragmented references. Good persons understand and accept faults. T. G. Sheppard expresses it as "She won't ask

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 Table 6 -- Character Theme Fragments
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	Songs	Pct
Good love mates.....	50	19.46
Bad love mates.....	44	17.12
Unloved mates.....	15	5.84
Correspondents.....	8	3.11
Family figures.....	8	3.11
Miscellaneous heroes.....	5	1.94
Miscellaneous villains.....	5	1.94
Totals.....	116	45.14

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where, where I've been or why I'm drinking/She know's it's hopeless, but she just keeps hanging on." ⁵⁹ Good persons are an "inspiration," a "bridge over troubled water." ⁶⁰ Good persons are faithful, as in "Lordy, she don't know what cheating means." ⁶¹ They are caring, they are strong, and they are hard-working.

A more significant addition to the character portrait of love mates comes with an introduction to the bad mate. While no song overtly focuses on the bad mate persona, many of the love songs do include such a character. In general,

the bad mate is presented as the (intentional or unintentional) force behind a failing relationship. There seem to be a number of traits commonly ascribed to bad mates. Primarily, they are unfaithful. As Bill Anderson puts it, "Your love is a sometimes thing/It comes and goes like winter and spring."⁶² Although the songs are sometimes guilty of stretching the point a little, as in "When I run out somebody else walked in," there seems to be a pervasive conviction that bad mates invariably yearn for new lovers.⁶³ (Nonetheless, many songs disclose a narcissistic fantasy about bad mates discovering that they really need their estranged lovers. Charley Pride consoles himself with "Tomorrow she'll probably want me back," and Sonny James sings "Yes, darling, you're gonna need me again/It's just a matter of time."⁶⁴ Another common perception about bad mates is that they are unwilling to break off current relationships. Thus, some songs charge that bad mates keep their estranged lovers dangling on a string, and plead "If you love me, let me know/If you don't then let me go."⁶⁵ In addition to being unfaithful and unrelenting, bad mates are described as demanding, as in "I've done all I could do/Trying to get along with you/And still you're not satisfied."⁶⁶ They are perceived as uncaring, as in "After I gave you everything I had/You laughed and called me a clown."⁶⁷ They are neglecting. They are hurtful, deceitful and self-centered. In short, bad mates are described in

counterpoint to good mates. For each loving quality attributed to good mates there is an insensitive or malevolent trait associated with bad mates.

A second love mate character introduced through theme fragments is the unloved mate. Songs describing unloved mates reverse the protagonist-antagonist relationship: The singer is uncaring. The singer is deceitful. The singer is unfaithful. Nonetheless, the singer perceives that his (her) mate has failed the relationship. There are three characteristics generally associated with unloved mates: Consistent with the view that wealth is anathema to romance, unloved mates are generally described as well-to-do. This description generally accompanies a conviction that affluence precludes emotional fulfillment, the basic tenet⁶⁸ of which reads "His money buys you everything but loving." This belief, perhaps, contributes to a second perception -- unloved mates are poor lovers. The failing may be physical, as with "When she holds me tight the feeling isn't⁶⁹ right." Or, it may be emotional, as in "You know that he⁷⁰ won't give me what I need most of all." In either event, the reaction is the same -- "You know you didn't keep me⁷¹ satisfied." Finally, unloved mates are unaware that they are unloved. As Roy Clark expresses it, "Today she thinks I⁷² love her/But tomorrow we'll be through." An alternate view of this character is offered in songs describing unloved mates as victims. In these songs a third person,

generally a subsequent lover, describes the character in more positive terms. The unloved were faithful to their faithless mates. As Larry Gatlin puts it, "Her love was like a fortress around a man she would have died for/Taking care to take care of all he needed."⁷³ The unloved were deeply hurt by their betrayal, as in "This time your hurting won't heal."⁷⁴ Finally, the unloved are understandably shy of romance, because "It's hard to live on promises that vanish in the night."⁷⁵

A final group of love mate fragments reveal contrasting perceptions about correspondents to illicit love. In the eyes of a philanderer the correspondent is beautiful; to an estranged mate those eyes are blinded by glamour. According to a philanderer the correspondent fills each night "with such good loving."⁷⁶ According to an estranged mate "He's just a foolish dream you're chasing."⁷⁷ The sole common ground is found in self-serving delusions about correspondents entrapping the unwary. A philanderer rationalizes "My self control was overruled by passion."⁷⁸ An estranged mate warns "Now I know about those devil women/They'll set your lover's head a'spinning."⁷⁹

In addition to amplifying the descriptions of various love mates, the theme fragments also expand the country-western cast of characters. Family characters are described in a number of songs. Mothers are seen as sacrificing, tender and caring, symbolizing both love and stability.

Fathers are symbols of hard work and wisdom. Children are pictured as innocent on the one hand, and insensitive to sacrifice on the other. There are also references to a host of supporting characters. The minor villains are generally powerbrokers, i.e., judges and bosses, or characters who appear to be unwilling to buy into country-western values. The primary traits associated with minor heroes, cast as cowboys and truckers, are strength, compassion and independence.

A third major theme of country music describes the emotional outlook of country personae. As with romance and character themes, the outlook fragments expand upon the impressions suggested through core references (see table 7).

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 Table 7 -- Emotional Outlook Theme Fragments
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	Songs	Pct
Love.....	40	15.56
Loneliness.....	22	8.56
Regret.....	12	4.67
Happiness.....	8	3.11
Nostalgia.....	6	2.33
Jealousy.....	3	1.17
Miscellaneous.....	3	1.17
Totals.....	77	29.96

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The emotion most often revealed in theme fragments is love. Given the number of songs focusing on romantic situations and characters, the frequency with which feelings of love

are expressed is not surprising. In fully one half of the songs expressing love, the declaration is direct and personal, e.g., "I love you." In more than one-third of the songs the declaration is personal but indirect, e.g., "We⁸⁰ sure can love each other." In the remaining songs, love is expressed directly but impersonally, e.g., "Won't you⁸¹ tell her that I love her." There seems to be a slight association between sex of the singer and willingness to express love. On the whole, female artists are over-represented in the group of recordings expressing love (31% of the recordings versus 23% of the artists). However, the pattern does not correspond with the traditional patriarchal myth which has males less willing to make direct personal declarations of love. The primary imbalance occurs for indirect personal (36% female) and direct impersonal (40% female) expressions. For both sexes, expressions of love are occasionally supported by expressions of happiness. While any number of life situations may potentially contribute to happiness, country songs almost always mention this emotion in a romantic context. For instance, falling in love leads Lynn Anderson to proclaim, "For once in my life I know the meaning of happiness," and makes Donna Fargo⁸² "the happiest girl in the whole USA."

Positive feelings of love and happiness are counterbalanced by feelings of jealousy, loneliness and regret. As with core references, the fragments present

loneliness as an inevitable reaction to an absence of love. Although regret is not universally associated with romantic topics, most of the situations which prompt the feeling are related to romance. Country singers regret cheating on their mates. They regret leaving their mates. In "Teddy Bear Song," Barbara Fairchild even regrets having fallen in love in the first place.⁸³ Two non-romantic situations, gambling and drinking, also motivate regret. However, in both songs the price the singer pays for his transgressions⁸⁴ is measured in terms of spoiled relationships.

The final major theme of country music relates impressions about the general quality of life. As is true of core references, the fragments almost universally focus on negative perceptions. However, the fragments generally fail to associate quality of life with any particular situation or set of circumstances. Instead, the fragments create an impression of unavoidable unhappiness, suggesting that misery might well be a rite of living. The life fragments focus on the sense of hopelessness and despair inextricable from this rite. Futility metaphors abound. According to Marty Robbins, "Every day has been uphill/We climb but we can't reach the top."⁸⁵ George Hamilton never finds "peace of mind."⁸⁶ Meanwhile, Dave and Sugar lament "The times we live in make you wonder which way you should go."⁸⁷ A pastoral escape corollary is evident in two songs. In one, Narvel Felts disclaims the bright lights and fast

life of urban escape with "I learned the truth about the so-called good life/It was just a candle too short to burn the night."⁸⁸ In the other, Charley Pride describes nostalgic rural fantasies ("Have you ever been awakened by the crowing of a rooster/While the night's dew is still heavy on the ground") and wonders "Could I live there anymore?"⁸⁹ The life fragments support the negative outlook on day-to-day living revealed in core references. The fragments add to this theme a sense of impotence and a suggestion of futility. Finally, as with core references, the fragments imply that any escape from hard living presumes a return to rural settings and country values.

The third respect in which theme fragments alter the lyric portrait of country music is through elevating minor themes to major status. Two specific themes are affected. The first of these themes addresses self concept (see table 8). As do core references, the fragments reveal an unbalanced, negative perception of self. There are, however, sufficient references to positive qualities to contrast positive and negative images. Positive characteristics are generally revealed in romantic settings, suggesting characteristics similar to those ascribed to good mates. The perception most frequently revealed describes the positive self as a faithful lover. This concept is expressed in a number of ways. Singers often declare that their love is "a true, true love" and "not a game of

pretend." ⁹⁰ Despite the number of country romances infected by infidelity, the positive self denies being attracted to other women (men). As Billy Walker puts it, "When a man loves a woman the way that I love you/In his eyes there's no one else to make his dreams come true." ⁹¹ A second

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 Table 8 -- Self Concept Theme Fragments
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	Songs	Pct
Negative images.....	101	39.30
Love slave.....	65	25.29
Weak.....	21	8.17
Unworthy.....	6	2.33
Miscellaneous.....	11	4.28
Positive images.....	51	19.84
Faithful lover.....	24	9.34
Other-oriented.....	12	4.67
Rebounder.....	7	2.72
Free spirited.....	4	1.56
Miscellaneous.....	6	2.33
Totals.....	138	53.70

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perception of the positive self which corresponds to perceptions of the good mate involves sacrifice for significant others. Other orientation is manifested in three specific characteristics: The positive self is strong, "a shoulder to lean on, a port in a storm." ⁹² When not faithful, the positive self is conscious of significant others and the pain they would feel were they aware of the

self's indiscretions, e.g., "You're tied to her and I'm tied to him/And we don't want to hurt either one of them."⁹³

This image may be somewhat self-serving, though, as seems evident in Conway Twitty's confession that "It's because I really love her that I try to save her heart with lies."⁹⁴

Finally, the positive self is understanding, willing to step aside when tables are turned, as suggested in lines like "I hope he makes you happy and you never lose his love" and "I wish you both the best/It's your happiness that matters most of all."⁹⁵

The final major perception is that the positive self can rebound from romantic misfortune. For instance, Crystal Gayle predicts "I'll get over you/I'll get through and when I do/I'll be good as new," and Waylon Jennings sings simply, "I found one love I'll find another."⁹⁶

Miscellaneous qualities of the positive self include being free spirited, being independent, and being a good provider.

For every one song describing a positive self concept, there are two songs revealing negative perceptions. The images of the negative self correspond both to select traits of bad mates and to the traits of good mates carried to excess. The dominant negative characteristic, suggested in almost half of the songs containing self concept fragments, is of self as love slave. The love slave image pictures the faithful lover gone awry, devoted beyond all reason, enduring indignities yet continuing to profess everlasting love. Thus, the love slave proclaims "You'll keep hurting

me I know/But I still can't let you go." ⁹⁷ Love slaves beg their lovers not to leave with lines like "Don't take it away, don't make me go crazy" and "Say anything but don't say goodbye." ⁹⁸

The negative self is described as a slave to passion as well as to love. When faced with temptation, the negative self readily gives in. Sometimes the negative self battles passion and loses, as in "I fought temptation/But the fire in my soul burned out of control

tonight." ⁹⁹ Sometimes there is not much of a battle. As Dolly Parton puts it, "All you have to do is smile that smile/And there go all my defenses." ¹⁰⁰ While admittedly

weak, the negative self does not accept responsibility for transgressing. Weakness excuses infidelity. For instance, The Kendalls rationalize that "Sweet desire carried me away," and Conway Twitty claims that "There's a devil in my body that I can't satisfy." ¹⁰¹

The final significant negative perception of self is one of unworthiness, usually manifested in drinking, carousing and ignoring family responsibilities. Miscellaneous qualities of the negative self include being uncertain, unaware and undeserving.

By way of contrast, then, the positive self is a good mate -- faithful, strong, and considerate. The positive self is resilient, rebounding from love's trials to love again. The negative self is a bad mate -- unfaithful, weak and unworthy of love. The negative self is enslaved, unable to live happily with love or without it.

The second minor theme the fragments elevate to major status deals with the religious philosophy of country music (see table 9). Although very few songs directly address theology, fragmented references make it quite clear that country personae are religious folk. Country-western songs approach theology obliquely. Rather than introducing

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 Table 9 -- Religion Theme Fragments
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	Songs	Pct
Theological expressions.....	25	9.73
Lord.....	10	3.89
God.....	8	3.11
Heaven.....	7	2.72
Devil.....	3	1.17
Jesus.....	2	.78
Christian.....	1	.39
Mr. Lovemaker.....	1	.39
Expletives.....	25	9.73
Lord.....	22	8.56
Heaven.....	3	1.17
God.....	1	.39
Totals.....	44	17.12

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religion as an overt theme, country music assumes deism to be a natural state. Thus, country theology is revealed by the way religious symbols have been integrated into the lexicon of country lyrics. Country-western songs accept without reservation the presence and power of an omnipotent

force. More than one in every six country songs makes some reference to deity -- most frequently "Lord," "God," or "Heaven." Each reference is accompanied by an implicit belief in the power of that force to affect the lives of the song's characters. These references might seem somewhat misleading in that one in every two religious symbols is used as an expletive, as in "Lord knows," "Heaven knows," or "Heaven help me." The expletives differ from theological references in that they are syntactic rather than thematic devices. However, none of expletives appear in an irreverent context. And, although they do not signify that an expression is directed heavenward, the expletives are used in a manner suggesting belief in the divine -- they imply that the singers accept, but are not appealing to, a divine presence. Thus, even the expletives suggest innate religiousness.

The final manner in which fragments enhance the thematic picture of country music is through introducing four new topics, each of which constitutes a major world view theme (see table 10). The first of these topics addresses time awareness. Time plays two significant roles in country lyrics -- time is a force affecting plot and time is a setting for plot. The theme fragments generally question the force of time. A dialectic of change questions respite. Time as a positive force heals all wounds, while time as a negative force intensifies despair. A dialectic

of permanence questions hope. Time as a positive force alters the human condition, while time as a negative force symbolizes impotence. Country-western songs make no consistent statement about this force. Time is clearly a significant element in country-western lyrics, but whether

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 Table 10 -- World View Themes
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	Songs	Pct
*Time awareness.....	80	31.13
*Place awareness.....	62	24.12
*Alcohol.....	27	10.51
*Media.....	23	8.95
Quality of life.....	14	5.45
Money.....	10	3.89
Politics.....	1	.39
Totals.....	147	57.20

*Themes introduced through fragments

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it positively or negatively affects the quality of life is open to question. References to time as a setting are just as uncertain. By far, the most frequent temporal setting is night time. As a positive setting, night is a time when good things happen, more specifically, night is a setting for good love. Contrarily, some songs use night as a darkness metaphor: Night symbolizes falseness and represents irrepressible forces beyond the control of country personae. It is a time for jealousy and loneliness. Morning is likewise an uncertain setting. Morning is a time for good

loving, but it is also a time to be reminded of estranged love. Morning is both a time to be with lovers and a time to miss lovers. As settings, neither night nor day are consistent symbols. Time of day often adds to the impressions created by country music. However, as with time force, these impressions are influenced by context rather than universal interpretations of time.

The second topic introduced in theme fragments deals with place awareness. Place, like time, provides a setting in which the plots of country music unfold. Three place settings occur with some frequency. The most common place setting for country-western songs is the home. As with time setting, home scenes symbolize both positive and negative aspects of country life. As a primary symbol, home represents love and happiness. Home is a place where mates experience the true love and togetherness which gives meaning to life. Home is also a place of rest and peace, symbolizing the pastoral values so important in country music. Contrarily, home is a negative symbol in songs expressing dissatisfaction. When relationships are bad, home is a setting for discontent and loneliness. When life is bad, home symbolizes effort, frustration and impotence. Consistent with the role of sex in country romance, a number of home scenes focus on the bedroom. When relationships are good, bed is a place for physical expressions of love. When relationships are bad, bed is a place to make believe love.

When relationships have ended, bed is a place to be lonely. Country-western plots also frequently unfold in bars. Bars are places to celebrate romance -- romance begins in bars, romance thrives in bars, and romance dies in bars. Bars are also places to celebrate loneliness -- they are places for the loveless to ponder their anguish and seek commiseration. Bars are avenues for escape. They lure country personae away from hard and loveless lives, offering brief respite from the disappointments, fears and frustrations which infect the plots of country music. Finally, geographic place settings suggest comparisons between city and rural life. The city is universally seen as hard, cold, lonely and unloving. The city symbolizes frustration, offering false promises of hope in a way of life foreign to country personae. By contrast, rural settings symbolize tranquillity and stability. Even those characters who are lured to the city eventually fantasize about the life and values they associate with rural settings.

The third topic introduced in theme fragments reveals country-western attitudes toward drinking. While alcohol is pictured in a variety of contexts, the ways in which drinking is incorporated as a plot device belies implications that alcohol may be a positive force in the lives of country characters. In country music, drinking almost invariably symbolizes human failure. On an obvious level, drinking is disorienting. The "devil in the bottle"

lures unhappy characters into its clutches, taking control and ruining their lives. In more subtle contexts, drinking represents weakness. Country songs often mention alcohol in a social context, intimating that drinking is a commonplace social activity. Invariably, social drinking is associated with romantic behavior. Alcohol sets the mood for romance, breaking down personal and social barriers and bringing people together. Irrespective of whether affairs are legitimate or illicit, alcohol is pictured as a source of instant romantic courage. Finally, alcohol is frequently associated with escape. Playing on both the hard life and time force themes, a number of songs describe drinking as a way of retreating from the unresolvable problems country characters inevitably face. When pressure is overwhelming, characters withdraw into "a jungle of flashing neon signs."¹⁰² They are, as one song puts it, "escaping to the only freedom I've ever known."¹⁰³ Alcohol, then, is pictured as a force which destroys the strong and compensates for the weak. In either event, drinking symbolizes a basic ignobility in country characters.

The final topic introduced in these fragments suggests an awareness of the ways people relate to media, primarily the way they relate to music.¹⁰⁴ These metamusical references focus on the ways country personae use songs. In one context, music reinforces a generally negative outlook toward life. The sheer volume of songs relating stories of

regret and loneliness confirms suspicions that unhappiness is the natural state of man. As such, music celebrates sorrow. In another context, music reinforces this suspicion as it relates to the personal lives of country personae. Country-western songs are replete with stories of country characters using music to help recall happier moments, but at the expense of deepening rather than easing pain. As such, music replenishes sorrow. More importantly, music offers a world for intermittent escape. Repeated three minute doses of jukebox medicine helps keep personal negativism in perspective by constantly relating it to general negativism. As such, music consumes sorrow. Country personae also relate to music in contexts unassociated with sorrow. In some songs, music is pictured as a romantic device. Somewhat analogous to lust and alcohol, music may be both an invitation to romance and a convenient scapegoat for illicit encounters. In this context, music relieves responsibility. Finally, some songs picture music as an expressive device. Music provides opportunities for vicarious expression of deep-seated emotions which might otherwise remain repressed. Thus, love songs become indirect expressions of affection and pain songs become impersonal expressions of sorrow.

Summary

The core themes of the sample country-western songs suggest several conclusions about country music. First, the

lyrics are manifestly preoccupied with affairs of the heart. More often than not country-western characters are pictured as romantic malcontents seeking out fresh love affairs, unbound by marital vows or societal mores. Second, the typical country-western character projects a weak self image, emasculate and insecure, and dependent upon a strength attributed only to significant others. Third, when country-western songs address worldly themes they largely focus on situations and conditions contributing to widespread personal frustration. A significant sub-theme suggests that discontent is compounded for those who, lured by the temptations of the city, reject the life and values of a rural society. Finally, while some country-western songs focus on politics and religion, too few do so to provide a base for generalizing about political or theological themes.

The themes developed through fragmented references in the sample songs both elaborate upon and extend beyond the themes developed through core references. First, the fragments suggest that relative concern with interpersonal, intrapersonal and worldly issues is more balanced than the core themes suggest. Second, each of the major core themes -- love, character, emotional outlook and life view -- are fleshed out with references to new or more complex myths. Of particular interest is a recurring thread absolving country characters of responsibility for either the good or

the bad of their lives. Third, two minor core themes -- self concept and religion -- are given more elaborate treatment. Although the fragments continue to project predominantly negative self images, these images are balanced somewhat by references to positive characteristics. Those songs which address religion do so more by indirection than by intention, but in a manner which confirms universal subscription to deism. Finally, the fragments introduce four new major themes: Time and place are presented as important, though uncertain, forces. Alcohol is pictured as an alluring but disorienting force destroying the lives of country personae. And, in a final and introspective theme, country-western songs picture themselves as romantic and expressive devices on the one hand, and sorrowful devices on the other.

CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

1. "You Never Even Call Me By My Name," by Steve Goodman, copyright CBS Incorporated (Recorded by David Allen Coe on Columbia Records LP "Once Upon A Rhyme," 1975).

2. "You Never Even Call Me By My Name."

3. "You Never Even Call Me By My Name."

4. "Major themes" are arbitrarily defined as those encompassing more than five percent of the total sample. Five percent seems to be an informal benchmark separating frequently and infrequently addressed themes.

5. "Hello Darlin'," by Conway Twitty, copyright Twitty Bird Music Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Conway Twitty on Decca Records, 1970).

6. "Ann (Don't Go Runnin')," by Buzz Cason, copyright Buzz Cason Publications (Recorded by Tommy Overstreet on Dot Records, 1972).

7. "Get On My Love Train," by Norris Wilson and Carmol Taylor, copyright Al Gallico Music Corporation and Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by La Costa on Capitol Records, 1975).

8. "Rocky," by Jay Stevens, copyright Strawberry Hill Music (Recorded by Dickey Lee on RCA Records, 1976).

9. "Yellow Ribbon," by I. Levine and L.R. Brown, copyright Warner-Tammerlane Publishing Company (Recorded by Johnny Carver on ABC Records, 1973).

10. "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man," by Becki Bluefield and Jim Owen, copyright Dunbar Music Incorporated (Recorded by Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty on MCA Records, 1973).

11. "After The Fire Is Gone," by L.E. White, copyright Twitty Bird Music Publishing Company (Recorded by Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn on Decca Records, 1971).

12. "Behind Closed Doors," by Kenny O'Dell, copyright House of Gold Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Charley Rich on Epic Records, 1973).

13. "You're My Best Friend," by Wayland Holyfield, copyright Vogue Music (Recorded by Don Williams on ABC/Dot Records, 1975).

14. "Jolene," by Dolly Parton, copyright Owepar Publishing Company (Recorded by Dolly Parton on RCA Records, 1974).

15. "Mammas Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys," by Ed Bruce and Patsy Bruce, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated and Sugar Plum Music Company (Recorded by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson on RCA Records, 1978), "Grandma Harp," by Merle Haggard, copyright Blue Book Music (Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1972), "Paper Rosie," by Harms, copyright Doubleday Music and Quality Music (Recorded by Gene Watson on Capitol Records, 1977), "Middle Age Crazy," by Sonny Throckmorton, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Jerry Lee Lewis on Mercury Records, 1978), "The Lord Knows I'm Drinking," by Bill Anderson, copyright Stallion Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Cal Smith on MCA Records, 1973).

16. "No Charge," by Harlan Howard, copyright Wilderness Music Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Melba Montgomery on Elektra Records, 1974).

17. "You Were Always There," by Donna Fargo, copyright Prima-Donna Music Company (Recorded by Donna Fargo on Dot Records, 1973).

18. "Long, Long Texas Road," by D. Lind, copyright Combine Music Corporation (Recorded by Roy Drusky on Mercury Records, 1970).

19. "Take Me Home Somewhere," by George Richey, Norris Wilson and Carmol Taylor, copyright Al Gallico Music Corporation and Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by Joe Stampley on ABC/Dot Records, 1975).

20. "Help Me Make It Through The Night," by Kris Kristofferson, copyright Combine Music Corporation (Recorded by Sammi Smith on Mega Records, 1971).

21. "I'll Do It All Over Again," by Bob McDill and Wayland Holyfield, copyright Hall-Clement Publishing, Vogue Music and Maple Hill Music (Recorded by Crystal Gayle on United Artists Records, 1977).

22. "You'll Lose A Good Thing," by B.L. Ozen and H. Meaux, copyright Crazy Cajun Music (Recorded by Freddy Fender on ABC/Dot Records, 1976).
23. "When Will I Be Loved," by Phil Everly, copyright Acuff-Rose Publications, Incorporated (Recorded by Linda Ronstadt on Capitol Records, 1975).
24. "To Get To You," by Jean Chapel, copyright Four Star Music Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Jerry Wallace on Decca Records, 1972).
25. "Tryin' To Beat The Morning Home," by R. Williams, T.G. Sheppard and E. Kahanek, copyright Stone Diamond Music Corporation and Don Crews Music (Recorded by T.G. Sheppard on Melodyland Records, 1975).
26. "Why Me," by Kris Kristofferson, copyright Resaca Music Publishing Company (Recorded by Kris Kristofferson on Monument Records, 1973).
27. "All His Children," by Alan Bergman, Marilyn Bergman and Henry Mancini, copyright Leeds Music Corporation (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Records, 1972).
28. "El Paso City," by Marty Robbins, copyright Mariposa Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Marty Robbins on Columbia Records, 1976).
29. "Lizzie And The Rain Man," by Kenny O'Dell and Larry Henley, copyright House of Gold Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Tanya Tucker on MCA Records, 1975).
30. "If We Make It Through December," by Merle Haggard, copyright Shade Tree Music (Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1974).
31. "Take This Job And Shove It," by David Allen Coe, copyright Warner-Tammerlane Publishing Corporation (Recorded by Johnny Paycheck on Epic Records, 1978).
32. "One's On the Way," by Shel Silverstein, copyright Evil Eye Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Loretta Lynn on Decca Records, 1972).
33. "Lord, Mr. Ford," by Dick Feller, copyright Vector Music Corporation, International (Recorded by Jerry Reed on RCA Records, 1973).
34. "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," by Waylon Jennings, copyright Baron Music Publishing Company (Recorded by Waylon Jennings on RCA Records, 1976).

35. "Faster Horses (The Cowboy And The Poet)," by Tom T. Hall, copyright Hallnote Music (Recorded by Tom T. Hall on Mercury Records, 1976).

36. "Promised Land," by Chuck Berry, copyright Arc Music Corporation (Recorded by Freddy Weller on Columbia Records, 1971).

37. "Kentucky Gambler," by Dolly Parton, copyright Owepar Publishing Company (Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1975).

38. "I'm Just Me," by Glenn Martin, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Records, 1971).

39. "I'm Just A Country Boy," by Fred Brooks and Marshal Barer, copyright Folkways Music Publishers, Incorporated (Recorded by Don Williams on ABC Records, 1978).

40. "(I Never Promised You A) Rose Garden," by Joe South, copyright Lowery Music (Recorded by Lynn Anderson on Columbia Records, 1971).

41. "Fightin' Side Of Me," by Merle Haggard, copyright Blue Book Music (Recorded by Merle Haggard and the Strangers on Capitol Records, 1970).

42. "Convoy," by C.W. McCall, Bill Fries and Chip Davis, copyright American Gramophone (Recorded by C.W. McCall on MGM Records, 1976).

43. "A Week In A Country Jail" by Tom T. Hall, copyright Newkeys Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Tom T. Hall on Mercury Records, 1970).

44. "When You're Hot, You're Hot," by Jerry Hubbard, copyright Vector Music Corporation, International (Recorded by Jerry Reed on RCA Records, 1971).

45. "One Piece At A Time," by Wayne Kemp, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Johnny Cash on Columbia Records, 1976).

46. "Marie Laveau," by Shel Silverstein and Baxter Taylor, copyright Evil Eye Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Bobby Bare on ABC Records, 1974).

47. Only one song failed to produce fantasy fragments. See "Tennessee Birdwalk," by Jack Blanchard, copyright Back Bay Music (Recorded by Jack Blanchard and Misty Morgan on Wayside Records, 1970).

48. Inasmuch as the type four grouping was a miscellaneous collection of novelty songs rather than a conceptual category, there could be no fragments of type four themes.

49. "Just Get Up And Close The Door," by Linda Hargrove, copyright Window Music Publishing, Incorporated (Recorded by Johnny Rodriguez on Mercury Records, 1975).

50. "Out Of My Head And Back In My Bed," by Peggy Forman, copyright Hello Darlin' Music (Recorded by Loretta Lynn on MCA Records, 1978).

51. "Love Is The Foundation," by William C. Hall, copyright Coal Miners Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Loretta Lynn on MCA Records, 1973).

52. "Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man."

53. "Somebody Somewhere," by Lola Jean Dillon, copyright Coal Miners Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Loretta Lynn on MCA Records, 1977).

54. "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife," by Marty Robbins, copyright Mariposa Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Marty Robbins on Columbia Records, 1970), "Super Kind of Woman," by Jack Lebsack, copyright Blue Book Music (Recorded by Freddy Hart on Capitol Records, 1973), and "Good Hearted Woman," by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, copyright Hall-Clement Publications (Recorded by Waylon Jennings on RCA Records, 1972 and by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson on RCA Records, 1976).

55. "Middle Age Crazy."

56. "Good Things," by Norris Wilson, Billy Sherrill and Carmol Taylor, copyright Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by David Houston on Epic Records, 1973), and "Sweet Desire," by Jeannie Kendall, copyright Terrace Music Corporation (Recorded by The Kendalls on Ovation Records, 1979).

57. "Behind Closed Doors."

58. "I Do My Swinging At Home," by Billy Sherrill, copyright Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by David Houston on Epic Records, 1970), and "Out Of My Head And Back In My Head."

59. "Tryin' To Beat The Morning Home."

60. "When A Man Loves A Woman (The Way That I Love You)," by Bill Eldridge and Gary Stewart, copyright Forrest Hills Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Billy Walker on MGM Records, 1970), and "The Best Part Of Living," by B.D. Johnson, copyright Mariposa Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Marty Robbins on Columbia Records, 1972).

61. "She's A Little Bit Country," by Harlan Howard, copyright Wilderness Music Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by George Hamilton IV on RCA Victor Records, 1970).

62. "Love Is A Sometimes Thing," by Jan Howard, copyright Stallion Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Bill Anderson on Decca Records, 1970).

63. "Kentucky Gambler."

64. "Is Anybody Goin' To San Antone?" by Dave Kirby and Glenn Martin, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Victor Records, 1970), and "It's Just A Matter Of Time," by Clyde Otis, Brook Benton and Belford Hendricks, copyright Eden Music Corporation (Recorded by Sonny James on Capitol Records, 1970).

65. "If You Love Me (Let Me Know)," by John Rostill, copyright Petal Music, Limited (Recorded by Olivia Newton-John on MCA Records, 1974).

66. "Ruby (Are You Mad)," by Cousin Emmy, copyright Acuff-Rose Publications, Incorporated (Recorded by Buck Owens on Capitol Records, 1971).

67. "It's Just A Matter Of Time."

68. "Slide Off Your Satin Sheets," by Donn Tankersley and Wayne Carson, copyright Rose Bridge Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Johnny Paycheck on Epic Records, 1977).

69. "Back On My Mind Again," by Conrad Pierce and Charles Quillen, copyright Jack and Bill Music (Recorded by Ronnie Milsap on RCA Records, 1979).

70. "The Door Is Always Open," by Bob McDill and Dickey Lee, copyright Jack Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Dave and Sugar on RCA Records, 1976).

71. "Satin Sheets," by John E. Valinkaty, copyright Champion Music Corporation (Recorded by Jeanne Pruett on MCA Records, 1973).

72. "Somewhere Between Love And Tomorrow," by Bud Reneau and Thomas Lazaros, copyright Chess Music, Incorporated and Charlie Boy Music (Recorded by Roy Clark on ABC/Dot Records, 1974).

73. "Broken Lady," by Larry Gatlin, copyright First Generation Music Company (Recorded by Larry Gatlin on Monument Records, 1976).

74. "Lucille," by Roger Bowling and Hal Bynum, copyright ATV Music Corporation and Andite Invasion Music (Recorded by Kenny Rogers on United Artists Records, 1977).

75. "I'm Gonna Love You," by Baker Knight, copyright Dunbar Music, Incorporated and Westgate Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Dave and Sugar on RCA Records, 1977).

76. "Love Is The Foundation."

77. "Ann (Don't Go Runnin')."

78. "Woman (Sensuous Woman)," by Gary S. Paxton, copyright Acoustic Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Don Gibson on Hickory Records, 1972).

79. "Trouble In Paradise," by Jerry Chestnut, copyright Passkey Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Loretta Lynn on MCA Records, 1975).

80. "We Sure Can Love Each Other," by Billy Sherrill and Tammy Wynette, copyright Algee Music corporation and Altam Music Corporation (Recorded by Tammy Wynette on Epic Records, 1971).

81. "The Most Beautiful Girl," by Norris Wilson, Billy Sherrill and Rory Bourke, copyright Al Gallico Music Corporation and Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by Charlie Rich on Epic Records, 1974).

82. "You're My Man," by Glenn Sutton, copyright Flagship Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Lynn Anderson on Columbia Records, 1971), and "Happiest Girl In The Whole USA," by Donna Fargo, copyright Prima-Donna Music Company and Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by Donna Fargo on Dot Records, 1972).

83. "Teddy Bear Song," by D. Earl and N. Nixon, copyright Duchess Music Corporation (Recorded by Barbara Fairchild on Columbia Records, 1973).
84. "Kentucky Gambler" and "Tryin' To Beat The Morning Home."
85. "My Woman, My Woman, My Wife."
86. "She's A Little Bit Country."
87. "I'm Gonna Love You."
88. "Reconsider Me," by Myra Smith and Margaret Lewis, copyright Shelby Singleton Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Narvel Felts on ABC/Dot Records, 1975).
89. "Wonder Could I Live There Anymore," by Bill Rice, copyright Jack and Bill Music Company (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Victor Records, 1970).
90. "It's Just A Matter Of Time" and "Ann (Don't Go Runnin')."
91. "When A Man Loves A Woman (The Way That I Love You)."
92. "Someone Loves You Honey," by Don Devaney, copyright Music City Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Records, 1978).
93. "Married But Not To Each Other," by Denise LaSalle and Frances Miller, copyright Ordena Music, Incorporated and Bridgeport Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Barbara Mandrell on ABC/Dot Records, 1977).
94. "How Much More Can She Stand," by Harry Compton, copyright Brothers Two Music (Recorded by Conway Twitty on Decca Records, 1971).
95. "Window Up Above," by George Jones, copyright Glad Music Company and Fort Knox Music Company (Recorded by Mickey Gilley on Playboy Records, 1975), and "Before The Next Teardrop Falls," by Ben Peters and Vivian Keith, copyright Shelby Singleton Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Freddy Fender on ABC/Dot Records, 1975).
96. "I'll Get Over You," by Richard Leigh, copyright Pulleybone Music Company (Recorded by Crystal Gayle on United Artists Records, 1976), and "Lookin' For A Feelin'," by Waylon Jennings, copyright Waylon Jennings Music (Recorded by Waylon Jennings on RCA Records, 1978).

97. "Heart Over Mind," by Mel Tillis, copyright Cedarwood Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Mel Tillis on Kapp Records, 1970).

98. "Don't Take It Away," by Troy Seals and Max Barnes, copyright Irving Music, Incorporated and Danor Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Conway Twitty on MCA Records, 1979), and "Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue," by Richard Leigh, copyright United Artists Music Company, Incorporated (Recorded by Crystal Gayle on United Artists Records, 1978).

99. "Gwen (Congratulations)," by Ricci Mareno and Jerry Gillespie, copyright Shenandoah Music (Recorded by Tommy Overstreet on Dot Records, 1971).

100. "Here You Come Again," by Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, copyright Screen Gems-EMI Music, Incorporated and Summerhill Songs, Incorporated (Recorded by Dolly Parton on RCA Records, 1978).

101. "Sweet Desire" and "How Much More Can She Stand."

102. "Touching Home," by A.L. Owens and Dallas Frazier, copyright Blue Crest Music, Incorporated and Range Songs, Incorporated (Recorded by Jerry Lee Lewis on Mercury Records, 1971).

103. "Devil In The Bottle," by B. David, copyright Dunbar Music (Recorded by T.G. Sheppard on Melodyland Records, 1975).

104. One song did address the media on a core level. See "(Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song," by Larry Butler and Chips Moman, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated (Recorded by B.J. Thomas on ABC Records, 1975).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RHETORICAL VISION OF COUNTRY-WESTERN POPULAR SONGS

The themes and theme fragments which unfold in popular country-western songs disclose a symbolic reality dominated by three common fantasies. A heroic fantasy introduces the *dramatis personae* consistently cast in country narratives and identifies presumptions about heroic people and heroic behavior. A romantic fantasy examines the ways country characters relate to each other in romantic settings, addressing the role of romance in country life and introducing conventions for loving. Finally, an escape fantasy reveals the ways country characters see and relate to the world in which they live. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe each of these fantasies and to comment on the rhetorical vision they sustain.

The Heroic Fantasy

The heroic fantasy is revealed through contrasting characterizations of esteemed and contemptible country *personae*. Since country-western narratives so frequently involve romance, the heroic fantasy is readily evident in the ways country songs treat romantic characters.

The most celebrated romantic character is the good mate. Apparently good mates are held in high regard because they manifest particularly esteemed personal values. Country songs laud lovers who are strong and dependable. They praise lovers who understand and accept flaws in others, yet are nonetheless caring and inspiring. Most importantly, country songs highly value romantic fidelity. In view of the infidelities which pervade country-western narratives, no greater tribute is paid to romantic characters than the regard accorded to those who are faithful to their mates. These values are also evident in positive descriptions of the self. Like the good mate, the esteemed self is both strong and faithful. The esteemed self not only understands, but is constantly willing to make sacrifices for significant others. For both good mates and the esteemed self, strength, fidelity and sacrifice are balanced by a degree of vulnerability. Since the counterparts to dependable, understanding characters are dependably abusing characters, those who give to love are doomed to become its victims. Vulnerability, however, is complemented by a resiliency evident in the esteemed self. Good people who are abused by, and understandably shy of, romance are able to rebound from romantic misfortune and love again.

Heroic romantic characters do not merely manifest overt country-western values. They also display covert sexual

values. Although this is somewhat slighted in songs directly addressing the good mate persona, sexual skills are a major focus of songs lauding the self. Furthermore, the number of songs which make incidental reference to physical love, and especially the number of songs which praise willing and thrilling mates, imply that country heroes are sexually satisfying.

The image of the romantic hero is reinforced by contrast in the image of the romantic antihero. Three somewhat similar characters are consistently cast in this role, the most contemptible of which is the bad mate. In general, this character is portrayed as the force behind a failing relationship. Romantic derision is suggested in an apparent disdain for the values manifested in good mates. Bad mates care little for their lovers or country conventions about romance. They want both the excitement of casual affairs and the stability of continuing relationships. Thus, while they are themselves unfaithful, bad mates relentlessly demand that their lovers remain willing, affectionate and true. A second character, the corespondent in illicit romance, likewise disregards these values. Corespondents are accorded qualities -- charm, sexuality and wealth -- denied to common country characters. These qualities are used to entrap the unwary, not to embark upon meaningful continuing relationships, but merely to gratify base desires for sex and excitement.

The third character cast as a romantic antihero is the contemptible self. Country songs invariably describe the contemptible self as sinfully weak, focusing variously on characters enslaved by drink, by passion, and by love. Undeservedly blessed with a good mate, the contemptible self cannot resist the temptation to drink and carouse, ignoring personal and family responsibilities. Paradoxically, when given cause to stray the contemptible self is devoted beyond all reason, professing undying love for an indiscreet and uncaring mate.

The contemptible self differs from other romantic antiheroes in two important respects. First, the contemptible self is not intentionally villainous. Country-western narratives suggest that weakness both causes and excuses enslavement. The contemptible self subscribes to the value system implied in country songs but is too weak to act accordingly. The contemptible self is victimized by weakness -- straying because people are charming, drinking because life is disheartening, enduring because loneliness would be unbearable. Contrarily, bad mates and correspondents are both strong characters. They obviously disdain country values and intentionally abuse romantic conventions. They use charm and sex and wealth to entrap and enslave the contemptible self. The second distinction is that the contemptible self is the self. Country songs are replete with allusions to double standards, excusing in

the self that which is despised about others. Inevitably, the songs find some way to mitigate personal transgressions, invoking feelings of pity which, were another character involved, should certainly turn to scorn. Thus, bad mates and correspondents are the real romantic villains in country-western narratives because they refuse to respect the image of the romantic hero. The contemptible self, on the other hand, represents common folk. The self may fail to live up to heroic expectations, but the omissions are unintentional and the character is not culpable.

Although country songs provide somewhat different descriptions of esteemed and contemptible characters when they are placed in non-romantic situations, the basic nature of the heroic fantasy remains. Heroes are always strong. Heroes are always kind and considerate. While romantic heroes value fidelity and pursue emotional fulfillment, non-romantic heroes value hard work and find pleasure in peace and tranquility rather than the sins of the city. One new dimension added to the heroic image is a sense of independence. While confronted by the same uncontrollable forces which dominate the lives of common country characters, heroes are given to acting from choice rather than resignation. A hero can see the humor in "A Week In A Country Jail" or tell the boss to "Take This Job And Shove¹ It." Contemptible characters are less obvious in non-romantic settings, as heroes are more likely to be

antagonized by plot than by personae. When villains do appear, they sustain the antiheroic image suggested in romance. Villains either reject heroic values or they are responsible for the plot devices which antagonize the heroes. Thus, contemptible characters are cast as city folk, dissenters and powerbrokers. Like their romantic counterparts, these villains contribute to the fantasy by contrasting with the strong, hard working, simple and compassionate characters country songs cast as heroes.

The images which comprise the heroic fantasy are not equally apportioned between male and female heroic characters. In fact, the apportionment clearly supports patriarchal traditions about male and female social roles. The male hero is more likely to be revered in non-romantic settings. The primary attributes of the male hero are strength, independence, subscription to a work ethic and pursuit of simple and innocent pleasures -- a macho image somewhat tempered by compassion and romantic vulnerability. Male heroes are cast, either in fact or fiction, as cowboys -- working men, truck drivers and country singers. The archetype male hero is described in "Mamma, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys."²

A cowboy ain't easy to love, and he's harder to hold
 And it means more to him to give you a song than silver or
 gold
 Lonestar belt buckles and old faded Levis and each night
 begins a new day
 If you can't understand him and he don't die young
 He'll probably just ride away

A cowboy loves smokey old pool rooms and clear mountain
 mornings
 Little warm puppies and children and girls of the night
 Them that don't know him won't like him and them that do
 sometimes won't know how to take him
 He's not wrong, he's just different and his pride won't let
 him
 Do things to make you think he's right

Momma, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys
 Don't let them pick guitars and drive them old trucks
 Make 'em be doctors and lawyers and such
 Momma, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys
 Cause they'll never stay home and they're always alone
 Even with someone they love

Heroic females are traditionally cast in roles placing them in the home, appearing as grandmothers and mothers and wives. Country songs generally focus on heroic women in romantic situations, holding them responsible for protecting the romantic fantasy. While heroic females are vulnerable to love they are not enslaved by it. They preserve fulfilling union by remaining unquestionably faithful to faithless mates. Heroic females sacrifice for the men in their lives, understanding that men are burdened by pressures outside the home and accepting that men are lured by flesh and swayed by drink. In short, country-western women stand by their men. The archetypal heroic female is the "Good Hearted Woman."³

A long time forgotten with dreams that just fell by the way
 The good life he promised ain't what she is living today
 But she never complains about the bad times or the bad
 things he's done, Lord
 She just talks about the good times they've had and all the
 good times to come

He likes the night lights and good life and good timing
 friends
 And when the party's all over she'll welcome him back home
 again
 Love, no she don't understand him but she does the best that
 she can
 This good hearted woman loving her good timing man

She's a good hearted woman in love with a good timing man
 She loves him in spite of his ways she don't understand
 Through tear drops and laughter they'll pass through this
 world hand-in-hand
 A good hearted woman loving a good timing man

The Romantic Fantasy

As a preoccupation with romantic themes implies, love plays a major role in the country-western rhetorical vision. The romantic fantasy follows country characters as they pursue emotional fulfillment, revealing itself in a three act drama which chronicles the archetypal country romance.

Act one finds country singers embarking upon campaigns to court love. In most episodes of this drama, the singer fawns over an unavailable love object. While any number of plot complications may threaten to keep love unrequited, the typical episode focuses on characters who are unhappily committed to established relationships. Adulterous courting is sanctioned in the constant contrasting between fulfilling and unfulfilling relationships, implying that characters burdened by the latter are free to court the former. While courting love, singers are absolved from the moral reproval accorded to those who seduce satisfied lovers. Country songs suggest self-serving distinctions between courting and

seducing. Common folk court, villains seduce. Common folk court the misfortunate, villains seduce the weak. Common folk court meaningful relationships, villains seduce for immediate pleasure. Since country songs invariably cast singers as common rather than heroic or villainous characters, the conventions for courting love suggest an indulgent romantic ethic which encourages infidelity and seduction while presuming to pursue everlasting love.

Act two begins the true romantic adventure. Having successfully courted, country singers begin glorifying love. As this act progresses, a fundamental romantic notion is revealed. When glorifying love, country singers contrive dramas which reduce life to a series of surrealistic romantic experiences: Lovers are universally cast as romantic heroes. Plots revolve around experiences reaffirming higher order romantic values. Relationships are emotionally and sexually fulfilling and promise to last a lifetime. Infidelity, jealousy, loneliness and regret are forgotten emotions. In short, the characters are convinced they have attained the romantic ideal embedded in their dreams and believe that their dismal existence has been given new substance and meaning. This drama is evident in
⁴
 "Don't Fight The Feelings of Love."

A boy and a girl in a big spinning world
 Upside down in love from the start
 Sunny days and laughing skies, true love in both their eyes
 Spending happy good times in the park

Learning all about the living, taking and the giving
 Love is growing stronger every day
 Well, there'll never be another cause they're trusting each
 other
 Good love seems to just work out that way

In act three love begins to sour. Idealism turns to frustration and an inevitable progression from glorified love to lost love begins. Relationships are neither sexually nor emotionally satisfying as happiness gives way to despair. Romantic heroes are recast as contemptible characters, and mates who were loving are now presumed weak or cruel and indifferent. Lovers recognize that the romantic ideal has not been attained. Characters who were faithful begin to stray, and a new story line emerges and purges old values. Adultery and casual romance once again become conventional behavior, consoling the misfortunate with love by proxy.

Act three is followed by a reprise of act one. Mired in unfulfilling relationships, country singers once more court love. Rather than being discouraged, country characters continue to pursue a romantic ideal, encouraged by memories of brief flings with glorified love and deceived by illusions which have each fledging romance promising to fulfill the dream. The romantic drama continues in an unending progression from courting, to glorifying, to losing love. A summary reconstruction of the romantic fantasy is provided in "Saying Hello, Saying I Love You, Saying
 5
 Goodbye."

Oh, I had my share of strangers turned into lovers
 Then turn back into strangers again
 Oh, I lost them in a crowd of sad passers by
 Saying hello, saying I love you, saying goodbye

Yes, it's a long way from nowhere to the place where we're
 standing
 But baby we've finally arrived
 After travelling separate highways, taking all the dead end
 rides
 Saying hello, saying I love you, saying goodbye

Oh baby, I hear you, I hear you, and I really do believe it
 I finally do believe it in my heart
 Let's close all the doors behind us and wrap all the night
 around us
 Baby, no don't say a word

Let's just make love to each other and leave the world
 outside
 Saying hello, saying I love you, saying goodbye

The Escape Fantasy

The final fantasy which contributes to the country-western rhetorical vision focuses on perceptions of the world in which country folk live, and identifies realities from which these characters continually seek respite. While the plots of country-western songs suggest a seemingly boundless set of situations from which to escape, they conjoin in the overt and covert dimensions of the escape fantasy.

Overtly, country characters seek to escape the pressures of the here-and-now. This quest seems provoked by the nearly universal perception that calamity is a regular feature of everyday life. Country lyrics are replete with allusions to misfortune in day to day experiences, as

represented by on going battles in worklife, homelife and personal life. Whatever the setting, extraordinary experiences are accepted as ordinary. Country characters never seem surprised by crisis, dishonesty, infidelity or personal tragedy. Woven into the fabric of country-western narratives is the perception that disaster is a necessary component of the here-and-now, a certainty around which country characters must adjust their lives and dreams.

The escape fantasy which emerges from here-and-now plots is readily evident in the hard life corollary suggesting that respite from the pressures of the present can be found in subscription to country-western values. The presumptions of a country value hierarchy are clear. Hard work is more satisfying than bodily pleasure. Personal fulfillment is found in honest living and honest relationships. The simplicities of the farm are more contenting than the fast paced complexities of city life. Tom T. Hall captures the essence of pastoral respite in

6

"Country Is."

Country is sitting on the back porch
 Listening to the whippoorwills late in the day
 Country is minding your business
 Helping a stranger if he comes your way
 Country is living in the city
 Knowing your people, knowing your kind
 Country is what you make it
 Country is all in your mind

Country is working for a living
 Thinking your own thoughts, loving your town
 Country is teaching your children
 Find out what's right and stand your ground

Country is having a real good time
Listening to the music, singing your part
Country is walking in the moonlight
Country is all in your heart

To country-western characters, "country" represents a fantasized existence which contrasts sharply with everyday experiences. As a temporary haven from pressure and responsibility, pastoral escape helps sustain survival for those trapped in a dismal here-and-now.

Romance represents a special case of escaping the here-and-now. As the courting love and losing love stages of the romantic fantasy suggest, the unrequited quest for an ideal romance is a constant spectre haunting country characters. Thus, romantic plots revolve around the kinds of here-and-now experiences country characters seek to escape. On the other hand, in country-western songs, romance is escape. Characters who live without love are universally pictured as lonely and despairing. Country folk survive despair by pursuing glorified love. It is the very surrealism of glorified love which sustains survival. So long as country characters can concoct dreams of a romantic future complete with fulfilling love and heroic lovers, they can endure the emptiness of their here-and-now existence.

Overt escape is provoked by dismal perceptions of the here-and-now. The misfortune country characters experience in their regular relations with others and with the world give way to a fantasy removed in time and space from the disasters of the present. The basic character of this

dimension of the escape fantasy is evident in "Luckenbach,
 7
 Texas."

The only things in life that make it worth living
 Is guitars that tune good and firm feeling women
 I don't need my name in the marquee lights
 I got my song and I got you with me tonight
 Maybe it's time we got back to the basics of love

So baby let's sell your diamond ring
 Buy some boots and faded jeans and go away
 This coat and tie is choking me
 In your high society you cry all day
 I've been so busy keeping up with the Jones'
 Four car garage and we're still building on
 Maybe it's time we got back to the basics of love

Let's go to Luckenbach, Texas
 With Waylon and Willie and the boys
 This successful life we're living
 Got us fueding like the Hatfields and McCoys
 Between Hank Williams' pain songs
 And Newbury's train songs
 And Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain
 Out in Luckenbach, Texas
 Ain't nobody feeling no pain

The overt dimension of the escape fantasy sets the stage for the covert fantasy. Rather than seeking to escape the here-and-now, the covert fantasy has country characters escaping responsibility for their here-and-now condition. This evasion is evident in the perception that life is regulated by forces beyond the control of common folk. Sex, alcohol and media songs, for instance, describe circumstances in which country characters only seemingly bring disaster upon themselves. In the fantasy, flesh, drink and reminiscence represent physical and metaphysical forces which only the heroic can resist. In a similar vein, here-and-now plots regularly focus on circumstances like

death, drought, poverty, and social decay which are beyond personal control. In a less obvious way, the religion theme also supports this perception. Country-western songs accept without reservation the presence of an omnipotent force and the power of that force to influence the lives of country characters.

The covert dimension of escape is implied in each of the common fantasies. It is readily identifiable in overt escape. Both glorified romantic and pastoral settings are pictured as responsibility free. "I'm the happiest girl in the whole USA" proclaims the woman who revels in a fantasy where waking up next to a lover means that life has turned out "the way I always thought it could be."⁸ "Wonder Could I Live There Anymore?" queries the escapist who fantasizes⁹ returning to the careless simplicity of childhood. The point is, country characters seek both to escape from the here-and-now and to a time and place dominated by good rather than bad fate.

Covert escape is likewise evident in the heroic fantasy. As much about common folk as about heroic and antiheroic characters, the heroic fantasy sustains the image of a victimized self. It is true that heroes also face calamity. Heroism, however, is defined by the ways characters deal with inevitable misfortune. Heroes and antiheroes are presented as strong characters behaving through free will. Common folk, on the other hand, are

bandied about by people and forces beyond their control. The weakness which characterizes the victimized self absolves common folk from responsibility for personal failure.

The covert dimension of escape is most evident in characteristics of the romantic fantasy. The very nature of the fantasy reinforces the premise that romantic fortune is beyond the control of common folk. The continuing quest for love is a constant reminder that country characters are not in control of their romantic destiny. Glorified love is an illusion which sustains constant courting. On the other hand, country characters are constantly courting because they are constantly losing love. A fact of romantic life is that relationships fail. Losing love represents not personal failure, but rather the failure of the illusion to sustain itself. Country characters accept responsibility for neither the glory of good love nor the pain of lost love. Satisfying relationships are attributed to the personal character of significant others. When relationships end, country characters are generally unwilling to admit fault. They perceive themselves as faithful and sacrificing, ever ready to accept wayward lovers with open arms. Even in songs admitting that lovers have cause to leave, country characters remain resolute in the belief that they are not responsible for their transgressions. Drinking and carousing are, after all,

weaknesses, and in country-western songs even the estranged excuse the weak.

The covert dimension of the escape fantasy seems provoked by the ultimate failure of overt escape. Real life experiences constantly remind country characters that pastoral and romantic escape are illusory. Luckenbach, Texas exists only in a dream world populated by "Waylon and Willie and the boys."¹⁰ Country-western songs do not place happy characters in the country, they place unhappy characters in circumstances where they fantasize about a way of life that is lost to them. In a similar vein, romantic escape is fleeting. For the days or weeks or years which comprise glorified love, romance appears to be a haven for the weary. Ultimately, however, glorified love progresses to lost love and characters are forced to confront once more the here-and-now from which they had sought escape.

Covert escape gives force to overt escape. Were country characters forced to confront both responsibility for the here-and-now and the certainty of disaster there would be little chance of psychic survival. By absolving country characters from responsibility for the disasters which befall them, country-western songs make the here-and-now bearable. When real life experiences disrupt escape fantasies, country characters return to a reality sufficiently similar to their fantasies so as to soften the disintegration of their dreams. And, since they are not

responsible for the calamity which befalls fantasy, country characters can construct new fantasies and again relieve the pressures of the here-and-now.

The Rhetorical Vision

This dissertation began with the presumption that the country music audience is an amorphous culture class sharing a common vision of reality. The rhetorical expression of this vision provides substance for essential artifacts of the culture class, namely country-western popular songs. The songs, in turn, serve as repositories of the fantasies that sustain the vision and thus the group. What is the vision? How do the common fantasies conjoin to reveal a symbolic reality shared by the country music audience?

The most obvious feature of the vision is that it is one of despair. It is commonplace for the dramas which sustain the vision to be set in a here-and-now characterized by disaster. Generally speaking, the dramatis personae who act out the fantasies are disillusioned and frustrated by the plots they confront. Country characters are downtrodden, often described as helpless, unloved and unfulfilled persons battered by fates they can neither control nor understand. Although each common fantasy includes a brief interlude with success and fulfillment, the finale is inevitably calamitous. The heroic fantasy gives substance to a sense of self, but the image is one which has

more in common with villains than with heroes. The romantic fantasy readily attends to the notion of glorified love, but the glory and the love are soon lost. The escape fantasy recalls memories of a fantasized past and projects a fantasy future, but escape is ultimately denied and characters are returned post haste to the here-and-now. Each fantasy is crushed by the general aura of despair which characterizes the vision. The message seems clear, good fortune does not offer refuge from the here-and-now, it is merely a starting point for calamity.

Nonetheless, the vision is also one of hope. Respite is a carefully constructed device within each fantasy. Success may be temporary, but it is as dependably a part of life as are the failures which contribute to despair. The heroic fantasy reinforces the notion of a latent nobility in man. Heroes are decidedly not common folk, but just as common folk display a kind of villainy, they likewise have their heroic moments. The romantic fantasy reminds the audience of the glory of love. Just as the romantic cycle inevitably reaches lost love, it always returns to courting and glorifying love, purging painful memories on its way and rekindling a romantic ideal. The escape fantasy gives substance to an escape dream. While it is set in a time and place far removed from the present condition, the fantasy draws heavily from real life experiences, making escape seem more an aspiration than an illusion.

Despair and hope are compatible, rather than contrary, constructs in the symbolic reality of the country-western audience. Their relationship reverses that noted by Hayakawa in his essay on '50s love songs.¹¹ Rather than making impossible demands upon life, leading to frustration and demoralization, country-western songs introduce a pessimism which real life can hardly sustain. Christopher Lasch notes that such a vision helps a society arm itself emotionally against "the onslaught of everyday life."¹² Those who participate in the vision conduct themselves as if they live in impossible circumstances, surviving "by preparing for the worst and by reassuring [themselves] that the worst has a way of falling short of expectations."¹³ Whereas Hayakawa charged that popular songs contribute to unrealistic views of the world and inhibit emotional growth, country-western songs create a symbolic world which, in overstating real life, relieves fears of disaster.

Relief is found in the sense of community which grows out of the vision. Country-western songs make uncommon experiences seem common. The composite drama of country music is set in a here-and-now filled with the kinds of disasters and injustices which fuel a sense of powerlessness and victimization. However, the sheer volume of misfortune encountered by the characters who act out the drama dwarfs that experienced by persons who share the vision. When calamity becomes commonplace it seems somehow less personal.

Those who share the vision become members of a symbolic community who share the here-and-now, and who through their sharing, aid and comfort each other.

Lasch notes that "The only evidence that could confirm or refute our own experience is the evidence of people like ourselves, people who share a common past and a common frame of reference."¹⁴ Country-western songs are stories about such people. The fantasies which make up the rhetorical vision of country-western popular song both confirm and refute the experiences of those who participate in the vision. The plots from which the fantasies evolve confirm the negative here-and-now experiences of the group. At the same time, the fantasies refute the despair which would grow out of those experiences were it not for the hope found in the community who share the vision.

CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

1. "A Week In A Country Jail," by Tom T. Hall, copyright Newkeys Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Tom T. Hall on Mercury Records, 1970), and "Take This Job And Shove It," by David Allen Coe, copyright Warner-Tammerlane Publishing Corporation (Recorded by Johnny Paycheck on Epic Records, 1978).

2. "Momma, Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys," by Ed Bruce and Patsy Bruce, copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated and Sugarplum Music Company (Recorded by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson on RCA Records, 1978).

3. "Good Hearted Woman," by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson, copyright Hall-Clement Publications (Recorded by Waylon Jennings on RCA Records, 1972 and by Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson on RCA Records, 1976).

4. "Don't Fight The Feelings of Love," by John Schweers, copyright Pi-Gem Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Records, 1973).

5. "Saying Hello, Saying I Love You, Saying Goodbye," by Jeff Berry, Dene Hofheinz and Brad Burg, copyright Doug Kirshner Music and Steeple Chase Music (Recorded by Jim Ed Brown and Hellen Cornelius on RCA Records, 1977).

6. "Country Is," by Tom T. Hall, copyright Hallnote Music (Recorded by Tom T. Hall on Mercury Records, 1975).

7. "Luckenbach, Texas (Back To The Basics Of Love)," by Bob Emmons and Chip Moman, copyright Baby Chick Music, Incorporated (Recorded by Waylon Jennings on RCA Records, 1977).

8. "Happiest Girl In The Whole USA," by Donna Fargo, copyright Prima Domma Music Company and Algee Music Corporation (Recorded by Donna Fargo on Dot Records, 1972).

9. "Wonder Could I Live There Anymore?" by Bill Rice, copyright Jack and Bill Music Company (Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Victor Records, 1970).

10. "Luckenbach, Texas (Back To The Basics Of Love)."
11. S. I. Hayakawa, "Popular Songs vs. The Facts of Life," Etc., 12 (1955), 83-95, reprinted in Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America, eds. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957).
12. Christopher Lasch, The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times (W. W. Norton and Company: New York, 1984), 94-95.
13. Lasch, The Minimal Self, 62.
14. Lasch, The Minimal Self, 133.

CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study grew out of the belief that country-western popular songs are a significant communication experience for a large segment of American society. The popularity of this assessment is attested to by the number of scholars who have looked upon country-western music as a kind of social barometer measuring "an important element in the American¹ ethos."

The rationale for this particular study was twofold. First, country-western songs are quantitatively significant communication experiences. As recently as the 1960s, country-western music was resoundly rejected by popular audiences. Few American radio stations were willing to play country-western records, few Americans wanted to listen to them, and fewer still bothered to buy them. During the last twenty-five years, and particularly during the decade of the 1970s, country-western music managed to overcome this rejection. The number of radio stations broadcasting country-western music has increased markedly. One in three adults claims to be a country-western music fan and 40% of the remainder listen to country-western songs. Fifteen cents out of every dollar spent on recorded music buys a

country-western record. Next to rock and roll, country-western is the most pervasive stream of American popular music.

The second reason this study viewed country-western music to be an important form of music communication is that it is sociologically significant. Popular music is an important component of American popular culture. As Beckley and Chalfant noted, popular music exerts a powerful socializing force upon its audience.² Country-western music has been particularly important in this regard in that it has led to a new understanding of the relationships between popular music and popular audiences. The demographics of the contemporary country-western audience suggest that participation in particular music communication experiences is more heavily influenced by personal outlook than by social class. The contemporary country-western audience can be described as a rhetorical community defined by shared communication experiences rather than a social community defined by socio-economic circumstances.

The quantitative and sociological significance of country-western music communication experiences suggest that country-western popular songs deserve the attention of communication scholars. Not only is country-western music a communication experience in which significant numbers of Americans regularly participate, their participation has rhetorical as well as aesthetic implications. As John

Buckley indicated, the musical messages of this rhetorical community reflect common experiences shared through the lyrics of country-western popular songs.³

Musical rhetorical acts are defined through choices made by artists as they construct and express musical messages. Traditionally, these choices have related to personae, performance media, musicological character and lyric content. Prior to the popularity explosion of the 1970s, country-western rhetorical acts were easily distinguished from other musical rhetorical acts through the stock images country-western performers projected, the performance media upon which they relied, the particular musicological conventions to which the songs subscribed, and the subject matter the songs addressed.

Country-western music overcame public rejection by appearing to lose its identity while conscientiously protecting it. Country-western rhetorical acts can no longer be clearly categorized according to particular performer images, performance media or conventional music styles. Traditional images, media and styles have survived, but they have been joined by new artist choices. Country-western music was once performed by artists projecting a carefully constructed "country" image. Contemporary country-western performers, however, are as likely to reject traditional images as to subscribe to them. Although country-western musical messages were once shared almost

exclusively through radio broadcasts, contemporary country-western performers rely heavily on live performances, televised performances, commercial recordings and movie soundtracks as performance media. While the country-western music dialect could once be readily identified by its rhythms, tempos, instrumentation and vocalization, contemporary country-western musical messages are phrased in a variety of instrumental and vocal styles. The single element of the traditional dialect which seems to have survived the popularity explosion involves the way the country-western vocal style gives force to the messages through an emotive "realness."

The identity which the contemporary country-western rhetorical act has carefully protected relates to the lyric content of country-western songs. Lyric content has been, and remains, the important consideration in country-western music. Unlike other streams of popular music, in country-western music the aesthetics of melody are often forced into the background in order that lyric narratives might remain uncompromised. The lyric style of country-western music is simple and direct with little of the allegory characterizing other popular songs. The story lines of country-western songs address the kinds of everyday experiences with which audiences are familiar, and the themes of these stories support the kinds of fantasies the community shares.

The rhetorical community which participates in these transactions is defined by choices in popular music rather than social construction. While the country-western audience once clearly constituted a taste culture of middle-aged, male, white, under-educated, poorly paid, rural Southern blue-collar workers, the contemporary country-western audience represents a culture class which is not neatly distributed according to socio-economic circumstances. In respect to education, income, occupation and geography, the country-western audience largely resembles the general population. Audience members are still likely to be mid-life males, but country-western music is far more popular with female and younger and older audiences than was once the case. The sole factors affording the country-western audience a sense of community are an affection for country-western music and participation in the country-western rhetorical vision.

The general perspective on rhetorical transaction adopted by this study was that suggested by Ernest Bormann in his discussion of public fantasizing. According to Bormann, people concoct personal "fantasies," or creative interpretations of experiences, in an effort to understand and cope with their here-and-now condition. During rhetorical transaction, these fantasies are revealed in the form of dramatizing scripts characterized by stock personae, plots and settings. When participants in the transaction

identify with these fantasies they take them up and share them with other groups. The fantasies continue to chain out until they catch up a large body of people in a social symbolic reality. The people who share this reality comprise a rhetorical community subscribing to and jointly expressing a rhetorical vision.

In order to reconstruct the country-western rhetorical vision, this study applied Bormann's techniques of fantasy theme analysis to a sample of 257 country-western songs recorded between 1970 and 1979. The reconstruction involved examining the narratives and coding them into content categories derived from the core themes and theme fragments suggested in the lyrics of each song. The coded narratives were then treated as a composite dramatizing script which could be reduced to the common fantasies expressed in the script and described in terms of the rhetorical vision these fantasies reveal.

The anthology of country-western musical messages used in this study forms a composite narrative dramatizing three specific rhetorical fantasies. The heroic fantasy gives dramatic expression to presumptions about heroic and villainous behavior. The romantic fantasy expresses conventions for interpersonal behavior and affirms the role and value of love relationships. Finally, the escape fantasy suggests norms for relating to the physical world in which the community must survive.

In the heroic fantasy, esteemed characters are generally presumed to be dependable, hardworking, psychologically strong people. Even though they confront the same calamities which befall other characters, heroes are given to acting by choice and out of conviction rather than yielding to the forces of fate. Country-western plot devices seem to continually test the mettle of country personae. The heroes of these plots are characters who are able to sustain themselves and their relationships in circumstances in which common folk are resigned to failure. Heroic males tend to reveal themselves through the ways they choose to respond to their physical environment. They are strong and independent when they face disaster, and are certain that it will be overcome. Heroic females reveal themselves through the ways they conduct their interpersonal affairs. They are held responsible for sustaining romance, and fulfill their responsibility by remaining faithful, sacrificing and understanding. Country-western villains likewise act out of conviction. However, unlike heroes, villains despise fidelity, honesty and industry. Villains are indifferent to the values of heroic folk and endeavor to subvert those values by leading common folk astray. Heroes and villains give definition to the predominant characters of the heroic fantasy -- the common folk. Common folk aspire to heroic behavior yet fail to achieve heroic ideals. While heroes and villains act by choice, common folk buy

into but fail to live up to heroic expectations. Weakness is the critical characteristic of common folk, for it excuses transgression and failure to fulfill personal ideals. The heroic fantasy addresses the intrapersonal needs of the country-western community. By providing heroes and villains, the fantasy affirms the ideals to which the community aspires. By providing common folk, the fantasy gives the community characters to whom they can relate. By making real life experiences seem commonplace, the fantasy makes the here-and-now failures of the community seem less important and less personal.

The romantic fantasy addresses the primary interpersonal concerns of the country-western community. The fantasy dramatizes a three act love play which chronicles an endless stream of affairs characterized by "saying hello, saying I love you, saying goodbye."⁴ In act one, common folk court love. In this act, characters who are unsatisfied with current romantic relationships openly court the affections of new lovers, often by pursuing or participating in adulterous affairs. In act two, common folk glorify love. This act is characterized by surrealistic dramas in which lovers are heroic, relationships are immeasurably fulfilling, and common folk are convinced that they have attained a romantic ideal which gives new substance and meaning to life. In act three, glorified love turns to lost love. In this act, lovers

experience romantic failure and are forced to confront the notion that the love they glorified was not ideal. Act three is followed by a reprise of act one in which unsatisfied lovers once more court love, and a new romantic cycle begins.

The escape fantasy addresses the way the country-western community perceives the world in which they pursue intrapersonal and interpersonal satisfaction. There are two distinct contexts of the escape fantasy. In its overt context, common folk seek to escape the pressures of their here-and-now condition. Crisis and tragedy are pictured as inevitable components of everyday life. Overt escape emerges in dramas suggesting that common folk may find respite in subscribing to the simple values associated with rural life. Overt escape also emerges in romantic dramas. In a sense, romance is escape. Despite experiences with unrequited love, common folk seek to escape their here-and-now by pursuing a romantic dream of glorified love, complete with its heroic lovers and fulfilling relationships. In its covert context, common folk seek to escape responsibility for their here-and-now condition. In the covert fantasy, common folk are victimized by disasters only the heroic can endure, and lured by forces only the heroic can resist. In this context, the community accepts responsibility for neither the good nor the bad in their lives.

The symbolic reality revealed in the heroic, romantic and escape fantasies is generally despairing. The dramas which make up the country-western rhetorical vision are commonly set in a here-and-now plagued by intrapersonal, interpersonal and existential strife. The common folk who interact in these dramas are pictured as helpless and disillusioned characters. Each fantasy includes dreams of success and personal fulfillment, yet in each fantasy these dreams are ultimately denied. The heroic fantasy dramatizes heroic behavior, but introduces a self who is more familiar with the behavior of villains. The romantic fantasy dramatizes glorified love, but only as a brief interlude between courting and losing love. Finally, the escape fantasy dramatizes the way things have been or could be, but those dramas inevitably clash with dramas about the disasters of the present.

At the same time, the rhetorical vision serves to sustain the community. Popular country-western songs dramatize experiences with which the rhetorical community can empathize. As Lasch suggests, the fantasies depict, and the community prepares for, the worst the here-and-now can possibly offer.⁵ However, real life disasters fall short of these expectations. The country-western rhetorical vision overstates failure, loneliness and disaster, and by so doing tempers fear and prepares the community to cope with real life experiences.

This study has both sociological and methodological implications. First and foremost, this study has been able to document the world- and life-views of a significant segment of American society. It is interesting to note that the conclusions this study has reached are fundamentally consistent with other sociological descriptions of the 1970s, as well as the results of attitude surveys conducted during the decade.

Three similarities are particularly significant. First, country-western popular songs propagate a contradictory notion of appropriate human behavior. In country-western music, the heroic fantasy functions to sustain images of ideal human behavior. Like the culture which produced the music, country-western songs assume that males and females aspire to quite different role models. Joseph Pleck indicates that in traditional American culture, the heroic male image has been characterized by strength and emotional control.⁶ To this, Michael Cicone and Diane Rubel add confidence, independence and a purely functional approach to romantic relationships.⁷ The country-western heroic fantasy resolutely affirms this traditional male hero. The "cowboy" is strong, independent and alienated from his emotions. He is in constant control of himself, his relationships and his circumstances. In contrast, the traditional female role is described by Nancy Russo as one characterized by a "motherhood mandate."⁸ According to

Russo, in traditional American culture women are kept in the home to fulfill their primary roles of wife and mother. Pleck adds that a woman is traditionally held responsible for providing her male with companionship while soothing his wounds and replenishing his emotional reserves.⁹ The country-western heroic fantasy sustains this sex role in the image of the "good-hearted woman." Heroic women are placed in the home and cast as mothers and wives. They assume responsibility for protecting interpersonal affairs, particularly the romantic fantasy, and understand and comfort the men in their lives.

While heroic behavior affirms the images of traditional males and females, the behavior of the central characters of country-western music, common folk, denies traditional sex roles. Pleck indicates that the male role developing in contemporary American culture is one in which interpersonal skills are increasingly emphasized.¹⁰ According to Pleck, the modern male sees romantic relationships as legitimate sources of emotional support and admits to a capacity for tenderness and emotional intimacy. This is consistent with the ways common men are portrayed in country-western songs. While common men aspire to traditional masculine strength and emotional alienation, they are in fact burdened by interpersonal fears and repressed desires to express themselves emotionally. Similarly, Russo indicates that the female role developing in contemporary American culture is

one which seeks to balance the burdens of motherhood with the psychological needs of modern women.¹¹ Again, the ways country-western songs portray common folk are consistent with modern sex roles. In country-western music, common women protect the image of the heroic woman while they aspire to become modern women. Common women accept the mandate of a culture caught up in a traditional view of womanhood. The songs, however, give voice to a notion that motherhood is a burden of womanhood. They depict women giving in to this burden, all the while fantasizing for themselves the mythical behavior of the traditional male.

That country-western songs construct contradictory images of appropriate human behavior is not surprising. Pleck indicates that in the culture of the 1970s popular images of sex roles were largely contradictory and confusing.¹² Modern roles were emerging and were increasingly representing the values by which behavior was evaluated. However, traditional roles persisted in culturally conservative groups. Given Merriam's observation that music is a vehicle for expressing ideas and emotions not allowed in ordinary discourse, the contradictions between heroic and common behavior suggest a culture in transition from traditional (expressed) to modern (repressed) sex roles.¹³

A second similarity is found in the way country-western narratives support Lasch's notion that contemporary American

14
culture is fundamentally narcissistic. Narcissism, Lasch writes, "defines the moral climate of contemporary society. The conquest of nature and the search for new frontiers have given way to the search for self-fulfillment." 15 In his discussion of cultural narcissism, Lasch identifies two related characteristics indicative of a narcissistic culture -- self absorption and survivalism. Lasch is careful to distinguish between self absorption and lay interpretations of narcissism. "The point," he indicates, "is not that Narcissus falls in love with himself, but, since he fails to recognize his own reflection, that he lacks any conception 16 of the difference between himself and his surrounding." The narcissist is not an egoist, but rather a psyche unable to distinguish between the self and the not-self. While his world revolves around the self, the narcissist is not afflicted with self-love. Narcissism is characterized by "a self threatened with disintegration and by a sense of inner emptiness." 17 The disintegration which underlies self absorption contributes to a sense of self-under-siege and fuels survivalism. Lasch argues that the contemporary narcissist "lives in a state of restless, perpetually 18 unsatisfied desire." The narcissist refuses to accept responsibility for his condition, preferring to believe that he is victimized by forces beyond his control. Feelings of victimization are manifested in a concern with psychic survival as the narcissist arms himself emotionally against

the onslaught of everyday life, conducting himself as if he
lives in impossible circumstances.

The country-western rhetorical vision is largely consistent with Lasch's notion of cultural narcissism. For instance, self absorption is evident in the conflicting images which make up the heroic fantasy. On the one hand, country-western songs suggest an exaggerated sense of self-worth, manifested in grandiose boasting and a preoccupation with martyrdom and delusions of self-sacrifice. On the other hand, the songs suggest an impotent self, victimized by fate and burdened by psychic depression. Many country-western songs suggest a general sense of unworthiness, manifested in drinking, carousing and ignoring family responsibilities. Survivalism is likewise evident. The conviction that disaster is imminent, and refusal to accept responsibility for its approach, sustain a number of country-western themes. They are particularly important to the romantic fantasy. In country-western songs, romance is survival. Characters who must live without love are pictured as lonely and despairing. Common folk survive this despair by pursuing a contrived notion of romance. Characters convince themselves that each romance attains the romantic ideal, and delude themselves into believing that life has taken on new substance and meaning. Ultimately, however, surrealism fades and romance seems neither sexually nor emotionally satisfying. Spurred by feelings of

victimization, idealism is supplanted by frustration. Frustration is relieved by the next romance, and country characters enter into a progression of romantic affairs offering temporary respite from a threatening existence.

A final similarity is found in the correspondence between the constructed "realities" of country-western music and results of attitude surveys conducted during the decade of the 1970s. Between 1972 and 1980, the National Opinion Research Center conducted a series of general social surveys covering a wide spectrum of American life.²⁰ Many of the attitudes expressed by survey respondents confirm elements of the country-western rhetorical vision. Three aspects of the NORC data are particularly noteworthy. First, opinion surveys confirm that during the 1970s Americans were disillusioned with their life circumstances. While the vast majority of the Americans polled purported to be "very happy" or "pretty happy," responses to more specific questions reveal a sense of disillusionment similar to that suggested by country-western music.²¹ For instance, 55% of the respondents admitted that they found life "routine" or "dull," and 56% felt that "the lot of the average man [was] getting worse."²² The disillusioned respondents also felt impotent to alter their circumstances. A majority believed that powerful people were taking advantage of the powerless, that elected officials were not really interested in the plight of the common man, that

other people did not really seem to care about these circumstances, that there did not seem to be anyone to whom they could really turn, and that their own feelings counted for very little.²³

A second noteworthy aspect of the NORC data is that they confirm the country-western notion that interpersonal relations play an important role in overt escape. Respondents were given an opportunity to rate how they felt different aspects of their lives contributed to their overall sense of satisfaction. Of the five areas, the two most frequently rated as major contributors were family life and friendships.²⁴ Additionally, when married respondents were asked to describe their marriages, an overwhelming 97% replied that their marriages were "very happy" or "pretty happy."²⁵ While this might seem to contradict the revolving romance depicted in country-western songs, it is in fact consistent with the glorified love component of the romantic fantasy. The question was asked only of people who were married at the time the surveys were conducted, excluding those respondents courting love or mired in lost love. Thus, the NORC data are consistent with the escape fantasy corollary which holds that glorified romance serves as a temporary respite from disillusionment and frustration.

A final noteworthy aspect of the NORC data is that they confirm the Christian orientation of middle America. Almost nine of every ten respondents professed a Christian

26
religious preference. Furthermore, of those professing a
religious belief, a large majority considered themselves to
be strongly or somewhat strongly religious.
27

The second implication of this study relates to rhetorical music criticism as method. As this study demonstrates, rhetorical music criticism is a potentially profitable approach to the study of contemporary culture. Popular songs are replete with references to the personae, plots and settings which dramatize socially constructed realities. Furthermore, the value of this critical approach is related to general characteristics of popular music communication rather than to attributes of particular streams of popular music.

Communication scholars have generally focused their interest in music communication on music in its functional context, limiting their discussion to songs which are intentionally or existentially persuasive. However, this study has argued that songs which merely satisfy personal expressive or pecuniary drives are likewise important rhetorical transactions. In these circumstances, the rhetorical implications of music communication are more appropriately assessed in a critical context, or according to what critics hope to learn from the criticism.

Most rhetorical critics who have dealt with music communication have subscribed to what may be appropriately called artist-centered and situation-centered models of

rhetorical music criticism. These models have been derived from accepted approaches to rhetorical criticism and adapted to the particular demands of musical messages. This study has advanced a third model of rhetorical music criticism called audience-centered criticism. This model is grounded in Wraga's belief that public messages reflect the concerns of popular audiences, as well as in research in psychology and ethnomusicology suggesting that music serves as a vehicle through which audiences vicariously express beliefs and values. Audience-centered criticism views music communication as a rhetorical event, or the product of interaction between an act and its audience.

Bormann indicates that shared fantasies are coherent accounts of past and present experiences which provide participants with ways to think about and simplify their future.²⁸ The fantasies dramatized in the narratives of popular songs provide a framework within which a particular rhetorical community can make sense out of and learn to cope with their day-to-day experiences. What these musical messages mean to the people who participate in the country-western rhetorical vision was best expressed by an anonymous country performer. "We're not just musicians, you know. We mean more than that to the people who come to hear us. . . . We bring them themselves, only in somewhat more dramatic form. Not too dramatic, mind you. But the drama ain't made

up. These folks know the story line, just from living, but
they like to hear it put to music."²⁹

CHAPTER SIX NOTES

1. Jens Lund, "Fundamentalism, Racism, and Political Reaction in Country Music," in The Sounds of Social Change, eds. R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A. Peterson (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 79.
2. Robert Beckley and H. Paul Chalfant, "Contrasting Images of Alcohol and Drug Use in Country and Rock Music," Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education 25 (Fall 1979), 44.
3. John Buckley, "Country Music and American Values," Popular Music and Society 6 (Spring 1979), 299.
4. "Saying Hello, Saying I Love You, Saying Goodbye," by Jeff Berry, Dene Hofheinz and Brad Burg, copyright Doug Kirshner Music and Steeple Chase Music (Recorded by Jim Ed Brown and Helen Cornelius on RCA Records, 1977).
5. Christopher Lasch, The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times (W. W. Norton and Company: New York, 1984), 62.
6. Joseph H. Pleck, "The Male Sex Role: Definitions, Problems, and Sources of Change," Journal of Social Issues 32 (Number 3, 1976), 156.
7. Michael V. Cicone and Diane M. Ruble, "Beliefs About Males," Journal of Social Issues 34 (Number 1, 1978), 5.
8. Nancy Filipe Russo, "The Motherhood Mandate," Journal of Social Issues 32 (Number 2, 1976), 143.
9. Pleck, "The Male Sex Role," 157.
10. Pleck, "The Male Sex Role," 156-157.
11. Russo, "The Motherhood Mandate," 144.
12. Pleck, "The Male Sex Role," 155-156.
13. Alan P. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 219.

14. Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), xvii.

15. Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, 25.

16. Lasch, The Minimal Self, 184.

17. Lasch, The Minimal Self, 57.

18. Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, xvi.

19. Lasch, The Minimal Self, 94-95.

20. James Allan Davis, General Social Surveys, 1972-1980 (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1980).

21. Davis, General Social Surveys, 102. The question was "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days -- would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?" The item was included in each year from 1972-1978. The cumulative totals were: 34% very happy, 53% pretty happy and 13% not too happy.

22. Davis, General Social Surveys, 103, 133. The first question was "In general, do you find life exciting, pretty routine, or dull?" The item was included in 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1977. The cumulative totals were: 44% exciting, 50% routine and 5% dull. The second item asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statement "In spite of what some people say, the lot (situation/condition) of the average man is getting worse, not better." The item was included in 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1977. The cumulative totals were: 56% agree, 40% disagree and 3% don't know.

23. Davis, General Social Surveys, 101, 134. The first item asked respondents to agree or disagree with the statement "Most people with power try to take advantage of people like yourself." The item was included in 1978. The totals were: 56% agree, 41% disagree and 3% don't know. The second statement was "Most public officials (people in public office) are not really interested in the problems of the average man." The item was included in 1973, 1974, 1976, and 1977. The cumulative totals were: 63% agree, 35% disagree and 3% don't know. The third statement was "Most people don't really care what happens to the next fellow." The item was included in 1973, 1974 and 1976. The cumulative totals were: 55% agree, 44% disagree and 1% don't know. The fourth statement was "These days a person doesn't really know whom he can count on." The item was included in 1973, 1974 and 1976. The cumulative totals were: 71% agree,

28% disagree and 1% don't know. The final statement was "What you think doesn't count very much anymore." The item was included in 1978. The totals were: 55% agree, 39% disagree and 6% don't know.

24. Davis, General Social Surveys, 104-105. The five items, in ascending order, were "The city or place you live in," "Your non-working activities -- hobbies and so on," "Your health and physical condition," "Your friendships," and "Your family life." The items were included each year from 1973-1978. The cumulative totals for friendships were: 30% a very great deal, 40% a great deal, 15% quite a bit, 9% a fair amount, 3% some, 2% a little and 1% none. The cumulative totals for family life were: 41% a very great deal, 34% a great deal, 11% quite a bit, 7% a fair amount, 3% some, 2% a little and 2% none.

25. Davis, General Social Surveys, 102. The item was "Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage? Would you say that your marriage is very happy, pretty happy or not too happy?" The item was included each year from 1973-1978. The cumulative totals were: 67% very happy, 30% pretty happy and 3% not very happy.

26. Davis, General Social Surveys, 89. The question was "What is your religious preference?" The item was included each year from 1972 to 1978. The cumulative totals were: 64% Protestant, 25% Catholic, 2% Jewish, 1% other and 7% none.

27. Davis, General Social Surveys, 90. The question was "Would you call yourself a strong . . . or a not very strong . . . ?" The item was included each year from 1974 to 1978. The cumulative totals were: 45% strong, 21% somewhat strong and 34% not very strong.

28. Ernest Bormann, The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), 10.

29. Nat Hentoff, "Willie Nelson: Country Outlaw," The Progressive (January 1981), 47.

APPENDIX A
BILLBOARD "TOP COUNTRY SINGLES"
1970-1979

1970

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Hello Darlin	Conway Twitty
2	Tennessee Birdwalk	Jack Blanchard & Misty Morgan
3	It's Just A Matter Of Time	Sonny James
4	Is Anybody Goin' To San Antone	Charley Pride
5	My Love	Sonny James
6	Fightin' Side of Me	Merle Haggard
7	Don't Keep Me Hanging On	Sonny James
8	Wonder Could I Live There Anymore	Charley Pride
9	He Loves Me All The Way	Tammy Wynette
10	My Woman, My Woman, My Wife	Marty Robbins
11	Pool Shark	Dave Dudley
12	A Week In A Country Jail	Tom T. Hall
13	For The Good Times	Ray Price
14	I Do My Swinging At Home	David Houston
15	Baby Baby	David Houston
16	She's A Little Bit Country	George Hamilton
17	Heart Over Mind	Mel Tillis
18	Long Long Texas Road	Roy Drusky
19	Once More With Feeling	Jerry Lee Lewis
20	If I Ever Fall In Love	Faron Young
21	If I Were A Carpenter	Johnny Cash & June Carter
22	Kansas City Song	Buck Owens
23	I'll See Him Through	Tammy Wynette
24	When A Man Loves A Woman	Billy Walker
25	Love Is A Sometimes Thing	Bill Anderson

"Top Country Singles," Billboard, 17 October 1970,
WOCM-8.

1971

Rank	Title	Artist
1	I Won't Mention It Again	Ray Price
2	Help Me Make It Through The Night	Sammi Smith
3	When You're Hot You're Hot	Jerry Reed
4	Empty Arms	Sonny James
5	I'm Just Me	Charley Pride
6	How Much More Can She Stand	Conway Twitty
7	Rose Garden	Lynn Anderson
8	You're My Man	Lynn Anderson
9	I'd Rather Love You	Charley Pride
10	After The Fire Is Gone	Conway Twitty & Loretta Lynn
11	Bright Lights, Big City	Sonny James
12	Just One Time	Connie Smith
13	Ruby	Buck Owens
14	We Sure Can Love Each Other	Tammy Wynette
15	Knock Three Times	Billy Craddock
16	I Wanna Be Free	Loretta Lynn
17	Come Sundown	Bobby Bare
18	A Woman Always Knows	David Houston
19	Promised Land	Freddy Weller
20	Step Aside	Faron Young
21	Touching Home	Jerry Lee Lewis
22	Always Remember	Bill Anderson
23	Good Lovin'	Tammy Wynette
24	Gwen	Tommy Overstreet
25	Pine Grove	Compton Brothers

"Top Country Singles," Billboard, 16 October 1971,
WOCM-10.

1972

Rank	Title	Artist
1	My Hang Up Is You	Freddie Hart
2	Happiest Girl In The Whole USA	Donna Fargo
3	It's Gonna Take A Little Bit Longer	Charley Pride
4	Think About It/Chantilly Lace	Jerry Lee Lewis
5	It's Four In The Morning	Faron Young
6	Carolyn	Merle Haggard
7	Eleven Roses	Hank Williams, Jr.
8	One's On The Way	Loretta Lynn
9	(Lost Her Love) On Our First Date	Conway Twitty
10	Made In Japan	Buck Owens
11	Woman (Sensuous Woman)	Don Gibson
12	Good Hearted Woman	Waylon Jennings
13	Only Love Can Break A Heart	Sonny James
14	Grandma Harp	Merle Haggard
15	Delta Dawn	Tanya Tucker
16	Cry	Lynn Anderson
17	To Get To You	Jerry Wallace
18	Bedtime Story	Tammy Wynette
19	Ann (Don't Go Runnin')	Tommy Overstreet
20	A Thing Called Love	Johnny Cash
21	All His Children	Charley Pride
22	Borrowed Angel	Mel Street
23	Best Part Of Living	Marty Robbins
24	When You Save Love	Bob Luman
25	All The Lonely Women In The World	Bill Anderson

"Top Country Singles," Billboard, 21 October 1972,
WOCM-10.

1973

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Behind Closed Doors	Charlie Rich
2	Teddy Bear Song	Barbara Fairchild
3	Why Me	Kris Kristofferson
4	Satin Sheets	Jeanne Pruett
5	What's Your Mamma's Name	Tanya Tucker
6	Amanda/Come Early Morning	Don Williams
7	Love Is The Foundation	Loretta Lynn
8	Kids Say The Darndest Things	Tammy Wynette
9	Trip To Heaven	Freddy Hart
10	Don't Fight The Feelings Of Love	Charley Pride
11	Come Live With Me	Roy Clark
12	You Always Come Back	Johnny Rodriguez
13	Keep Me In Mind	Lynn Anderson
14	The Lord Knows I'm Drinking	Cal Smith
15	Superman	Donna Fargo
16	'Til I Get It Right	Tammy Wynette
17	Lord, Mr. Ford	Jerry Reed
18	Everybody's Had The Blues	Merle Haggard
19	Super Kind Of Woman	Freddy Hart
20	You Were Always There	Donna Fargo
21	Yellow Ribbon	Johnny Carver
22	Mr. Lovemaker	Johnny Paycheck
23	Louisiana Woman, Mississippi Man	Loretta Lynn & Conway Twitty
24	Good Things	David Houston
25	I Love You More And More Everyday	Merle Haggard

"Top Country Singles -- 1973," Billboard, 20 October 1973, WOCM-12.

1974

Rank	Title	Artist
1	The Most Beautiful Girl	Charlie Rich
2	Guess Who	Jerry Wallace
3	If We Make It Through December	Merle Haggard
4	Another Lonely Song	Tammy Wynette
5	I Love	Tom T. Hall
6	He Thinks I Still Care	Anne Murray
7	There Won't Be Anymore	Charlie Rich
8	The Last Love Song	Hank Williams
9	Rub It In	Billy Craddock
10	Marie Laveau	Bobby Bare
11	A Very Special Love Song	Charlie Rich
12	Let Me Be There	Olivia Newton-John
13	We're Gonna Hold On	George Jones & Tammy Wynette
14	If You Love Me	Olivia Newton-John
15	Midnight, Me And The Blues	Mel Tillis
16	I'm Still Loving You	Joe Stampley
17	Jolene	Dolly Parton
18	Would You Lay With Me	Tanya Tucker
19	I'll Never Break These Chains	Tommy Overstreet
20	Love Song	Anne Murray
21	The Grand Tour	George Jones
22	If You Can Feel It	Freddie Hart
23	No Charge	Melba Montgomery
24	Somewhere Between Love And Tomorrow	Roy Clark
25	Ridin' My Thumb To Mexico	Johnny Rodriguez

"Top Country Singles -- 1974," Billboard, 19 October 1974, WOCM-12.

1975

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Reconsider Me	Narvel Felts
2	It's Time To Pay The Fiddler	Cal Smith
3	You're My Best Friend	Don Williams
4	Wrong Road Again	Crystal Gayle
5	Trouble In Paradise	Loretta Lynn
6	Lizzie And The Rainman	Tanya Tucker
7	Before The Next Teardrop Falls	Freddy Fender
8	I See The Want To In Your Eyes	Conway Twitty
9	Window Up Above	Mickey Gilley
10	Tryin' To Beat The Morning Home	T.G. Sheppard
11	Devil In The Bottle	T.G. Sheppard
12	I'm Not Lisa	Jessi Coulter
13	Touch The Hand	Conway Twitty
14	I Can't Help It	Linda Ronstadt
15	Get On My Love Train	La Costa
16	(Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Did Somebody Wrong Song	B.J. Thomas
17	Love Is Like A Butterfly	Dolly Parton
18	Country Is	Tom T. Hall
19	Always Wanting You	Merle Haggard
20	Misty	Ray Stevens
21	When Will I Be Loved	Linda Ronstadt
22	Kentucky Gambler	Merle Haggard
23	Just Get Up And Close The Door	Johnny Rodriguez
24	Blanket On The Ground	Billie Jo Spears
25	Take Me Home Somewhere	Joe Stampley

"1975 Country Music Chart Winners: Top Country
Singles," Billboard, 18 October 1975, WOCM-12.

1976

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Convoy	C.W. McCall
2	Good Hearted Woman	Waylon & Willie
3	The Door Is Always Open	Dave & Sugar
4	I'll Get Over You	Crystal Gayle
5	One Piece At A Time	Johnny Cash
6	Teddy Bear	Red Sovine
7	Stranger	Johnny Duncan
8	Rocky	Dickey Lee
9	El Paso City	Marty Robbins
10	I'm Sorry	John Denver
11	Broken Lady	Larry Gatlin
12	All These Things	Joe Stampley
13	Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way/Bob Wills Is Still King	Waylon Jennings
14	Faster Horses	Tom T. Hall
15	'Til The Rivers All Run Dry	Don Williams
16	It's All In The Movies	Merle Haggard
17	Don't The Girls All Get Prettier At Closing Time	Mickey Gilley
18	Drinkin' My Baby Off My Mind	Eddie Rabbitt
19	Secret Love	Freddy Fender
20	Sometimes	Bill Anderson
21	I Like Beer	Tom T. Hall
22	You'll Lose A Good Thing	Freddy Fender
23	Easy As Pie	Billy Craddock
24	Love Put A Song In My Heart	Johnny Rodriguez
25	'Til I can Make It On My Own	Tammy Wynette

"Top Country Singles," Billboard, 16 October 1976,
WOCM-10.

1977

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Luckenbach, Texas	Waylon Jennings
2	Lucille	Kenny Rogers
3	Rolling With The Flow	Charlie Rich
4	She's Pulling Me Back Again	Mickey Gilley
5	Somebody Somewhere	Loretta Lynn
6	She's Got You	Loretta Lynn
7	It Was Almost Like A Song	Ronnie Milsap
8	Some Broken Hearts Never Mend	Don Williams
9	Don't Be Angry	Donna Fargo
10	Paper Rosie	Gene Watson
11	9,999,999 Tears	Dickey Lee
12	Play Guitar Play	Conway Twitty
13	I Don't Wanna Cry	Larry Gatlin
14	I Can't Help Myself	Eddie Rabbitt
15	Married But Not To Each Other	Barbara Mandrell
16	A Song In The Night	Johnny Duncan
17	Thinkin' Of A Rendezvous	Johnny Duncan
18	Saying Hello, Saying I Love You, Saying Goodbye	Jim Ed Brown & Helen Cornelius
19	Her Name Is	George Jones
20	Southern Nights	Glen Campbell
21	I'm Gonna Love You	Dave & Sugar
22	Way Down/Pledging My Love	Elvis Presley
23	You And Me	Tammy Wynette
24	Slide Off Your Satin Sheets	Johnny Paycheck
25	I'll Do It All Over Again	Crystal Gayle

"No. 1 Country Single," Billboard, 15 October 1977,
WOCM-8.

1978

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Here You Come Again	Dolly Parton
2	Heaven's Just A Sin Away	The Kendalls
3	Mamma's Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys/I Can Get Off On You	Waylon & Willie
4	Only One Love In My Life	Ronnie Milsap
5	Take This Job And Shove It	Johnny Paycheck
6	Don't Break The Heart That Loves You	Margo Smith
7	Everytime Two Fools Collide	Kenny Rogers & Dottie West
8	Do You Know You Are My Sunshine	Statler Brothers
9	Someone Loves You Honey	Charley Pride
10	The Wurlitzer Prize/Lookin' For A Feelin'	Waylon Jennings
11	Don't It Make My Brown Eyes Blue	Crystal Gayle
12	Out Of My Head And Back In My Bed	Loretta Lynn
13	It's All Wrong But It's All Right/ Two Doors Down	Dolly Parton
14	What A Difference You Made In My Life	Ronnie Milsap
15	Georgia On My Mind	Willie Nelson
16	Blue Bayou	Linda Ronstadt
17	I'm Just A Country Boy	Don Williams
18	She Can Put Her Shoes Under My Bed	Johnny Duncan
19	It Only Hurts For A Little While	Margo Smith
20	Hearts On Fire	Eddie Rabbitt
21	Middle Age Crazy	Jerry Lee Lewis
22	Talking In Your Sleep	Crystal Gayle
23	Two Moe Bottles Of Wine	Emmylou Harris
24	More To Me	Charley Pride
25	Love Or Something Like It	Kenny Rogers

"Singles Of The Year," Billboard, 21 October 1978,
WOCM-16.

1979

Rank	Title	Artist
1	Sleeping Single In A Double Bed	Barbara Mandrell
2	I Just Fall In Love Again	Anne Murray
3	If I Said You had A Beautiful Body	Bellamy Brothers
4	Amanda	Waylon Jennings
5	Every Which Way But Loose	Eddie Rabbitt
6	Golden Tears	Dave & Sugar
7	Heartbreaker	Dolly Parton
8	She Believes In Me	Kenny Rogers
9	The Gamble	Kenny Rogers
10	You're The Only One	Dolly Parton
11	Why Have You Left The One You Left Me For	Crystal Gayle
12	Nobody Likes Sad Songs	Ronnie Milsap
13	I've Always Been Crazy	Waylon Jennings
14	Where Do I Put Her Memory	Charley Pride
15	All I Ever Need Is You	Kenny Rogers & Dottie West
16	Backside Of Thirty	John Conlee
17	Lady Lay Down	John Conlee
18	Sweet Desire	The Kendalls
19	(If Loving You Is Wrong) I Don't Want To Be Right	Barbara Mandrell
20	I Just Want To Love You	Eddie Rabbitt
21	Shadows In The Moonlight	Anne Murray
22	Don't Take It Away	Conway Twitty
23	Lay Down Beside Me	Don Williams
24	Back On My Mind Again/Santa Barbara	Ronnie Milsap
25	Farewell Party	Gene Watson

"Top Singles," Billboard 13 October 1979, WOCM-8.

APPENDIX B
SAMPLE CODED SONG AND COMPLETED CODING SHEET

Sample Coded Song

Song Code: 1972-5
 Title: It's Four In The Morning
 Composer: J. Chestnut
 Publisher: Passkey Music
 Artist: Faron Young
 Label: Mercury Records

3E2 [It's four in the morning and once more the dawning
 Just woke up the wanting in me]

2B6 [Wishing I'd never met her, knowing if I forget her
 How much better off she would be]

The longer I hold on and the longer this goes on
 The harder that it's gonna be
 But it's four in the morning and once more the dawning
 Just woke up the wanting in me

2C2 [I never deserved her, God knows when I hurt her
 2A2 That's the last thing that I want to do]

She tries but she can't tell how she feels
 But I know too well what she's going through

2A2 [If I love her so much I don't know why I can't do
 The right thing and just let her be]

But it's four in the morning and once more the dawning
 Just woke up the wanting in me.

2A2 [Last night I told her this time it's all over
 Making ten times I've told her good bye
 Last night we broke up, this morning I woke up
 And for the tenth time I'm changing my mind]

1C1a [I saw more love in her eyes when I left her
 Than most foolish men will ever see]

And it's four in the morning and once more the dawning
 Just woke up the wanting in me.

Completed Sample Coding Sheet

Song: 1972-5 "It's Four In The Morning" Faron Young

Codings	Comments
[1st Person Narrative]	
2nd Person Narrative	
3rd Person Narrative	
General Orientation	
1 Past	
a Positive	
b Negative	
c Uncertain	
[2] Here-and-now	
a Positive	
[b] Negative	
c Uncertain	
3 Future	
a Positive	
b Negative	
c Uncertain	
I Interpersonal	
A Romantic relationship	
1 Existing relationship	
a Positive reference	
[b] Negative reference	<-- Core Theme
c Uncertain reference	
2 Severed relationship	
a Positive reference	
b Negative reference	
c Uncertain reference	
3 Uncertain status	
a Positive reference	
b Negative reference	
c Uncertain reference	
4 Physical	
5 Illicit	
B Nonromantic relationship	
C Character Images	
1 Loved Mate	
[a] Positive image	<-- Loving person
b Negative image	
2 Unloved Mate	
3 Victim of love	
4 Correspondent	
5 Family character	
6 Miscellaneous character	

Completed Sample Coding Sheet (continued)

II Intrapersonal

- A Self concept
 - 1 Positive
 - [2] Negative <-- Undeserving, Indecisive
- B Emotional expressions
 - 1 Jealousy
 - 2 Patriotism
 - 3 Nostalgia/Pastoral
 - 4 Loneliness/Blues
 - 5 Revenge
 - [6] Regret/Shame/Sorrow
 - 7 Sympathy
 - 8 Love
 - 9 Happiness
- C Metaphysics
 - 1 Religion
 - a Theology
 - [b] Expletive <-- God
 - 2 Other

III World View

- A Money
- B Alcohol/Drugs
- C Politics
- D Quality of Life
- E Time
 - 1 Force
 - [2] Setting <-- Night, Dawning/Morning
- F Media
- G Place
 - 1 Geography
 - 2 Setting

APPENDIX C
COMPILED CORE THEME AND THEME FRAGMENT CODINGS

Table 11 -- Core Theme Codings

Category	Total	Pct*
Type One (Interpersonal) Themes	200	77.82
Romantic Love Theme	182	70.82
Severed Romance Theme	80	31.13
Established Romance Theme	77	29.96
Illicit Romance Theme	22	8.56
Undefined Status Romance Theme	2	.78
Physical Romance Theme	1	.39
Character Theme	16	6.23
Love Mate Figures	10	3.89
Third Person Figures	4	1.56
Family Figures	1	.39
Correspondent Figures	1	.39
Family Love Theme	2	.78
Type Two (Intrapersonal) Themes	29	11.78
Emotional Outlook Theme	18	7.00
Nostalgia	7	2.72
Lonliness	5	1.95
Regret	3	1.17
Sympathy	2	.78
Jealousy	1	.39
Self Concept Theme	8	3.11
Negative Image	6	2.33
Positive Image	2	.78
Philosophical Theme	3	1.17
Type Three (World View) Themes	22	8.56
Quality of Life Theme	15	5.84
Hard Life	13	5.06
Good Life	2	0.78
Money Theme	3	1.17
Political Theme	3	1.17
Media Theme	1	.39
Type Four (Novelty) Theme	6	2.33

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 12 -- Theme Fragment Codings

Category	Total*	Pct+
World View Theme Fragments	147	57.20
Time Awareness	80	31.13
Place Awareness	62	24.12
Alcohol	27	10.51
Media	23	8.95
Quality of Life	14	5.45
Money	10	3.89
Politics	1	.39
Self Concept Theme Fragments	138	53.70
Negative Images	101	39.30
Love Slave	65	25.29
Weak	21	8.17
Unworthy	6	2.33
Insensitive	3	1.17
Unaware	4	1.56
Unrealistic	2	.78
Indecisive	2	.78
Positive Images	51	19.84
Faithful Lover	24	9.34
Other-oriented	12	4.67
Rebounder	7	2.72
Free Spirited	4	1.56
Good Provider	2	.78
Realistic	2	.78
Proud	1	.39
Strong	1	.39
Character Theme Fragments	116	45.14
Good Love Mates	50	19.46
Bad Love Mates	44	17.12
Unloved Mates	15	5.84
Correspondents	8	3.11
Family Figures	8	3.11
Powerbrokers	3	1.17
Cowboys	2	.78
Truckers	2	.78
Dissenters	2	.78
Welfare Recipients	1	.39

*Subtotals are greater than totals where individual songs make multiple references.

+Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Table 12.(continued)

Category	Total*	Pct+
Emotional Outlook Theme Fragments	77	29.96
Love	40	15.56
Loneliness	22	8.56
Regret	12	4.67
Happiness	8	3.11
Nostalgia	6	2.33
Jealousy	3	1.17
Patriotism	1	.39
Revenge	1	.39
Sympathy	1	.39
Romantic Love Theme Fragments	74	28.79
Physical Romance	48	18.68
Established Romance	18	7.00
Illicit Romance	16	6.23
Severed Romance	9	3.50
Religion Theme Fragments	44	17.12
Theological Expressions	25	9.73
Lord	10	3.89
God	8	3.11
Heaven	7	2.72
Devil	3	1.17
Jesus	2	.78
Christian	1	.39
Mr. Lovemaker	1	.39
Expletive Expressions	25	9.73
Lord	22	8.56
Heaven	3	1.17
God	1	.39

*Subtotals are greater than totals where individual songs make multiple references.

+Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

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- "Do You Know You Are My Sunshine." Composed by Don Reid and Harold Reid. Copyright American Cowboy Music Company. Recorded by The Statler Brothers on Mercury Records, 1978.
- "Don't Be Angry." Composed by Wade Jackson. Copyright Acuff-Rose Publications, Incorporated. Recorded by Donna Fargo on ABC/Dot Records, 1977.
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- "Don't Fight The Feelings Of Love." Composed by John Schweers. Copyright Pi-Gem Music, Incorporated. Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Records, 1973.
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- "Everybody's Had The Blues." Composed by Merle Haggard. Copyright Shade Tree Music. Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1973.
- "Everytime Two Fools Collide." Composed by Jeff Tweel and Jan Dye. Copyright United Artists Music Company, Incorporated and Window Music Publishing Company, Incorporated. Recorded by Kenny Rogers and Dottie West on United Artists Records, 1978.
- "Farewell Party." Composed by L. Williams. Copyright Western Hills Music, Incorporated. Recorded by Gene Watson on Capitol Records, 1979.
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- "Golden Tears." Composed by John Schweers. Copyright Jack
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Willie Nelson. Copyright Hall-Clement Publications.
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- "Here You Come Again." Composed by Barry Mann and Cynthia
Weil. Copyright Screen Gems-EMI Music, Incorporated
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- "(Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong
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- "How Much More Can She Stand." Composed by Harry Compton.
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- "I've Always Been Crazy." Composed by Waylon Jennings.
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- "If I Ever Fall In Love Again." Composed by Tom T. Hall.
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- "If I Said You Had A Beautiful Body (Would You Hold It Against Me)?" Composed by David Bellamy. Copyright Famous Music Corporation and Bellamy Brothers Music. Recorded by The Bellamy Brothers on Warner/Curb Records, 1979.
- "If I Were A Carpenter." Composed by T. Hardin. Copyright Koppelman-Rubin Enterprises, Incorporated. Recorded by Johnny Cash and June Carter on Columbia Records, 1970.
- "If Loving You Is Wrong I Don't Want To Be Right." Composed by Homer Baines, Raymond Jackson and Carl Hamilton. Copyright East Memphis Music. Recorded by Barbara Mandrell on MCA Records, 1979.
- "If We Make It Through December." Composed by Merle Haggard. Copyright Shade Tree Music. Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1974.
- "If You Can't Feel It (It Ain't There)." Composed by Freddie Hart. Copyright Blue Book Music. Recorded by Freddie Hart on Capitol Records, 1974.
- "If You Love Me (Let Me Know)." Composed by John Rostill. Copyright Petal Music Limited. Recorded by Olivia Newton-John on MCA Records, 1974.
- "Is Anybody Goin' To San Antone." Composed by Dave Kirby and Glenn Martin. Copyright Tree Publishing Company, Incorporated. Recorded by Charley Pride on RCA Victor Records, 1970.
- "It Only Hurts For A Little While." Composed by Mack David and Fred Spielman. Copyright Advanced Music Corporation. Recorded by Margo Smith on Warner Brothers Records, 1978.
- "It Was Almost Like A Song." Composed by Archie Jordan. Copyright Jack and Bill Music Company and Casa David Music. Recorded by Ronnie Milsap on RCA Records, 1977.
- "It's All In The Movies." Composed by Merle Haggard and K. Haggard. Copyright Shade Tree Music, Incorporated. Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1976.

- "It's All Wrong, But It's Alright." Composed by Dolly Parton. Copyright Velvet Apple Music. Recorded by Dolly Parton on MCA Records, 1978.
- "It's Four In The Morning." Composed by J. Chestnut. Copyright Passkey Music. Recorded by Faron Young on Mercury Records, 1972.
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- "Just One time." Composed by Don Gibson. Copyright Acuff-Rose Publications, Incorporated. Recorded by Connie Smith on RCA Victor Records, 1971.
- "Kansas City Song." Composed by Buck Owens and R. Simpson. Copyright Blue Book Music. Recorded by Buck Owens on Capitol Records, 1970.
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- "Kentucky Gambler." Composed by Dolly Parton. Copyright Owepar Publishing Company. Recorded by Merle Haggard on Capitol Records, 1975.
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