"What Happened to the Post-War Dream?": Nostalgia, Trauma, and Affect in British Rock of the 1960s and 1970s

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Music Musicology: History)
in the University of Michigan
2018

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DEDICATION

For Charles and Bené S. Cox, whose unwavering faith in me has always shone through, even in the hardest times. The world is a better place because you both are in it.

And for Laura Ingram Ellis: as much as I wanted this dissertation to spring forth from my head fully formed, like Athena from Zeus's forehead, it did not happen that way. It happened one sentence at a time, some more excruciatingly wrought than others, and you were there for every single sentence. So these sentences I have written especially for you, Laura, with my deepest and most profound gratitude.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although it sometimes felt like a solitary process, I wrote this dissertation with the help and support of several different people, all of whom I deeply appreciate. First and foremost on this list is Prof. Charles Hiroshi Garrett, whom I learned so much from and whose patience and wisdom helped shape this project. I am very grateful to committee members Prof. James Borders, Prof. Walter Everett, Prof. Jane Fulcher, and Prof. Kali Israel for their invaluable insight and thought-provoking questions throughout the development of this dissertation.

Also important during this time was the unending well of moral support from family members Charles and Bené S. Cox, Robert and Sara Cox, David Cox, and Beth Brock, as well as from dear friends Laura, Matt, Emma, and Natalie Ellis; Caroline, Brett, and Luman Colasacco; Liz, Herman, and Noa Lui; Irene Wu; Molly, Bryant, Walter, and Natalie Chavez; Rebecca Fülöp; Christy Wall Kuhlman; and Janet Higgins. Thank you all for being in my life.

I extend special thanks to Will Phillips for his assistance with editing musical excerpts and to Dr. Felicia Brabec for her suggestions on psychological resources regarding trauma.

My time as a graduate student in the musicology department at the University of Michigan has been transformative, and I have my colleagues and professors to thank for that, including the entire musicology faculty, Prof. Paul Anderson, Prof. Stephen Rush, and Dean Jason Corey, as well as my fellow student cohort, in particular Elizabeth Batiuk, Dan Blim, Kristen Clough, Alison Desimone, Megan Hill, Sarah Gerk, Jessica Getman, Meredith Juergens,

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ABSTRACT

The widespread popularity of British rock musicians in the early 1960s presented the world with

a postwar-dream version of Britain as a modern, thriving cultural force in the global economy.

Over the course of the decade, however, many of these musicians increasingly turned toward the

nation's war-torn past as a source for musical inspiration. No longer were they only popular

culture ambassadors for a modern Britain, but they also came to serve as representatives of a

generation scorched by their nation's history, particularly by the aftershocks of World War II.

Although members of pioneering groups such as the Beatles, the Kinks, the Who, and Pink Floyd

were all born in the early 1940s—much too late to have had experience on the frontline—

memories of World War II haunted them. The rubble left from buildings decimated during the

German Blitz attacks, family war stories, and national rationing into the late 1950s were among

the constant reminders of near defeat during the war and the struggle to survive afterward amidst

a crumbling empire.

This dissertation explores how British rock musicians sought to engage with their

identities as members of the postwar generation and to challenge their inherited national history.

By applying theories addressing identity, memory, and nostalgia from Svetlana Boym, Pierre

Nora, and Janelle Wilson, chapter 1 demonstrates how the Beatles in the film and soundtrack

Magical Mystery Tour (1967) constructed a world deeply rooted in postwar nostalgia. Drawing

on the works of Clay Routledge and Lawrence Kramer, chapter 2 illustrates how the

Kinks employed the affective ambiguity of nostalgia as a tool for cultural criticism in their

concept album *Arthur: Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1969). Theories on

trauma and denial by Julie P. Sutton and Judith Herman inform chapter 3, which examines how

the Who's rock opera *Tommy* (1969) reflects a culture of postwar traumatic denial. Concluding

the dissertation, chapter 4 incorporates trauma theory from works by Shoshana Felman, Cathy

Caruth, and Maria Cizmic, to show how Pink Floyd's rock opera *The Wall* (1979) functions as a

traumatic narrative through musical disruption, creates a soundscape built from traumatic events,

and emphasizes the role of the listener as witness.

INTRODUCTION

The intellectual seeds for this project were planted quite a while ago, coming from a personal history that parallels one of the overarching themes in this dissertation: how one's inherited cultural history impacts one's contemporary world, or, in other words, the continuing impact and ever-presence of the past. My interest in British rock began when I was in middle school. The new consumer technology at the time was compact discs, and for adolescents of my generation, not only were the top 40 pop hit albums easily available, but we also had easy access to albums from thirty and forty years ago thanks to record companies re-releasing popular albums as CDs for the Baby Boomer generation. Compilation albums of greatest hits such the Beatles's *1* (2000) and Pink Floyd's *Echoes: The Best of Pink Floyd* (2001) captured my sonic imagination, resulting in my younger self collecting any and all things British rock. Something I curiously noted even then was the use of militaristic imagery by these artists, as evidenced by pictures of John Lennon often wearing a US Army jacket in the 1970s, the Who's band symbol coming from aircraft roundels, and the frequent use of World War II aircraft silhouettes in the film version of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1982). The area where I grew up in Tennessee was the former site of a German prisoner of war camp during World War II—one can see still the building foundations from the highway—and is now home to a major air force base. In addition to this, I am the daughter of a Vietnam Era U.S. Navy pilot and the granddaughter of a World War II U.S. Air Force pilot, so I grew up surrounded by military history and very attuned to it. What were these military references doing in British rock from the 1960s and 1970s?

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British progressive rock band Pink Floyd's album *The Final Cut* (1983) contains a striking moment in the opening song "The Post War Dream" when bassist and lyricist Roger Waters stridently sings—almost wails—at the top of his range, "Should we shout, should we scream/ what happened to the postwar dream?" By questioning the existence of the postwar dream, Waters asks the listener to look back through almost four decades of British history to the moment when the postwar dream began: the end of World War II. Waters was not alone amongst British rock musicians of his generation in harkening back to World War II, and, in fact, many British rock groups who rose to prominence during the 1960s and 1970s acknowledge World War II in various ways. For example, an early publicity shot of the Beatles from September 1962 by photographer Peter Kaye featured the band standing in front of a bombed-out car amidst a pile of debris left over from the German air raids two decades earlier. Photographer Jerry Schatzberg captured an image of the Rolling Stones dressed in drag for the cover of their 1966 single "Have You Seen Your Mother, Baby, Standing in the Shadow?" in which band members Bill Wyman and Brian Jones wore World War II- era women's military uniforms. Over the years, World War II has continued to influence 1960s-1970s British rock bands: when the Who toured in 2006, they projected images onstage of peace symbols, flowers, and guitars, as well as wartime footage of World War II heavy bomber aircraft flying in various formations. The website for Led Zeppelin's 2007 reunion concert featured the sound of air raid sirens with a Flash animation of a Hawker Typhoon—another World War II aircraft—flying over London's O2 Arena.

These examples only begin to touch on the wealth and depth of connections between World War II and British rock musicians of the 1960s and 1970s—most of whom were born during or shortly after the war years, and therefore had very little or no firsthand experience of

the war itself. The appearance of 1940s militaristic imagery and the musical references to the

war then beg the questions of why and how World War II played a role in the works of British

rock musicians of this era. In this dissertation, I view British rock musicians of the 1960s and

1970s through the lens of the impact of World War II on their lives. I examine how these artists

were inspired by, challenged by, and haunted by the postwar dream, an aggressively optimistic

vision of Britain's future after the destruction of the war. Even though these artists represented a

new chapter in the history of twentieth-century Britain, they still engaged with the repercussions

of their nation's recent past.

During the 1960s and 1970s, British rock bands rose in international popularity—a trend

that at its peak in the mid-1960s was termed the British Invasion by the American media—and

the sway they held over contemporary popular trends that presented Britain as a center for

fashion seemed to erase the vision of a war-torn Britain devastated by the German *Blitz* air

attacks. Top popular musicians associated with the British Invasion including the Beatles, the

Kinks, the Rolling Stones, the Who, Petula Clark, the Zombies, the Yardbirds, Lulu, Donovan,

the Dave Clark Five, Cilla Black, the Hollies, Dusty Springfield, Small Faces, Manfred Mann,

the Moody Blues, the Animals, and many others swept the imagination of listeners worldwide.

Not only did the musicians of the British Invasion help Britain find new pathways into the global

cultural market, but they also revived rock and roll as a genre, and indeed, started the transition

from rock and roll to rock. As Dominic Sandbrook writes in his history of Britain during the

1960s:

> In the fifties and early sixties, pop music had been widely criticised as hollow, trivial,
> even corrupt; but now, in the eyes of the press, it had suddenly become an example of
> cultural creativity and a source of national pride. Thanks to the success of the British

Invasion, groups like the Beatles had turned into national ambassadors, carrying the gospel of the New Britain across the globe."[1]

English literature scholar Irene Morra also emphasizes the importance of popular music for Britain in the twentieth century in *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity: The Making of Modern Britain*. She poses that prior to the mid-twentieth century, literature and theater played the largest roles in cultural discourses surrounding national identity, but that by the 1960s, "music established itself as a dominant signifier of contemporary British identity and cultural accomplishment." Popular music provided a discursive outlet for how to define "modern England without Empire."[2] Scholarly attention to British rock artists of this era has greatly expanded in the past decade, and the British Invasion has been revealed to be a very complex story involving cultural change, political tensions, civil rights debates, the questioning of gender roles, and the shifting of social classes, among other significant factors.

Many authors who critically examine this era work to establish the modernizing aspects of these British musicians and their creative endeavors. For example, musicologist Gordon Thompson places the musicians within the postwar technological boom, describing how the artists worked with producers and recording engineers to make innovative strides in the studio.[3] Other surveys of 1960s British rock focus on the musicians and their works as vital components of thriving youth subcultures that formed out of the postwar population surge, such as cultural sociologist Christine Feldman's *"We Are the Mods": A Transnational History of a Youth Subculture*, which examines the 1960s Mod youth subculture in Britain, as well as in Germany,

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[1] Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties 1964-1970* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), 113.
[2] Irene Morra, *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity: The Making of Modern Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2014), Preface.
[3] Gordon Thompson, *Please Please Me: Sixties British Pop Inside Out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the United States, and Japan.[4] Music theorist James E. Perone also explores the roles of British

rock musicians as an influence on British youth subcultures, detailing the antagonism between

the Mods and the rival youth subculture, the Rockers.[5] Literature scholar Barry Faulk

underscores the modern elements of British rock musicians, demonstrating how these artists used

the destabilizing philosophies of modernism to create forward-aimed works.[6] Through the

writings of Faulk, Perone, Feldman, and Thompson, among others, readers gain a strong sense of

how this generation of British rock musicians shaped the field of contemporary popular music

and broadcast a restored vision of Britain (and particularly London) as fashionable, modern, and

thriving.

Scholars have also explored how this set of musicians engaged with the past, although

such work has generally mined the more distant past, whether drawing from centuries-old British

literary traditions or examining British Imperial history as a way to frame how these British rock

musicians sought to construct a new national identity and reimagine Britain's future. For

example, Irene Morra's *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity: The Making of*

Modern Britain focuses on conflicting constructions of British identity as alternately

championing the folk versus a modern, re-emergent Empire.[7] Cultural historian Kari

Kallioniemi similarly engages with how postwar British pop music culture "has explored,

expressed and articulated new readings of English national identity."[8] In his book on British folk

rock, music critic Rob Young stretches back into the distant past to explore how a concept of

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[4] Christine Feldman, *"We Are the Mods": A Transnational History of a Youth Subculture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

[5] James E. Perone, *Mods, Rockers, and the Music of the British Invasion* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2009).

[6] Barry Faulk, *British Rock Modernism, 1967-1977: The Story of Music Hall in Rock* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010).

[7] Morra, *Britishness*.

[8] Kari Kallioniemi, *Englishness, Pop, and Post-war Britain* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2016).

previous British styles of folk music influenced 1960s British popular musicians as a means of looking to the national future.[9] Young views British folk rock of this period as "music born out of the battle between progressive push and nostalgic pull."[10] He identifies, for example, the Celtic lore of the rock group Tyrannosaurus Rex or the Tudor-influenced work of the band Pentangle—as contributing to a "sensation of travel between time zones, of retreat to a secret garden, in order to draw strength and inspiration for facing the future."[11] In contrast to these studies, my work focuses on how British rock groups engaged with World War II, not to highlight what they accomplished to move away from that devastation—works listed above certainly establish how they attempted to do so—but rather how the war remained a cultural weight on their shoulders. Previous work has addressed the practical aspects of the effects of World War II on British popular music, such as the lack of resources that led to technological innovations (vinyl records, better amplifiers, etc.) and the scarcity of American blues and rock and roll records, which created intense interest around those that were available.[12] Because the affective influence of World War II in British rock remains largely unexplored, this dissertation focuses on how the emotional repercussions of World War II operate in 1960s and 1970s British rock.[13]

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[9] Young explains, "I wanted to grasp how British musicians and composers have drawn on an idea of folk, alongside a literary (or cinematic) sense of nostalgia and connection with the landscape, all of which feeds into an encompassing expression of Britain that Black, at least, called 'visionary.'" Rob Young, *Electric Eden: Unearthing Britain's Visionary Music* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 5.

[10] Young, *Electric Eden*, 5.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Thompson, *Please Please Me*, 16-42.

[13] It is important to address the affective content of British rock because emotions are an essential component in how creators and listeners interact with music. Patrik Juslin and John A. Sloboda pose in their introduction to *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* that emotional experience is an integral part of people's engagement with music, whether as a performer, listener, or composer. Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, *Music and Emotion: Theory and Research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

Toward the end of the 1960s, many British rock musicians increasingly turned toward the nation's war-torn past as a source for musical inspiration: No longer were they only popular culture ambassadors for a modern Britain, but they were also representatives of a generation scorched by their nation's history, particularly by the aftershocks of World War II. This dissertation places these musicians within their recent national history, emphasizing that it was not one or two British rock musicians who dealt with memories of World War II in select songs, but rather that several well-known groups grappled with their relationship to World War II in some of their most expansive and popular works, including the respective subjects of the four chapters of this dissertation: the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967), the Who's *Tommy* (1969), the Kinks' *Arthur: Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1969), and Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979). Furthermore, this dissertation examines the affective response of these artists to World War II, looking at unique ways they combined music and lyrics in rock to communicate emotions tied to memory, particularly those involving nostalgia and trauma.

"Fought the War for Your Sort": Growing Up in the Shadow of World War II

The Beatles' first feature-length film, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964), contains a comedic yet telling scene that encapsulates the ever-present shadow of World War II on the postwar generation. After finally escaping hordes of screaming fans by boarding a train, the four band members settle into a train car, but are soon joined by a stodgy older man in a bowler hat who grimly assesses the young lads and rolls his eyes at them. The Beatles' drummer, Ringo Starr, gleefully takes out a handheld radio set, turns it to a station playing rock 'n' roll, and begins bobbing his famous mop-top haircut along to the music before the older man gruffly switches it off. A short argument ensues regarding train passenger rights, during which the older man states,

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"Don't take that tone with me, young man. I fought the war for your sort!" Starr blithely quips in response, "I bet you're sorry you won." This brief scene exposes a generational tension, a power dynamic centered on ownership of the war experience: the older man is indignant over the irreverent actions of these postwar youth, while Starr, as a representative of these youth, vents frustration at having the war lorded over him.

Although most members of pioneering groups such as the Beatles, the Kinks, the Who, and Pink Floyd were born in the early 1940s—much too late to have had experience on the frontline—reminders of World War II were pervasive throughout their childhoods. Often, biographies and autobiographies of British rock musicians begin by placing them in the context of growing up in the stark realities of postwar Britain.[14] The rubble left from buildings decimated during the German *Blitz* attacks on the U.K., stories of friends and family who had fought and died during the war, and national rationing into the 1950s were among the persistent reminders of Britain's near defeat during the war and struggle to survive afterward. Even one of the most popular television programs in the U.K. from 1968 to 1977 was a BBC show about the Home Guard—a volunteer defense organization during World War II—entitled *Dad's Army*.[15]

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[14] The following chapters of this dissertation address the role of World War II in the biographical context of band member from the Beatles, the Kinks, the Who, and Pink Floyd. Other examples, however, of British rock musicians placing their own histories in the context of World War II abound. For example, in his autobiography *Life,* the Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards relates that he was born during an air raid (at least according to his mother), that neighboring houses on his street had been destroyed by "Doodlebugs" (the British nickname for the German V1 flying bombs), and that his first memory was of lying in the backyard listening to a "droning airplane in the blue sky above our heads," which his mother identified for him as a Spitfire, a World War II fighter plane. In *Clapton: The Autobiography,* famous British rock guitarist Eric Clapton explains that his birth was the result of an affair between his then fifteen-year-old mother, Pat, and a Canadian airman stationed in Ripley, England. The airman, Edward Fryer, left Pat upon discovery of her pregnancy because he had a family back in Canada. This was not an uncommon story for many British youth at the time. Keith Richards, *Life* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2010), 21; Eric Clapton, *Clapton: The Autobiography* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 6.

[15] It is interesting to note that in his summary of the most popular television programs in postwar Britain, Marwick notably describes *Dad's Army* as "nostalgic but unsentimental." James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), 186.

The British experience during World War II would resound throughout British culture and society decades after its end.

This impact was due in part to the mass involvement of British citizens throughout the war. As historian Bob Holman explains in *The Evacuation: A Very British Revolution*, unlike World War I, in which most of the fighting took place overseas, World War II engaged large sectors of the British population on the home front in different volunteer capacities—as Home Guard members, air raid wardens, ambulance drivers, firefighters, and evacuee caretakers—to support the war effort.[16] Advances in military technology meant that the war hit home in new ways for British citizens, as the German *Blitz* attacks brought the war to their front doors. Holman elaborates:

> The Second World War was different for Britain. It was fought on the home front as well as abroad. What ensued should not be romanticized: it was not about cheerful cockneys proving that they could take it while humming Vera Lynn songs. War at home was cruel, destructive and deadly. Families were split asunder by conscription and evacuation. The Blitz was terrifying. The bombs destroyed 200,000 houses, rendered another 250,000 unusable, severely damaged a fifth of all schools and flattened numerous factories and public buildings. Above all, over 60,000 people were killed and some 86,000 were seriously injured by bombs.[17]

The destruction wrought by the Blitz rendered the country unable to develop the same industrial complex that led to America's wealth after the war.[18] Britain had come out of the devastation of the war as the victors, albeit the vanquished heroes in many respects, where a crumbling Empire

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[16] Holman specifies that "Over 1,500,000 men joined the Home Guard and spent much of their time in rescue work following air raids. The air raid wardens, the stretcher parties, the emergency ambulance service, the WVS, involved thousands, mainly as volunteers. Even many of the firefighters were auxiliaries. Many were ordinary, working-class citizens who had not previously participated in official civic organizations." Bob Holman, *The Evacuation: A Very British Revolution* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1995), 149.

[17] Ibid., 163-164.

[18] Historian Peter Clarke reports, "The financial burden of the Second World War for Britain was twice that of the First, wiping out 28 percent of the country's wealth … Though transnational arrangements were pieced together by sympathetic American officials, the alternatives not facing Britain were desperate—to beg, borrow or starve." Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 227.

and the rubble from the *Blitz* just outside their doorsteps put a terrible irony in the adage, "to the victor go the spoils."

British citizens still sought the dream of the conquerors, however, hoping to rise out of what they had experienced in World War II to build a better world for themselves. It was from this context that the postwar dream emerged and colored the lives of this generation of British rock musicians. In this dissertation, I use the term "postwar dream" to refer to a prevalent hope amongst citizens in the United Kingdom after World War II that not only would they see the end of war altogether, a time of lasting peace, but also that the new postwar era would usher in improved living conditions for all Britons.[19] From the late 1940s into the following decades, British citizens found refuge in this dream, which grew out of an optimistic vision from World War II of normal British citizens courageously uniting in a time of mutual hardship to achieve victory over seemingly insurmountable odds, fostering an infectious can-do attitude.[20] One of the most popular songs during the war spoke to this attitude: as British vocalist Vera Lynn's famously sang in "We'll Meet Again" (1939), "Keep smiling through/ Just like you always do/ 'Til the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away." The British wartime narrative projected defiant optimism in the face of adversity, and at the close of the war, this idealism prevailed. In postwar histories of Britain that describe a nationwide sense of optimism after the war, some scholars attribute it to the rise of socialism, others to the success of wartime nationalistic propaganda, while still others connect it to the symbolism of the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the coronation of Elizabeth II as the new monarch in 1952, entitling it "the new Elizabethan age" as the past, present, and future of Britain were presented as a coherent whole.[21] I understand the postwar dream as a combination of all of these factors along with others—such as the

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[19] Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 207-208; Holman, *Evacuation*, 136.
[20] Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 207.
[21] Obelkevich and Catterall. *Understanding Post-war British Society*, 9-10.

overwhelming relief at the cessation of the terrors of war and the rise in scientific and

technological innovations that led Leader of the Labour Party (and future Prime Minister) Harold

Wilson to proclaim in 1962 that Britain would be "forged in the white heat of this revolution"—

that fueled the idealistic vision of what Britain could become after the war.[22] The postwar dream

was part of an aspirational push to define the nation as modern amidst the decline of Empire, and

it reflected a pervasive attitude after the end of World War II that happier times were ahead for

British citizens.

In addition to being rooted in the many ways British citizens were involved in the war

efforts, the postwar dream reflected shifting relationships between British citizens of different

social classes. As Holman explains, the mass movement of urban British citizens into the

country to keep safe from air raids led to changes in how the populace—whether working,

middle, or upper class—viewed the hierarchical social system at work within British society.[23]

The evacuation mainly affected industrial cities, which had large populations of working-class

residents, because the Axis powers were trying to cripple the British economic centers sustaining

Allied troops.[24] As urban working-class women and children voluntarily moved to the country,

they saw a different way of life, and "[working-class women] began to ask why they had been

sentenced to poverty in the urban slums. Moreover, the feeling grew that if their husbands were

good enough to fight for the nation and if they were willing to endure the Blitz or be moved

away because of it, then the same nation should be prepared to give them a fairer share of its

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[22] Harold Wilson, *Labour's Plan for Science: Reprint of Speech by the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, MP, Leader of the Labour Party, at the Annual Conference, Scarborough, Tuesday, October 1, 1963* (London: Victoria House Printing Company, 1963).
[23] Holman emphasizes that "The British class system was brought into sharp focus by evacuation." Holman, *Evacuation*, 79.
[24] Holman, *Evacuation*, 139.

goods."[25] Likewise, the middle-class country residents who opened their homes to evacuees

were surprised upon learning the living conditions of working-class urban Britons, and this led to

a desire for reform across social classes:

> To many—certainly not all—residents of the reception areas, the evacuation taught them that the problems, the lack of clothing, the thinness, the different manners, even the aggressiveness of the evacuees came not from a stock of 'problem families' but from a poverty which had been imposed upon them by society. … With understanding came compassion, with compassion came a determination to take action to challenge poverty.[26]

In response, the British government began developing programs to maintain the welfare of

British citizens, which improved the way of life for many citizens, despite the devastation of the

war.[27] British historian Peter Clarke notes, for example, that the establishment of the National

Health Service granted citizens better access to infant healthcare, creating a sharp decline in

infant mortality.[28] The resulting government intervention in healthcare, education, and

employment provided a framework for the postwar Welfare State, which at first promised a route

to bringing the British postwar dream to fruition. Clarke connects the rise of wartime

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[25] Ibid., 147.

[26] Ibid., 141-142.

[27] In their introduction to *Understanding Post-war British Society,* editors James Obelkevich and Peter Catterall write, "Compared with its fairly restricted range of activities earlier in the century, the state now gives the impression of intervening in just about every corner of British life. It has become a central fact in post-war society." Obelkevich and Catterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society*, 6. Holman elaborates on these governmental social reforms: "… profound changes did occur in the 1940s. In 1939, the Poor Law was still in existence while entitlement to unemployment and insurance benefits was patchy in coverage and temporary duration: by the late 1940s, the Poor Law had been finally buried and entitlement to state benefits, including old age pensions, extended across the nation. In 1939, the prospect of family allowances was unlikely: by 1945, they were in place. In 1939, only 14 percent of children proceeded to secondary education and funding of state schools was parsimonious at best: a decade later all children had secondary education while finance was no longer a barrier to working-class children going to grammar schools or higher education. In 1939, the health service was a fragmented muddle with access to medical practitioners difficult for many low-income women and children and with hospitals distributed in no logical way: by the late 1940s, the National Health Service was in place with access to services depending on need, not ability to pay. In 1939, economic policy was dominated by private interests with state intervention to control unemployment kept to a minimum: by the 1940s, the Government accepted a duty to maintain high employment. In 1939, state welfare was frugal and seen as a social ambulance for the poorest: by the end of the 1940s it was seen as a means of benefiting all." Holman, *Evacuation*, 162-163.

[28] Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 209.

propaganda and the spirit of national camaraderie with the increasing popularity of socialism in

Britain. Socialism seemed the answer to many problems that citizens saw as stemming from

class warfare: "'A people's war', in a more ideologically ambitious sense, meant a radical

agenda, seeking to fulfill dreams of a popular front, to win the war by and for socialism."[29]

Despite the glimpse of a better world offered through socialism, however, there were

many ways in which it failed over the ensuing years, undermining the lofty aims of the postwar

dream. As historian Angus Calder elucidates, "the period from 1939 to 1951 saw class

polarisation in Britain as never before."[30] During the war, some upper-class citizens found ways

to work around housing evacuees; rationing inconvenienced middle- and working-class citizens

far more than upper-class citizens; and social rank influenced the military hierarchical

structure.[31] Immediately after the war, upper-class citizens maintained advantages in education

and healthcare that were unavailable to middle- and working-class citizens. In *The Rise and Fall

of Class in Britain*, David Cannadine argues that despite the wartime camaraderie, there was a

prevailing sense that British citizens remained split into social classes that pitted an "us" against

a "them."[32] Historians James Obelkevich and James Catterall maintain that "While [the welfare

state] has undoubtedly done much good, overall it has been something of a disappointment,

falling well short of the high hopes expressed for it in the 1940s and 1950s."[33]

Belief in the postwar dream was also tested by the growing success of challenges to

British imperial control. The British government, economically crippled by the war, sought to

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[29] Ibid., 207-208.
[30] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), 59. Furthermore, Calder writes
that the class differences reached a level of historical precedence: "Class divisions in British society were
demonstrated and exacerbated as at no time since the 1926 General Strike."
[31] David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999),
150-151.
[32]Ibid., 150.
[33] Obelkevich and Catterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society*, 6.

avoid further costly military entanglements, and over the following decades found itself unable to sustain political control of territories across the globe that previously had been under its purview.[34] The achievement of Indian Independence in 1947, the Suez Crisis in 1951 that led the British to withdraw their control in the Middle East, and the decolonization of British Africa and the independence of Caribbean territories in the 1960s, among many other developments, essentially dissolved the British Empire. While the postwar dream could at once act as a source of inspiration for Britons, when juxtaposed with Britain's changing role in the world, failure to fully realize the fantasy could also act as a source of disappointment. How could citizens achieve the goals of the dream when faced with the newly-arisen economic obstacles of post-Imperial Britain?

The story of postwar Britain is a complex one involving both national growth (i.e., the expansion of the middle class, the establishment of the National Health Service, and Educational Reform) and national decline (i.e., the poor postwar economy throughout the 1950s and then economic decline at the end of the 1960s through the 1970s, the dissolution of empire, and the failure of socialism to completely overcome the inequalities inherent in the British class system), and it was out of this context that the British rock musicians of the 1960s and 1970s arose. Many of these musicians came from working- and lower-middle-class households that were the focus of these societal shifts, and the allure and the unattainability of the postwar dream played a particularly formative role in their postwar upbringing. While these musicians escaped some of the bounds of their working class backgrounds through their fame and success, in many ways attaining the dream, many of them did not forget the social circumstances of their childhoods, and often spoke to those class conditions in their music. Some drew from the enchanting

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[34] Clarke, *Hope and Glory*, 232-234.

postwar visions of a thriving Britain while others experienced disillusionment at the realities of their postwar present, which I will explore further in the following chapters.

What is clear is that British rock musicians of the 1960s and 1970s were at an intersection of a new dialogue between social class and British culture. In his chapter on arts and entertainment in post-war Britain, historian Arthur Marwick stresses that British rock music was "the central cultural phenomenon of the time."[35] The popularity of British rock music in the 1960s provided a new global stage for the British working-class, not just in terms of the working-class backgrounds of the artists themselves, but also of their fans. As cultural historian Kari Kallioniemi explains, prior to the 1960s, "Englishness has traditionally been left to be defined primarily by high culture," and there existed "the profound antagonism between popular culture and the heritage of English history and literature."[36] The 1960s brought about a sea change in British culture as British rock musicians expanded the scope of what popular music could entail, as I explain in following analyses.[37] Historian Arthur Marwick states, "Such was the penetrative and involving power of rock/pop that it did help to break down some of the barriers between elite music and popular music."[38]

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[35] Obelkevich and Catterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society*, 187.

[36] Kallioniemi, *Englishness*, 4.

[37] Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem,* Op. 66 of 1962 serves as the most salient example of what was perceived as musical high culture in the U.K. artistically dealing with World War II decades later. Having been born in 1913, however, Britten came from an older generation than the musicians who are the focus of this dissertation, as World War II occurred during his adulthood. He spent the first part of the war in the United States, but returned to the United Kingdom in 1942 to spend the remainder of the war living in the countryside as a conscientious objector. Britten composed the *War Requiem* for the consecration of the newly rebuilt Coventry Cathedral, which had been destroyed by a German air raid on November 14, 1940. The composition is scored for vocal soloists, a boys' choir, organ, a chamber orchestra and a full orchestra, and Britten drew the text from Latin texts and the poems of World War I British poet and soldier, Wilfred Owen, who was killed in action in 1918. Examples of art music compositions outside of Britain dealing with the impact of World War II in the 1960s include Italian composer Luigi Nono's *Canti di vita e d'amore: sul ponte di Hiroshima* (1962) and *Ricorda cosa ti hanno fatto in Auschwitz* (1966) and Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960) and *Dies irae:* 'Auschwitz Oratorio" (1967).

[38] Obelkevich and Catterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society*, 187.

One of the postwar developments that fostered both the class mobility that led to these musicians moving away from their working-class backgrounds and the interest in merging high and low arts were the educational reforms instituted by Conservative politician Richard A. Butler.[39] The Education Act of 1944 opened up new educational routes for the children of working-class and middle-class families. Rather than proceeding straight into factory jobs or apprenticeships, working- and middle-class students were now afforded opportunities to pursue higher education, which included not just traditional universities, but also art schools and technical schools. These art schools—attended by musicians such as John Lennon of the Beatles, Ray Davies of the Kinks, and Pete Townshend of the Who—were centers for artistic experimentation and intellectual discussion. Sociologist Deena Weinstein elaborates:

> An important vehicle of transmission of this romanticism and its avant-garde ideals to British youth was the system of public art school—unmatched in number anywhere else in the world—that became repositories and refuges for young people who were intelligent but had difficulty conforming to mainstream organizational society. Rock bands whose members had attended these art schools include the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who, the Yardbirds, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, and the Kinks.[40]

Historian Arthur Marwick further supports the historical importance of art schools for British culture in the postwar era, stating that they were in part responsible for the "remodeling and transmission of culture" in popular music, painting, and sculpture.[41] For many British rock musicians in the 1960s and 1970s, popular music became a significant mode of artistic experimentation and expression as their roles as conveyors of British culture became increasingly—and globally—apparent. These musicians shifted away from writing songs mainly

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[39] Holman explains that the evacuation brought the massive educational inequalities between British social classes into the public eye: "The evacuation showed up the differences between town and country schools, revealed the poor conditions of many urban schools, and lay bare the low attainment levels of many evacuees." Holman, *Evacuation*, 160.

[40] Deena Weinstein, "Relations in the Kinks—Familiar but not Fully Familial," *Popular Music and Society* 29, no. 2 (2006): 172.

[41] Obelkevich and Catterall, *Understanding Post-war British Society*, 187.

about teenage romantic interests, and instead wrote songs about a far wider range of topics that drew on musical influences from the avant-garde, Indian classical music, Western classical music, folk styles, and many other sources. This was part of an overarching contemporary artistic dialogue challenging the boundaries between high art versus low art and their adherents, a dialogue which some British rock musicians encountered during their time as students in art schools.

Along with this desire to champion rock music as an elevated art form, new recording technologies led to these artists releasing works that featured longer-term listening experiences than the single had, giving them more space to craft musical responses to their historical moment and their relationship to the postwar dream. This included projects such as concept albums (an album comprised of songs that were connected thematically, including the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* [1967] and the Kinks' *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* [1968]) and rock operas (a work that usually began as an album of songs connected by a plot, and then often subsequently moved to stage or screen as a dramatic work, like the Who's *Tommy* [1969]). Within these longer formats, bands were able to explore their musical subjects with increasing depth. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, one of the subjects with which these artists spent extensive creative treatment was their affective relationship to their postwar pasts.

Postwar Memories: Nostalgia and Trauma in British Rock

My project highlights how the idea of the postwar dream for British rock musicians shifted over the close of the 1960s into the late 1970s from nostalgia for a mythologized war experience to using the postwar dream to explore the traumatic impact of the war. British rock

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addresses the impact of World War II predominantly through two emotionally-laden means of

engaging with the past: through nostalgic memory and through traumatic memory. Nostalgic

memory of World War II in British rock often revolves around reveling in wartime camaraderie,

British victory, and a mythologized war experience, while traumatic memory of World War II in

British rock delves into the repercussions of the horrors of war. These two forms of memory

also have multifaceted intersections with music. For example, in one of the earliest scholarly

studies of nostalgia, a Swiss physician in 1710 pointed to a specific "sweet melody of

Switzerland which tends to produce homesickness in everyone who hears it" and included the

notation of the "pathologic air" entitled "Kühe-Reyen" in his thesis.[42] More recently,

psychologist Clay Routledge reports, "when people are listening to music, nostalgia is one of the

most common emotions experienced."[43] Some studies of trauma indicate that music can

establish communicative pathways that are otherwise shut down due to maladaptive responses to

a traumatic event.[44] In her dissertation on how music represents the experience of trauma, Maria

Cizmic underscores a bodily relationship between music performance and trauma, writing,

"music, an essentially embodied art form, has particular access to experiences that are bounded

by the body. … Pain, like desire and sexuality, is primarily situated in the body; music, therefore,

has particular access to representing such experiences."[45] These studies are just a few examples

that demonstrate some of the manifold ways music and nostalgia and music and trauma

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[42] Carolyn Kiser Anspach, trans., "Medical Dissertation on Nostalgia by Johannes Hofer, 1688," *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 2 (Jan. 1, 1934): 376.

[43] Routledge also adds that music-induced nostalgia invokes many types of emotional responses: "all of the emotions that music inspires influence nostalgia. That is music-triggered positive, negative, and mixed emotions were all significant predictors of music-triggered nostalgia." Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 40-41.

[44] Julie P. Sutton, ed., *Music, Music Therapy and Trauma: International Perspectives* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002), 50.

[45] Maria Cizmic, "Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in 1970s and 80s Eastern Europe." (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2004), 5.

converge. In the past two decades, studies of nostalgia and of trauma have significantly

developed understandings of how these two affective experiences function.

The first two chapters of this dissertation focus on the influence of nostalgic memories of

wartime and the postwar dream on British rock musicians. Nostalgia for war might initially

seem absurd, but nostalgia is, at its core, an act of fantasy that paints over unpleasant history,

creating a new story that revels in the perceived glories of the past. Nostalgia came into the

scholarly lexicon in 1688, when Johannes Hofer, a Swiss medical student, developed the term in

his dissertation to describe the symptoms he observed in youth living abroad who "easily become

sad, continually think about the Fatherland, and because of this perpetual desire of returning

there, they finally fall into this illness."[46] Hofer invented the word "nostalgia" by putting

together the Greek "nostos" (meaning "to return home") and "algos" (meaning "longing"), and

he originally defined nostalgia as "the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to

one's native land."[47] Over the centuries, however, the concept of nostalgia as a medical disease

was abandoned. As psychologist Clay Routledge summarizes in *Nostalgia: A Psychological

Resource*, physicians attempting to discover a bodily location for nostalgia were unsuccessful,

there was no evidence that people diagnosed with nostalgia had specific physical symptoms, and

other scientists, such as Charles Darwin in 1896, argued that nostalgia could be experienced as a

positive feeling.[48]

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[46] Hofer also posed the terms "nosomanias" and "philopatridomania" as possible names for the disease he observed in homesick youth, writing that if either of those terms "is more pleasing to anyone, … it will be entirely approved by me." The symptoms Hofer identified as indicative of nostalgia were "continued sadness, meditation only of the Fatherland, disturbed sleep either wakeful or continuous, decrease of strength, hunger, thirst, senses diminished, and cares or even palpitations of the heart, frequent sighs, also stupidity of the mind—attending to nothing hardly, other than an idea of the Fatherland…" Anspach, "Medical Dissertation," 380-381, 385.

[47] In his dissertation, Hofer describes nostalgia as a potentially fatal disease if not treated. Anspach, "Medical Dissertation," 381, 388-390.

[48] Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 4-5.

Routledge continues his brief overview of the history of nostalgia by noting that as the field of psychology expanded in the early twentieth century, scholarly interest in nostalgia arose once again.[49] By the 1940s, psychologists shifted their view of nostalgia away from being tied to homesickness, and instead conceptualized nostalgia with "a new emphasis on a general longing for aspects of one's past (e.g., childhood)," realizing that "just as people can long for home, they could also long for a wide range of objects or people. Indeed, psychoanalysts tended to believe that people could be nostalgic for any object that symbolized aspects of their past that they missed."[50] As the perception of what people could be nostalgic for changed, so did the understanding of what emotions nostalgia entailed. Routledge spends much of his book exploring nostalgia as a positive emotion, where people turn to nostalgia as a curative mechanism in times of distress, but he also recognizes that "people's longing for the past may reflect both positive and negative feelings that may serve psychological functions."[51]

As well as broadening the scope of the emotional experience of nostalgia, scholars also began examining nostalgia as it operates for individuals and for social groups. In 1979, sociologist Fred Davis presented nostalgia as both a "private, sometimes intensely felt personal character" and "a deeply social emotion."[52] As such, Davis saw nostalgia as an important means of understanding the self and society in general. In the 1989 collection of essays *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, historians Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw examined nostalgia as a means for people to use the past to interpret their present. They introduce three conditions under which nostalgia develops: The society must conceptualize time as "linear with

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[49] Routledge explains that by the mid-twentieth century, nostalgia had moved from a physical ailment to a mental one: "[Psychologists] did not believe that nostalgia was necessarily a disease of the body. Instead, it was a disorder of the mind." Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 5.

[50] Ibid., 5

[51] Ibid., 7.

[52] Fred Davis, *Yearning For Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), vii.

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an undetermined future," must have a sense "that the present is deficient," and that "objects, buildings, and images from the past should be available."[53] When one examines British rock history through this lens, rich material for nostalgic reverie emerges (e.g., links to the past were available through the piles of rubble left behind after the war).

The concept of using the past to interpret the present and the future has proven to be a fruitful way of approaching nostalgia: both comparative literature scholar Svetlana Boym and sociologist Janelle L. Wilson applied that premise to productive effect in their studies of nostalgia. Boym's 2001 book *The Future of Nostalgia* was influential in demonstrating how artworks can be shaped by nostalgia to reflect critical interpretations of current political and cultural perspectives.[54] She views nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" and as "a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy."[55] In *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, Wilson regards the process of nostalgia as an active expression of identity.[56] Much like Boym, Wilson recognizes nostalgia as an idealization, one that does not have to be relegated to one's own lifetime: ""Nostalgia for a time that we did not ourselves experience is largely a product of our imagination. The nostalgic views may be fiction. Yet, this does not seem to make them less significant or powerful."[57] She further writes, "The past we remember is thus perhaps not really the past we experienced. The important questions become: Why do I remember it this way? How do these recollections shape

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[53] Malcolm Shaw and Christopher Chase, eds., *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1989), 2-4.
[54] Boym identifies two ways of being nostalgic: reflective nostalgia, which "dwells in *algia,* in longing and loss, the imperfect process on remembrance" and restorative nostalgia, which "puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps." Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 41.
[55] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xiii.
[56] Janelle Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 8. This is mirrored in Routledge's psychological survey, where he states, "When the present or future seems overwhelming, we often look to the past nostalgically to right the ship." Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 3.
[57] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 115.

who I am?"[58] Through these works and others, in this project I have come to understand

nostalgia as a multivalent emotional process involving a personal feeling of engagement with the

past, not necessarily relegated to one's own lifetime, resulting in an idealization or fantasy that

aids in exploring identity. Furthermore, nostalgia acts as a way to juxtapose past and present that

opens the door to critical analysis. This view of nostalgia serves as the foundation for the first

two chapters of this dissertation.

As nostalgia studies have grown across many disciplines in the last few decades,

scholarly work on music and nostalgia, which I will discuss in much more depth in the following

chapters, has also expanded. Of most significance to this project are studies of how nostalgia is

represented in music.[59] These include ethnomusicologist Christine R. Yano's examination of the

Japanese musical genre *enka* and musicologist Caryl Flinn's work on film music, which both

explore how composers intentionally create music that sounds as if it were from a different era,

thereby mitigating the passage of time.[60] Composers will also invoke nostalgia by calling

attention to elapsing time, which is the basis of one analysis by musicologist Charles Rosen of

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[58] Ibid., 121.

[59] Here I refer to research on nostalgia from music historians, but there are also a number of studies on music and nostalgia from music psychology. Works such as sociologist Joseph Kotarba's or psychiatrist Frederick Barrett et al.'s focus on how the act of listening to music can cause a listener to engage with nostalgia due to pre-existing memories the listener has of the work, while other studies such as music theorist Lahdelma et al.'s try to pinpoint specific, small-scale musical characteristics (something akin to a phoneme in language) that evoke nostalgia for listeners. These studies are listener-centric. Since my dissertation centers on nostalgia as a creative springboard for British rock musicians as composers, I do not spend much time on how songs specifically evoke nostalgia for the listener, but rather how nostalgia influenced the composition. Future research could be done on a listener-centric study of nostalgia in British rock, examining whether specific chordal structures are particularly nostalgically evocative for listeners, or how inclined listeners are to engage in nostalgia when listening to works from this era. Frederick S. Barrett et al., "Music-evoked Nostalgia: Affect, Memory, and Personality," *Emotion* 10, no. 3 (2010): 390-403; Joseph A. Kotarba, "Rock 'n' Roll Music as a Timepiece," *Symbolic Interaction* 25, No. 3 (2002): 397-404; Imre Lahdelma and Tuomas Eerola, "Theoretical Proposals on How Vertical Harmony May Convey Nostalgia and Longing in Music," *Empirical Musicology Review* 10, No. 3 (2015): 245-263.

[60] Christine Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

Ludwig van Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, as well as musicologist Ryan Kangas's analysis of Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 4.[61] Such work demonstrates different means by which nostalgia can be musically depicted, whether it be through instrumentation and production choices, through genre juxtaposition, through tempo changes, or other musical techniques. The first two chapters of this dissertation draw on these theories and add to them by incorporating discussions of nostalgia, identity, and affect from psychology, sociology, and comparative literature, including the above-mentioned works by Routledge, Wilson, and Boym. The first chapter demonstrates how nostalgia can assert multiple aspects of identity through music. This expands the work from other studies concerned with music, nostalgia, and identity, which always focus on one particular identity communicated through the music. The second chapter shows how a musical work can incorporate the many emotional facets of nostalgia to present conflicting messages regarding the past. Studies that view nostalgia in music as a tool for cultural criticism typically only present one reading of the work in question, ultimately arguing that either the past should be upheld as an example to follow or that the past is not what it is glorified to be. Nostalgia, however, is a complex, conflicting process, so the second chapter demonstrates how artists can use nostalgia to both celebrate and denigrate the past within the same work.

The second half of this dissertation turns to examining the impact of World War II-related trauma on the works of British rock musicians. The war was the source of seemingly unending trauma that reverberated across the decades, and the lives of the British rockers were disturbed in major ways by wartime trauma. For example, Roger Daltrey, vocalist of the Who,

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[61] Rosen hears the displacement of the vocal line from the piano line in the *lied* as a musical depiction of the distance between past and present, which calls attention to the distance between past and present. Kangas points to the juxtaposition of musical styles in Mahler's symphony as another way of emphasizing the passage of time. Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 166-169; Ryan Kangas, "Classical Style, Childhood and Nostalgia in Mahler's Fourth Symphony*," Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 8 (2011): 219-236.

saw his neighborhood annihilated by bombing during the Blitz. The father of Pink Floyd's

Roger Waters was killed in battle, which tore Waters' family apart. Trauma, like nostalgia, has

received much scholarly attention in the past two decades in a broad range of fields, including

psychology, comparative literature, and musicology. Trauma (from the Greek word "trauma"

meaning, "wound") is the experience of an event or series of events that is shocking, disturbing,

and leaves lasting effects.[62] In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*,

comparative literature scholar Cathy Caruth describes trauma as an event that "is experienced too

soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it

imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor."[63]

As psychologists came to understand the impact of trauma on individuals, its impact on

surrounding communities became apparent. Music therapist Julie P. Sutton explains that "the

multiple influences created by a single event are wide ranging at many different levels and affect

many people."[64] Trauma also has an impact on those surrounding an individual who experienced

a traumatic event, including people who might have witnessed the traumatic event occur, family

members who were not there, rescue services and hospital staff, members of the immediate

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[62] Music therapist Julie P. Sutton states, "three facets—shock, wound, and lasting effect—remain in the literature and are still central to our understanding of trauma." Sutton, *Music,* 22.

[63] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4. Physicians and psychologists in the twentieth century took a particular interest in trauma after observing large numbers of what was then called "shell-shock" in soldiers returning home after World War I, and again after World War II, and then again after Vietnam. Experiencing a traumatic event could result not just in physical injuries, but also in mental disorders. Some returning soldiers impacted by trauma exhibited symptoms of "the re-experiencing of the [traumatic] event, a lack of affect or numbness, and active avoidance of any reminder of what took place." In 1980, this set of symptoms associated with the experience of trauma became known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although the diagnosis of PTSD was originally chiefly applied to veterans, psychologists observed the same symptoms in survivors of sexual and domestic violence, and after 1980, PTSD was recognized by the medical community as a mental disorder that could affect anyone who had experienced a traumatic event. Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 9-32; Sutton, *Music*, 22.

[64] Sutton, *Music,* 27.

community, and members of the broader community.[65] Sociologist Arthur G. Neal examines

trauma as a large-scale event in *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, advancing the idea of

national trauma, where the concept of trauma is "applied collectively to the experiences of an

entire group of people" who experience "an injury, a wound, or an assault on social life as it is

known and understood."[66] He concentrates on American national traumas such as the Great

Depression, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy,

and the Vietnam War, showing how these events resonated throughout the United States as a

collective experience of trauma.[67] In *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* literature

scholar Marianna Torgovnick delves into World War II as a collective trauma that following

generations claim citizenship to (an idea I explore further in chapter four). She describes the

massive scale of the war as a societal traumatic event: "In 1945, the world saw death in new and

shocking forms; speeded up, multiplied, and dealt by human beings with deliberate and stunning

technological speed, often under government auspices and sometimes burning or vaporizing

bodies on religious, ethnic, or racial grounds. The combination forms one of the most troubling

legacies of the twentieth century."[68] Part of this troubling legacy comes to light in the works

discussed in the third and fourth chapters of this dissertation, which incorporate theories on both

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[65] Ibid., 27-28.

[66] Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 4.

[67] He notes that although not every citizen will respond to a large-scale traumatic event in the same way, a national trauma will disrupt the overall societal workings: "National traumas are not necessarily traumas for all individuals within a society. Because of the size and complexity of modern society, many people respond to national events with cynical indifference, while most who read newspapers or watch the nightly news respond as concerned citizens. National traumas enter into the personal sphere of individual lives in a selective process. The trauma of war, for example, has a direct impact upon the military personnel assigned to combat units and upon their families. … In the final analysis, however, the test for a national trauma is that of the disruptive effects of an extraordinary event on the institutional underpinnings of the social order." Neal, *National Trauma*, x-xi.

[68] Marianna Torgovnick, *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xi.

individual and collective trauma in the analyses of the impact of World War II in the creative works of British rock musicians.

This dissertation adds to music and trauma studies by presenting new approaches to how musicians represent the psychological repercussions of trauma in their works. Scholarly works on music and trauma have increased in the last two decades, particularly due to the rising interest in music therapy and disability studies. Julie P. Sutton's edited collection on music therapy provides several essays on how music aids survivors in the process of recovery from a traumatic event.[69] *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies* includes a section entitled "War and Trauma" with essays that discuss how the physical impact of traumatic injuries manifest in music, such as how the vocal damage in Marshallese islanders as a result of radiation from the atomic bomb testing from 1948-1956 shapes their music, or how the amputee veterans of the Civil War are depicted in song.[70] A significant and groundbreaking work on music and trauma comes from musicologist Maria Cizmic, who concentrates on how the physicality of musical performance can convey representations of traumatic pain.[71] She views music as a means of communication that stretches beyond the bounds of language. This dissertation draws from that approach, but unlike Cizmic's work, the pieces this project analyzes also incorporate language in the form of lyrical texts, which contribute to the narrative capability of music to communicate trauma. In addition to the focus on the combination of music and text to present a traumatic narration, this dissertation illustrates how the psychological repercussions of trauma, such as denial and disruptive memories, are represented musically, which are demonstrated through examples from British rock.

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[69] Sutton, *Music*.

[70] Blake Howe, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[71] Maria Cizmic, *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Traumatic memories represent another mode through which the past seeps into the present, often in an especially upsetting way because of the unpredictable nature of traumatic remembrances for a trauma survivor. Sociologist Arthur G. Neal suggests, however, that these intrusions of the past in the present can act as means of understanding the present: "Traumatic events of the recent past are important ingredients of our social heritage and continue to convey implications for the prospects and limits of the world in which we live."[72] In that light, my project explores how representations of the traumatic impact of World War II in the works of British rock musicians of the postwar generation reveal valuable cultural insights.

This dissertation works to underscore changing perspectives of World War II by musical artists of the postwar generation as they gained temporal distance from the event. As British rock musicians continued to deal with memories of World War II from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, what began as a naïve nostalgia for the mythology of wartime turned to a more visceral understanding of the traumatic impact of the horrors of war. To briefly outline the overarching narrative of my project, in the first chapter I show how the Beatles revel in the nostalgia for the postwar dream in the film and soundtrack *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967); in the second chapter I demonstrate how the Kinks began to chip away at the mythologization of and nostalgia for World War II in the concept album *Arthur: Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (1969); in the third chapter I highlight how the Who implicitly began to address the traumatic impact of war in the rock opera *Tommy* (1969); and in chapter four I examine how Pink Floyd directly relate traumatic narratives of the war to listeners.

Entitled "Hoping to Take You Away: The Beatles and British Nostalgia in Magical Mystery Tour," the first chapter focuses on the Beatles' soundtrack and film *Magical Mystery Tour,* released in late 1967 at the height of their psychedelic era. While it is clear that the

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[72] Neal, *National Trauma*, x.

Beatles' works were heavily informed by drugs and psychedelia during this time, their brand of psychedelia was highly influenced by nostalgia—a nostalgia that functioned as a means of asserting identity in a time of personal and professional flux. 1967 was the year after the Beatles stopped touring and the year their manager Brian Epstein died: both drastic changes to the everyday reality they had known for several years. In this time of upheaval, remnants of the past, such as childhood memories and markers of British heritage, came to the front of their creative attentions as a way to provide a continuity for their identities, in particular aspects of their identity that stem from their postwar childhoods, such as their working-class background, their experience as British citizens, and their identity roles within familial relationships. By drawing on theories on nostalgia, identity, and collective memory from Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Janelle Wilson, Clay Routledge, and Svetlana Boym, this chapter shows how in *Magical Mystery Tour* the Beatles constructed a world deeply rooted in nostalgia that revels in the postwar dream. The Beatles used their contemporary medium of rock music to celebrate a fantasy version of what it meant to be British in the postwar era. Album tracks "Magical Mystery Tour," "I Am the Walrus," and "Your Mother Should Know" invent a postwar utopia by celebrating working-class culture, British traditions, and shared memories.

The second chapter, "The Kinks' *Arthur,* Or the Decline and Fall of British Nostalgia," examines the nostalgia of the Kinks in their second concept album, *Arthur: Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire.* The Kinks use the multivalent emotional nature of nostalgia to provide an affectively realistic encounter with the exercise of looking back to the past, where feeling nostalgic acts as both a positive and a negative experience. The main character, Arthur, provides the listener with memories of British life that span two world wars and the postwar era. Arthur evokes memories of an idealized past, but the Kinks also portray Arthur's nostalgia as a

reflective process that serves to highlight the pitfalls of living in the past. The Kinks wield nostalgia as a means of cultural criticism in order to challenge their national history and rebel against the middle-class confines of the postwar dream, while also celebrating their heritage and posing that the older generation had much to offer, which was an unpopular stance at a time when popular music acted as a strong reflection of the generational divide. By using theories on critical nostalgia from folklorist Ray Cashman, and by comparing *Arthur* to contemporary British satirical television (a genre for which lyricist Ray Davies composed songs), this chapter demonstrates how the Kinks incorporated the comedic tool of juxtaposition to both embrace and challenge the contemporary British nostalgia for a mythologized war experience.

In the third chapter—"You Didn't Hear It: the Who and the Denial of Traumatic Narrative in *Tommy*"—nostalgic memory is left behind as traumatic memories begin to surface in the Who's *Tommy* (1969). While this rock opera typifies many of the countercultural trends of the late 1960s, it is also demonstrative of rising out of the trauma of the British experience in World War II. The plot of *Tommy* centers on a personal trauma that leaves the protagonist physically disabled, but the moment of this initial trauma is not musically represented in the original album. In successive versions of the story, however, including the 1975 film and the 1993 Broadway musical, that same moment of trauma gained musical narration. By incorporating trauma theory drawn from the works of Julie P. Sutton in music therapy, Judith Herman in psychology, and Cathy Caruth in comparative literature, this chapter explores how the representation of traumatic narrative developed in *Tommy* over the decades from album to screen to stage. This chapter provides a detailed examination into *Tommy* as a rock reflection of societal denial and community dysfunction, demonstrating a narrative reluctance that stems from a culture of denial that developed in the postwar era.

The final chapter—"Feelings of an Almost Human Nature: Pink Floyd and Traumatic Narrative"—examines Pink Floyd's *The Wall* as a traumatic narrative. Among the many psychological horrors Pink Floyd depict in *The Wall*, the traumatic wounds of World War II rise to the surface. Woven throughout the story of a fictional rock star, Pink, who isolates himself from society are references to traumas born out of World War II: the personal trauma of Pink's father's death as a soldier in World War II, Pink's experience of the national trauma of the Blitz and German V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks, and the international trauma of the Holocaust as reimagined by Pink during a fascist fantasy. In contrast to The Who's *Tommy,* which continually maneuvers around a traumatic moment, Pink Floyd's *The Wall* confronts traumatic moments throughout the rock opera. By incorporating trauma theory from comparative literature and psychology (by Dori Laub and Shoshanna Felman), and musicology (by Maria Cizmic), this chapter shows how *The Wall* functions as a traumatic narrative. Pink Floyd recreate the soundscape of traumatic events, emphasize the role of the listener as witness, and repetitively juxtapose musical depictions of safety with sonic disruptions of that safety, mimicking the disruption of memories trauma survivors experience.

CHAPTER I

"Hoping to Take You Away": The Beatles and British Nostalgia in *Magical Mystery Tour*

The story of the Beatles has become the stuff of twentieth-century legend: four lads from

Liverpool rise out of the ashes and rubble of World War II to conquer the world with their music

and its message of peace and love. They shed their humble beginnings to put their nation, a

crumbled empire, back in the center of the global mindset. This, of course, is a romanticized

narrative, but I am very interested in these humble beginnings and the idea of rising out of the

ashes, and how, rather than being shed, these ashes and beginnings cling, remain, and reverberate

throughout one's lifetime. In 1967, remnants of the Beatles' past came to the forefront in

Magical Mystery Tour, through both the U.S. and U.K. versions of the soundtrack (released

November 27 and December 8, 1967, respectively) and through the loosely-plotted film

resembling a home movie in which they starred, as well as wrote, produced, and directed (aired

by BBC1 on December 26, 1967). Beatles scholars have highlighted the modern, psychedelic

aspects of *Magical Mystery Tour*, but it is also worthwhile to examine this work as one that

deeply engages with nostalgia by drawing from British cultural traditions that were a part of the

Beatles' postwar childhoods. As cultural icons, the Beatles were in dialogue with British culture,

including both its modern, popular aspects and those stemming from tradition and history. This

chapter explores why nostalgia arose as a theme for the Beatles at this time in their career and

how it presents itself in a work as multifarious as *Magical Mystery Tour.* The soundtrack and

film showcase many facets of nostalgic memory—broadly defined as an emotional reflection on

or an idealization of past experiences or states—including how it functions to reinforce social

roles through emphasizing class identity, national identity, and family identity.[1]

In this chapter, I consider *Magical Mystery Tour* as part of a larger creative arc that

stretched throughout the year, for in 1967 the Beatles frequently used the past as a creative

theme. The double A-sided single "Penny Lane"/"Strawberry Fields Forever" (released

February 13 in the U.S., and February 17 in the U.K.) heavily featured memories of the Beatles'

childhood home, Liverpool. The album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (released May

26 in the U.K. and June 2 in the U.S.) visually reimagined the Beatles as a military band from the

Edwardian era, with songs demonstrating a wide array of musical influences that were

disparately juxtaposed in the manner of British music hall vignettes. The Beatles released

Magical Mystery Tour in the winter of that same year, and once again the theme of nostalgia

emerged from the work as it had in the other two projects. *Magical Mystery Tour*, then,

concluded a nostalgic thread for the Beatles that wound throughout 1967.

The Beatles' creative interest in nostalgia occurred at the same time as major shifts in

their professional careers and their personal lives. In 1966, the band had collectively decided to

stop touring, so the August 29, 1966, Candlestick Park concert in San Francisco was their last

live show, excepting an impromptu performance on the rooftop of the Apple Corps building on

January 30, 1969. Ending touring meant the Beatles could spend more time in the studio, but it

also significantly altered the band's engagement with the public, which brought a challenge to

their artistic identity.[2] Throughout 1967, the Beatles were in the process of figuring out their

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[1] Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6, 20-22.
[2] The press started running stories that the Beatles were finished, or if not finished, they would at least not be playing the same public roles that they had during the last four years. For example, the Los Angeles Times ran three articles within the space of a little over a month, moving from headlines announcing "Beatles reportedly breaking up" (this is from Nov. 9, 1966) to "Beatlemania Ending, Echo Lingers On"

reinvigorated identities as studio artists. The double A-sided single "Strawberry Fields

Forever"/"Penny Lane" deftly exhibited the fruits of these labors, and the release of *Sgt.*

Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band was hailed as a *tour de force* during the summer of 1967.

Afterward, though, the Beatles faced the tests of how to follow the success of that album and

how to continue their growth as studio musicians. What brought further challenges to both their

professional and personal lives during the creation of *Magical Mystery Tour* was that their

manager, Brian Epstein, died from a drug overdose on August 27, 1967. Although Epstein's role

as manager had diminished after the band had stopped touring, he nonetheless served as an

organizational force for the Beatles. He was also a close friend to the members. His sudden

death was thus a huge personal loss for the band members, and it also forced them to scramble to

organize business matters. In the midst of their grief, the Beatles threw themselves into their

work, putting together a new film and its accompanying soundtrack, *Magical Mystery Tour*.

The presence of nostalgia amongst the several themes evident in the film and soundtrack

of *Magical Mystery Tour* aligns with theories on how nostalgia operates as a confirmation of

identity during times of transition. Over the past few decades, sociological studies on nostalgia

have focused on the dialogue between nostalgia and identity. In an early sociological work on

nostalgia, Fred Davis discussed its relationship to identity, claiming that nostalgia is one of the

means "we employ in the never-ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing

our identities."[3] More recently, social psychologist Janelle Wilson referred to nostalgia as the

"sanctuary of meaning" because of nostalgia's "ability to facilitate the continuity of identity."[4]

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this is from Nov. 19, 1966) to arts editor Charles Champlin assuring readers that the "Beatles Bubble Not
About to Burst" (from Dec. 28, 1966).
[3] Davis describes nostalgia as being integral to "the search for continuity amid threats of discontinuity"
and that "nostalgia thrives on transition." Fred Davis, *Yearning For Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*
(New York: The Free Press, 1979), 31, 35, 49.
[4] Janelle Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 10.

Psychologist Clay Routledge based a series of clinical studies on the theory that people use

nostalgia as a self-curative mechanism in response to distress, finding that people frequently turn

to nostalgia during times of change and amidst disruptive life events.[5] In light of these studies, it

is noteworthy that nostalgia played a prominent role as a creative theme for the Beatles during a

time of personal and professional flux. The nostalgia of *Magical Mystery Tour* highlights

aspects of the Beatles' identities that stem from their time growing up in postwar Liverpool. In

the film and soundtrack, the Beatles' postwar childhoods become the source of a modern utopia

that reinforces particularly British aspects of their identities and paints their oftentimes bleak

postwar years as a site of play, reinventing history in favor of nostalgic memory and the postwar

dream. Nostalgia acts as a source of stability amidst the contemporary psychedelia.

　　　Prior analyses of *Magical Mystery Tour* frame it as reflective of the late 1960s Western

Countercultural movement and an experiment in psychedelia.[6] In *The Beatles: Image and the*

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[5] Routledge reports that "distress, sadness, and loss often instigate nostalgia." The results of his clinical surveys indicated "that the greater number of life disruptive events people had experienced in the last two years, the more they tended to be nostalgic … experiences of discontinuity associated with negative psychological states (e.g., sadness, loss, anxiety, loneliness) that motivate nostalgia. … Taken together, research clearly indicates that distressing or psychologically threatening experiences inspire nostalgia." Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 4, 35-37. Cultural anthropologist Kathleen Stewart also understands nostalgia as a grounding mechanism for a challenged identity, writing: "In a world of loss and unreality, nostalgia rises to importance as 'the phantasmal, parodic rehabilitation of all lost frames of reference.'" Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia—A Polemic," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, No. 3 (August 1988): 228.

[6] Barry Faulk, *British Rock Modernism, 1967-1977: The Story of Music Hall in Rock* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 47; Jonathan Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain and America* (London: Piatkus Books, 2007), 455. Although the Beatles' works have received abundant scholarly attention, *Magical Mystery Tour* has to a lesser extent, as pop critics and academics alike have panned *Magical Mystery Tour* as a rushed project that did not do much to advance the Beatles' musicianship. Russell Reising and Jim LeBlanc note in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles*: "In their music for *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles continued to incorporate psychedelic themes and effects, without introducing any strikingly new sounds or innovation to their musical catalog." Russell Reising and Jim LeBlanc. "Magical Mystery Tours, and Other Trips: Yellow Submarines, Newspaper Taxis, and the Beatles' Psychedelic Years," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles*, ed. Kenneth Womack (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 98. Scholars have described *Magical Mystery Tour* as "the low point of the Beatles' professional career," "a paltry copy of the *Pepper* road show," and "their single greatest artistic failure." Michael R. Frontani, *The Beatles: Image and the Media* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 161; Terry Riley, *Tell Me Why: A Beatles Commentary* (New

Media, communications scholar Michael R. Frontani strongly places *Magical Mystery Tour* within the counterculture of 1967, stating that *Magical Mystery Tour* "reflected countercultural preoccupations" where the Beatles "reinvented themselves following the end of touring in 1966, and their image evolved to accommodate their status as counterculturalists, or 'beautiful people,' and artists."[7] It is clear that the Beatles were symbols of a New Britain: celebrities who were seen as global trendsetters, including their recreational exploration of psychotropic drug use that placed them within the Counterculture, a contemporary social movement that sought to find alternatives to traditional Western lifestyles. In their chapter in *The Cambridge Companion to the Beatles,* literature scholars Russell Reising and Jim LeBlanc describe the influence of the LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) on the Beatles' compositions in 1967, pointing to their psychedelic lyricism, expanded use of electronic effects, and incorporation of shifting meters as examples of psychedelia reflected in their music.[8]

Yet even within the modernity of psychedelia, there was space for the past: Reising and LeBlanc argue that psychedelia and nostalgia can coexist, where the psychedelic "trip" could be approached "as a way of traveling through time" to revisit "moments and places of childhood innocence or strangeness."[9] In this chapter I push this idea further, arguing that the nostalgia in *Magical Mystery Tour* appears as theme because it was a particularly fluctuating time in their careers, and it plays a key role in expressing a "continuity of identity" for the Beatles that emphasizes their postwar British upbringing. Some scholars see this psychedelic nostalgia as a modernist irony: in *British Rock Modernism, 1967-1977: The Story of Music Hall in Rock*, Barry

York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 233; Kenneth Womack and Todd F. Davis*,* "Mythology, Remythology, and Demythology" in *Reading the Beatles: Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four*, eds. Kenneth Womack and Todd F. Davis (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 104-105.
[7] Frontani, *Beatles*, 229.
[8] Reising and LeBlanc, "Magical Mystery Tours," 90-111.
[9] Ibid., 104-105.

J. Faulk examines the modernist components of *Magical Mystery Tour,* viewing the film as a

product of the Beatles' time in metropolitan London. He claims that *Magical Mystery Tour*

"restores the Beatles to their origins, but primarily, … to make the world of traditional

Englishness unfamiliar and exotic, and thus destabilize it."[10] I argue, however, that the film and

the music of the soundtrack tell a different story, particularly in terms of the historical context of

the Beatles. Yes, the Beatles were restored to their British origins in *Magical Mystery Tour*, but

the project did not represent a means to an end of completely destabilizing these origins, but

rather a mechanism for grounding their origins amidst the musical experimentalism that was

taking place concurrently with larger personal and professional changes.

Nostalgia is not always a challenge to modernity: it can act as an integral part of the same

creative work of reframing the present. Understandings of nostalgia have changed greatly over

the past two decades, shifting from being centered on the past to referring to a longing for the

idealized past *and* the idealized present or idealized present that is informed by the past.[11]

According to Svetlana Boym's influential book *The Future of Nostalgia*, time is slippery, and

nostalgia does not necessarily refer to an imagined past, but instead can involve an imagined

present: "Nostalgia itself has a utopian dimension, only it is no longer directed toward the future.

Sometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past either, but rather sideways. The nostalgic

feels stifled within the conventional confines of time and space."[12] The nostalgia of *Magical*

Mystery Tour is of the sideways sort Boym describes, where the Beatles imagined their present

through the nostalgic lens of the postwar dream, regenerating the dreams from the past of what

the future could have been. In his work on how nostalgia is presented in visual art, art historian

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[10] Faulk, *British Rock Modernism*, 47.

[11] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii, 3-4; Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 3-5.

[12] Boym, *Future of Nostalgia,* xiv.

Paolo Magagnoli explains that while nostalgia has often been defined as the opposite of history—for while "history entails critical distance, nostalgia is seen as ideological distortion"—nostalgia can be a tool that responds "to a diversity of desires and political needs … the past can provide positive models of resistance to the status quo and show utopian possibilities which are still valid in the present."[13] By drawing from the past both visually and musically in *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles created their own contemporary utopia built from nostalgic visions of the postwar era. Here I take an approach similar to that of Pertti Grönhom in his article on the German band Kraftwerk's postwar nostalgia, where he describes that it is not the antithesis of modernism, but rather that "nostalgia, especially in its 'creative mode,' appears to be an alternative future, built in to the core of modernity and modernism itself. Nostalgia brings to the surface alternative narratives and images from the past to which we feel attracted and in that way it helps us adapt to ongoing changes."[14] *Magical Mystery Tour* found the Beatles constructing an alternative narrative during a time of personal and professional changes, and the fantasy world they create is one that is deeply rooted in a nostalgia that calls upon memories of their postwar British childhoods. That is, the optimistic dreams of the past create a concrete vision of a positive present in an otherwise unstable time.

The modernizing effects of psychedelia are certainly present, but focusing solely on modernity excludes other important themes within a work whose very fractured nature allows it to sustain multiple narratives. *Magical Mystery Tour* is a very complex work, and recognizing its multiple narratives is important since it is at once the product of a band as well the product of four distinctive artists. For example, George Harrison's contribution to the album, "Blue Jay

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[13] Paolo Magagnoli, "Critical Nostalgia in the Art of Joachim Koester," *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 101.

[14] Pertti Grönhom, "When Tomorrow Began Yesterday: Kraftwerk's Nostalgia for the Past Futures," *Popular Music and Society* 38, no. 3 (2015): 374. He further writes that nostalgia can unleash "'contemporary fantasies' that can carry hope, utopian aspirations, and the seeds of change."

Way," is significant in its lack of nostalgic references. Instead, the song establishes a sense of

wandering and self-doubt in a "slightly Indian" musical context.[15] Through his musical output,

Harrison appears not to have been as interested in nostalgia as a theme in 1967 as Paul

McCartney and John Lennon were, and this is likely because his explorations of identity at the

time were wrapped up in his heavy interest in North Indian classical music, as well as yogic and

Vedic philosophies. The cyclical view of time within these philosophies renders the experience

of nostalgia moot. The instrumental track "Flying," credited to all four members of the Beatles,

also renders little when viewed through a nostalgic lens, as the piece provides an atmospheric

concept of flying, heights, and traveling that relates to themes one would expect as the backdrop

of a recreational drug trip. The McCartney-penned "The Fool on the Hill" does include a

reference to British cultural history through the trope of the Fool character, but analyses such as

music theorist Walter Everett's in *The Beatles as Musicians:* Revolver *through* the Anthology

(1999) and literature scholar Adam Hansen's *Shakespeare and Popular Music* already cover this

connection in depth.[16] These tracks demonstrate the diverse nature and multiple levels of

identity within *Magical Mystery Tour*.

By exploring the expression of identity in *Magical Mystery Tour*, this chapter also opens

up a musical-analytical approach to nostalgia. Many studies on how musicians incorporate

nostalgia in their works focus on one composer's or performer's approach to nostalgia or on one

particular method of being nostalgic—such as collective nostalgia, private nostalgia, reflective

nostalgia, restorative nostalgia, or displaced nostalgia.[17] With *Magical Mystery Tour*, however,

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[15] Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians:* Revolver *through the* Anthology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 141.

[16] Ibid., 139-140. Adam Hansen, *Shakespeare and Popular Music* (London: Continuum, 2010), 85.

[17] These are just a few of the distinctive types of nostalgia described by sociologists and comparative literature scholars. Sociologist Fred Davis makes the distinction between private nostalgia (where the nostalgic engagement stems from resources within a person's particular biography) and collective

there exists an opportunity to view a singular work that presents varied artistic approaches to nostalgia, multiple ways in which nostalgia informs the work, and alternate perspectives on how nostalgia reveals different aspects of identity. There are several ways the Beatles musically engage with nostalgia—through lyrical subjects, instrumental usage, stylistically idiomatic harmonic progressions, and other means—showing there is no one way to be musically nostalgic. Indeed, the varied approaches to nostalgia bring out the different contexts in which nostalgia can function as an affirmation of identity.

By applying theories from psychology and sociology about the connection between nostalgia and identity, this chapter demonstrates how scenes in the film establish nostalgia as an organizing force, how the songs from *Magical Mystery Tour* communicate aspects of the Beatles' identities through the lens of nostalgia, and how through these means, both the film and the songs depict an aggressively optimistic postwar fantasy. This chapter mainly focuses on three songs from the soundtrack—"Magical Mystery Tour," "I Am the Walrus," and "Your Mother Should Know"—and briefly examines "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever" since these two tracks appear on the U.S. release of the *Magical Mystery Tour* soundtrack, despite having been released earlier in the year as a double A-sided single. The nostalgic elements in the title track "Magical Mystery Tour" highlight the Beatles' social class identity, where sound effects and specific instrumentation choices reinforce the Beatles' working-class backgrounds (as opposed to emphasizing their newly-attained status as part of the global musical elite). The nostalgia present in "I Am the Walrus" through lyrical references and the formal

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nostalgia (where the nostalgic engagement amongst a large community is shared via symbolic objects and resources); comparative literature scholar Svetlana Boym explores reflective nostalgia (where the nostalgic engagement focuses on the passage of time) and restorative nostalgia (where the nostalgic engagement focuses on erasing the feeling of time having passed); and social psychologist Janelle Wilson explores displaced nostalgia (where the nostalgic engagement is for a time or place outside of a person's biography). Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 122-123; Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xviii; Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 32.

construct of the song emphasizes Englishness as a marker of stability, bolstering this facet of the Beatles' identities. Finally, "Your Mother Should Know," through the familial relationships inherent in the lyrics and musical references to music hall idioms, provides an example of collective nostalgia that underlines identity within a community. In *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles referenced the past to try to come to terms with, and find stability in, the longer national history of which they were a part.

A Beginning: World War II, the Postwar Dream, and the Beatles

The nostalgia in *Magical Mystery Tour* is rooted in the childhood experiences of the members of the Beatles, and these experiences were inextricably tied to World War II. Many of the biographies written about the Beatles begin not with a new, modern Britain, but with visions of their hometown of Liverpool under siege, situating the four musicians in the backdrop of Liverpool during the Blitz, every beginning having an air of being almost heroic in nature. Each member of the Beatles is connected by birth to World War II through family stories, biographers' and journalists' accounts, and their own narratives. Right after the Beatles' drummer Richard Starkey, later Ringo Starr, was born (July 7, 1940), his mother had to immediately hurry him into a safety room under the stairs because of an air raid (his working-class family could not afford a bomb shelter, so the space under the stairs had to suffice).[18] Starr recounts that his mother used to jest with him that World War II started because he was born.[19] Guitarist John Lennon's full name was John Winston Lennon, for his mother had named him in honor of Winston Churchill, Prime Minister throughout the majority of World War II. Lennon's Aunt Mimi recounted to writers the improbable story of having to dodge bombs from the Luftwaffe and German

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[18] Philip Norman, *Shout!: The True Story of the Beatles* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1981), 151.
[19] Beatles, *The Beatles Anthology* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000), 33.

landmines to go see him in the hospital when he was born (October 9, 1940).[20] When the

Beatles' bassist, Paul McCartney, came into the world on June 18, 1942, his father, Jim

McCartney, was late getting to the hospital because he was part of the volunteer fire brigade and

was kept busy that night putting out fires from an air raid.[21] Guitarist George Harrison (born

February 25, 1943) began his autobiography *I Me Mine*, " . . . . . to try to imagine the soul

entering the womb of the woman living in 12 Arnold Grove, Wavertree, Liverpool 15: there

were all the barrage balloons, and the Germans bombing Liverpool. All that was going on."[22]

Liverpool experienced the worst damage from the Blitz outside of London. The

industrial port city suffered for the very reason it had flourished previously: its shipping lines.

These had been the crux of the British Empire, having brought wealth and prosperity to the city

during the Victorian and Edwardian eras, but they were now one of the few channels left to the

outside world for supplies for the nation. The Axis powers meant to destroy that lifeline through

heavy bombing during the Blitz in 1940-1941. Bomb sites became such a permanent feature of

Liverpool after the war due to the lack of government resources to clean up the debris that the

locals developed slang terms in the Scouse dialect for such places: a "debby" or a "bombie."[23]

Britain was left with a decimated postwar economy since the Blitz rendered the country unable

to develop the same industrial complex that led to America's wealth after the war. Jobs were

hard to find amidst the struggling economy, and wartime-induced civilian rationing did not end

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[20] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love,* 27; Norman, *Shout!*, 3; Bob Spitz, *The Beatles: The Biography* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 24.
[21] Norman, *Shout!*, 12; Spitz, *Beatles*, 75.
[22] George Harrison, *I Me Mine* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 1980), 19-20. These first words of his autobiography describing his birth (February 25, 1943) are accompanied by an illustration by Roy Williams of barrage balloons over Liverpool, complete with searchlights, explosions mid-air, a bomber, and the Liver bird of the Royal Liver Building, stretching its wings proudly amidst the dangers of the night sky.
[23] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 42; Beatles, *Anthology*, 17. It is also worth noting that McCartney grew up in a home not far from the mass graves where the victims of the Blitz attacks had been buried. Norman, *Shout!*, 13.

until 1954 because of the financial collapse. Postwar hardships impacted the lives of the band members, so much so that McCartney described his schooldays in a documentary, *Living in the Material World*, as "Dickensian," to the point that "you grew up kind of wanting to go somewhere else, it made you hungry."[24] Furthermore, in the midst of Cold War politics and the ever-looming, apocalyptic threat of nuclear mutually-assured destruction—a debacle with roots in World War II—the future felt unprecedentedly uncertain for people around the globe. The devastation of World War II left little unscathed, and its aftershocks were felt by following generations.

For someone growing up in England after World War II, much of what one experienced was shaped by the ravages of war, but also entangled with the mythology of war and the postwar dream. Being on the winning side of military engagement that involved all sectors of British life from the frontline to the home front, British citizens continued to partake in the wartime camaraderie, national pride, and morale-boosting propaganda that brought them through the "People's War" (as World War II came to be known in the U.K.) long after the war had ended, to the extent that some of the war's aftereffects that could have been interpreted otherwise were placed in a triumphant light: they were the victors, after all. In their collective autobiography, *The Beatles Anthology*, McCartney nostalgically described his childhood, where, for McCartney, the evidence of war was magically turned into a site of childhood nostalgia through a transformative denial of the trauma:

> We played on bombsites a lot and I grew up thinking the word 'bomb-site' almost meant playground.' I never connected it with bombing. 'Where are you going to play?'—'I'm going down to the bombie.' We said words like 'shell-shock', never realising their true significance. There used to be a guy in a demob suit who walked along twitching. People would ask, 'What's wrong with him?'—'Oh, shell-shock.'[25]

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[24] McCartney in Martin Scorsese dir., *George Harrison: Living in the Material World* (2011).
[25] Beatles, *Anthology,* 17.

This personal anecdote relates the innocent view of the child, as well as McCartney's penchant for turning militaristic imagery into fanciful whimsy—which we will see more of in the following analysis—but it also points to a slippery distinction between history and memory, with which French historian Pierre Nora engaged in his works on sites of memory, or *lieux de mémoire*. A *lieu de mémoire* is "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of the time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[26] Strewn throughout England, the debris piles of bomb rubble left after the Blitz—their presence more out of inability than out of purpose—inadvertently became sites of memory of the war, not just of the devastation and horror of the experience, but also as a reminder that British citizens not only survived, but were victorious. The transformative act of becoming playgrounds for children, for McCartney's generation, changed the symbolic meaning of the rubble from traumatic memory to memorialized history. Such is the character of a *lieux de mémoire*, where in becoming wrapped up in national identity, these memorial sites allow following generations "to mediate their cultural myths by inculcating them with their desires."[27] Nora further writes, "The transition from memory to history requires every social group to redefine its identity by dredging up the past."[28] In the bombsite anecdote, McCartney exhibits this process of one generation taking a symbol of national history and imbuing it with the desires of the postwar dream.

In *The Past Is A Foreign Country*, historian David Lowenthal describes nostalgia as memory with the pain removed, and although this is not always how nostalgia functions (as

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[26] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii.

[27] Nora writes, "If a 'realm of memory' is to exist it must have a capacity for metamorphosis: the recycling of knowledge through associations and new symbolic representations. In becoming a synonym for national identity, a 'realm of memory' enables successive generations to mediate their cultural myths by inculcating them with their desires." Nora, *Realms of Memory*, xiii.

[28] Nora, *Realms of Memory*, 10.

demonstrated in the next chapter), it is an apt assessment of how nostalgia functions in *Magical Mystery Tour*.[29] Lowenthal raises the curious phenomenon of nostalgia stemming from "horrendous memories," and he even points to the example of British citizens being nostalgic for the *Blitz* during World War II.[30] Here, nostalgia is tied up with the mythologization of the war and the process of coloring the past through the postwar dream, i.e., taking the pain out of the memory of war and replacing it with a hopeful optimism. The Beatles grew up as part of a generation instilled with a childhood dream world of what their future was supposed to be, a postwar utopia that did not quite come to fruition in real life. This, however, did not stop them from inhabiting that dream world, whether through making a bombsite into a playground, or through painting their contemporary landscape into a postwar nostalgic idyll, as the Beatles do in *Magical Mystery Tour*.

"I Believe In Yesterday": The Beatles and Musical Nostalgia Before *Magical Mystery Tour*

When the soundtrack to *Magical Mystery Tour* was released, the U.S. LP (November 27, 1967) contained non-album singles from earlier in the year, including the Lennon-penned "Strawberry Fields Forever" and the McCartney-penned "Penny Lane."[31] Although adding these two tracks to the American release of the *Magical Mystery Tour* album was a marketing decision to boost record sales in the U.S., the inclusion of these two tracks calls attention to two important details: 1) how chronologically close in proximity these overtly nostalgic singles are to the soundtrack of the film, so that even though the band was quite prolific in the months in between,

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[29] David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 8.
[30] Ibid., 7.
[31] The U.K. double EP only had the six songs on the film (December 8, 1967). The other songs on the B-side of the US *Magical Mystery Tour* album include "Baby You're a Rich Man," "Hello Goodbye," and "All You Need is Love."

there is a resounding *leitmotif* throughout 1967 for the Beatles of nostalgia and drawing

inspiration from their distinctly British youth; and 2) how the musical devices the Beatles used to

depict nostalgia are also present in the soundtrack songs. The juxtaposition on the American

release of the soundtrack with earlier singles brings out the nostalgia inherent throughout

Magical Mystery Tour.

The Beatles had addressed nostalgia to some extent in songs they released before 1967,

including "Yesterday" (1965) and "In My Life" (1965), but both of these lack the

autobiographical and geographical specificity present in the lyrics of 1967's "Penny Lane" and

"Strawberry Fields Forever."[32] As Everett explains in his 1986 article, "Fantastic Remembrance

in John Lennon's 'Strawberry Fields Forever' and 'Julia'," the Beatles had dealt with memory in

previous compositions, such as "Yesterday," "Yes It Is," and "There's a Place." Everett states,

however, that the memory employed in these songs serves the needs of the lonely or broken

heart.[33] With "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever," the Beatles turned away from

nostalgic memories being solely tied to nebulous romantic relationships, and explored nostalgia

as a deeply personalized exercise. Beatles scholar Jonathan Gould refers to this February 1967

release as "the Liverpool single" since both songs musically depict memories of the Beatles'

hometown. This Liverpool single is strongly nostalgic for the Beatles' postwar childhoods—the

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[32] Interestingly, Lennon began "In My Life" under the auspices of autobiographical nostalgia after a suggestion from journalist Kenneth Allsop that Lennon use the same attention to childhood experiences he demonstrated in his 1964 written publication, *In His Own Write*, in his songwriting. Lennon initially began to meet this challenge by writing "In My Life," which in its earliest incarnation began as a highly autobiographical song, with an early draft of the song including lyrics "Penny Lane is one I'm missing/ Up Church Road to the Clock Tower/ In the circle of the Abbey/ I have seen some happy hours." Lennon later abandoned this idea, believing it came off as "the most boring sort of 'What I Did On My Holidays Bus Trip' song and it wasn't working at all. I cannot do this!" Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: The Quarry Men Through* Rubber Soul (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 319; David Sheff, *All We Are Saying: The Last Major Interview with John Lennon and Yoko Ono* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 198), 152.
[33] Walter Everett, "Fantastic Remembrance in John Lennon's 'Strawberry Fields Forever' and 'Julia'," *The Musical Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1986): 361.

first E.M.I. issue of the single in the U.K. included baby pictures of each Beatle—and it musically re-imagines the reality of their childhoods to one that revels in the postwar dream.

Lennon began writing "Strawberry Fields Forever" in October 1966, during the few months break between when the Beatles stopped touring and when they reconvened in the studio in November to begin their tenure as purely studio artists.[34] Lennon spent part of this time in Spain, playing the role of a World War II sergeant in the movie *How I Won the War*. It must have been thought provoking for him to see his reflection in the garb so many young men had worn just a few decades before. It comes as no surprise, then, that as Lennon was reenacting the past on the set of *How I Won the War,* he began thinking about his own past as it related to the war and began to write "Strawberry Fields Forever," a song that deeply engages with nostalgia for a specific locale of his postwar childhood. Galvanized by Lennon's personal songwriting, McCartney began composing his own ode to the Liverpool of his childhood by writing "Penny Lane."

The Beatles recorded "Strawberry Fields Forever" in November and December of 1966, and "Penny Lane" in December 1966 and January 1967. Phillip Norman notes that the two

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[34] In remembering that period years later, each Beatle voiced memories of the relief at the prospect of no longer having to tour, but also the reflection on the expanse of time now open in their future. Lennon stated in 1966, "We have been Beatles as best we ever will be—those four jolly lads. But we're not those people anymore. We are old men. … We've got to find something else to do. Paul says it's like leaving school and finding a job. It's just like school, actually, because you have to group to lean on, and then suddenly you find you're on your own." The 26 year-old Lennon would return to this thought of feeling like an old man in a separate interview in 1967, saying "Don't forget that under this frilly shirt is a hundred-year-old man who's seen and done so much, but at the same time knowing so little." Beatles, *Anthology*, 229, 241. I highlight Lennon's sentiment of feeling like an old man because on face-level, it aligns with one popular, societal understanding of nostalgia, where nostalgic tendencies are associated with old age. As psychologist Clay Routledge explains, however, "nostalgia is not a rare experience confined to specific age or cultural groups." Routledge does note, however, that intensive survey studies suggest that young adults (aged 18 to 30) and older adults (aged 76 to 91) tend to be more prone to nostalgia than middle-aged adults. He theorizes that this is likely a result of the "life transitions that tend to be associated with these age cohorts." Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 103, 105.

songs "had involved more time and expense than most entire LPs."[35] As Beatles scholar

Jonathan Gould reports, by that January, the Beatles had spent 125 hours in the studio

concentrating on those two tracks and one other nostalgic song, "When I'm Sixty-Four," which

would eventually find a place on *Sgt. Pepper's*.[36] The amount of time and effort that went into

"Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" highlights not only the Beatles' realignment of

priorities to studio time, but also how carefully they were treating the past.[37]   Both Lennon and

McCartney were intent on giving their cherished Liverpool a meticulous treatment. Instead of

focusing on a Liverpool decimated by the Blitz, struggling to rebuild itself in a crippled post-war

economy, and fraught with daily struggles like rationing, Lennon and McCartney focus on a

Liverpool that is mostly free of troubles, as well as free of the restrictions of time. Lennon and

McCartney's nostalgia in the Liverpool single reveled in the lure of the utopia promised by the

postwar dream. Simply the title of Lennon's "Strawberry Fields Forever" unchains his

childhood haunt in Liverpool from any bounds of time—it is "forever,"—and McCartney's

"Penny Lane" engages with an idealized Liverpool that could exist at almost any point in the

twentieth century: it is unclear whether McCartney's fanciful depiction is one of his childhood

past or one of his present adulthood. The inspiration for "Strawberry Fields Forever" came from

a Salvation Army Home for children that Lennon lived near in his childhood. Lennon would

hear the Salvation Army Brass Band playing nearby, and beg his Aunt Mimi to take him to the

party.[38] This anecdote is redolent of a post-war dream world, where the military-style brass

bands that had so recently performed mournful dirges for the war's fallen were now celebrating

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[35] Norman, *Shout!*, 267.

[36] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 377.

[37] George Martin noted, "The song kept eluding [John] . . . he could hear what he wanted in his head, but he couldn't make it real." Kevin Ryan and Brian Kehew. *Recording the Beatles: The Studio Equipment and Techniques Used to Create Their Classic Albums* (Houston, TX: Curvebender Publishing, 2006), 439.

[38] Spitz, *Beatles*, 642; Hunter Davies, *The Beatles* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1985), 57.

peace and prosperity at a children's garden party in a place with a fanciful name. The lyrics of

the song present nostalgia for an idealized childhood, fantasizing about an escape to this place

where "nothing is real," and there is "nothing to get hung about," (i.e., nothing to be worried

about). McCartney also revisited his childhood, writing about the street he traveled daily as a

child to get to and from school in "Penny Lane."[39] In "Penny Lane," McCartney musically

reconstructs a nostalgic version of his childhood haunt, reimagining those "blue suburban skies,"

which only a few decades ago, and for part of his childhood, had been watched and listened to in

fear. There is no room, however, for a foreboding past because the song is providing a utopian

alternative to the present. As Gould observes, McCartney's "Penny Lane" immediately places

the listener in a present reconstruction of his past utopia. The song confidently begins with

scenic description ("Penny Lane there is a barber showing photographs . . ."); there is no

instrumental introduction to gently draw the listener into the world of Penny Lane, it is already

there, and everything about it seems so dependable that it probably has always been and will

always be there.[40]

Musical choices in both "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" amplify the

nostalgic affect present in the songs, including both evoking older musical styles and calling

attention to the passage of time, both common tools in music that engages with nostalgia as a

theme. Existing scholarship on music and nostalgia demonstrates two major analytical trends:

the examination of how composers mimic older styles within a piece, thereby working to

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[39] Beatles, *Anthology*, 237.

[40] Gould writes, "In a manner suggestive of 'Good Vibrations,' the record just starts right in with the sound of Paul's voice ringing out … The unspoken point, perhaps, is that Penny Lane needs no introduction; with its doubly diminutive name, it sounds like a place out of everyone's childhood…" Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 378. In the *Anthology*, McCartney stated, "[Penny Lane] is part fact, part nostalgia for a great place—blue suburban skies, *as we remember it*, and it's still there." This is a very telling quote from McCartney, for fact and nostalgia become one and the same: the blue suburban skies are what he remembers, but they are also still there. He imbues the past with a perfection that replicates itself continuously into the future. Beatles, *Anthology*, 237. Italics my own.

diminish the sense of time having passed at all, or the unveiling of how composers emphasize

temporal and spatial distance, thereby calling attention to the passage of time. For example, in

Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song, ethnomusicologist

Christine R. Yano notes that the popular Japanese musical genre *enka* is produced to

purposefully sound as if it is from the 1950s, even if it was recorded in the 1990s, because "[t]he

erasure of passing time is in fact part of its attraction."[41] Contrastingly, in *The Romantic*

Generation, Charles Rosen describes Beethoven's musical portrayal of memory in *An die ferne*

Geliebte, where at one point, the composer displaces the melody from the vocal line to the piano,

creating what Rosen identifies as a distancing effect. The singer ruminates on a repeated note,

while the piano takes the vocal melody, and performs it at *pianissimo,* and the spatial distance in

the performance of the melody mirrors the temporal distance described in the lyrics.[42] In both of

these examples, the concept of time is the central issue—as one might expect from works

engaging with nostalgia—it is just a difference between focusing on mitigating or on

emphasizing the distance of time.[43]

Musical expressions of nostalgia in "Strawberry Fields Forever" include various methods

of calling attention to and meditating on the distance and irretrievability of time. The ten-second

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[41] Christine Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3. Other studies that address musical depictions of nostalgia where the emphasis is on erasing the passage of time include: Caryl Flinn, *Strains of Utopia: Gender, Nostalgia, and Hollywood Film Music* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Jessica Hillman, "'This Lovely Land Is Mine': Milk and Honey's Restorative Nostalgia for Israel," *TDR: The Drama Review* 55, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 31-39; and Sean Williams, "Irish Music and the Experience of Nostalgia in Japan," *Asian Music* 37, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 101-119.

[42] Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 166-169. Other select studies that examine how music addressing nostalgia emphasizes the passing of time include Ryan Kangas, "Classical Style, Childhood and Nostalgia in Mahler's Fourth Symphony," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 8 (2011): 219-236; Susan Key, "Sounding Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster," *American Music* 13, no. 2 (Summer, 1995): 145-166; Goffredo Plastino, "'Lazzari felici': Neapolitan Song and/as Nostalgia," *Popular Music* 26, no. 3 (Oct. 2007): 429-440.

[43] This aligns with the two types of nostalgia Boym's work ecplores—restorative nostalgia and reflective nostalgia—so her categorization is useful for its application to "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane." Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xviii.

introduction to the song, and, more importantly, the closing coda of one minute and fourteen seconds, draw the listener into and then out of Lennon's musical reverie, aiding in establishing a meditative effect for the listener to contemplate the passage of time and the distance of the past. The coda of the song gives the listener over a minute (and over a fourth of the entire song's length) to join in a sonic meditation. The attention to dynamics in this coda emphasizes a sense of time passing and memory's distance: the repeated B♭ in the guitar at 3:41-3:49 crescendos and decrescendos as it moves from the right speaker to the left speaker, reproducing of the Doppler effect, or how the human ear perceives sound waves traveling through a space (like that of an emergency vehicle siren driving past a stationary listener. Thus, there is a created sense of distance in the song.[44]

In "Penny Lane," McCartney focused on bringing the past to sonic life, abolishing the sense of time passing. Although listeners may not be able to actually see Penny Lane, they are treated to its diegetic sounds. For example, McCartney introduces a cast of characters that inhabit this vision, including a barber, a banker, a fireman, and a fireman, and both times the fireman is mentioned in the lyrics, one can hear an alarm bell (1:06, 2:10).[45] The instrumentation

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[44] Throughout "Strawberry Fields Forever," the sense of time is distorted because of several factors. One engineered element that contributes to this is George Martin's masterful combination of two different takes to create the final version; according to his autobiography, Martin created the final version of "Strawberry Fields Forever" from two takes that Lennon could not decide between, and then told Martin to just put them together. The problem with putting the two takes together was that they were in different tempos and different keys (A, ♩=92 and B♭ ♩=102), but Martin was able to speed up the earlier track and slow down the later track so that they matched pitch, and the tempo for the two tracks, as Everett notes, "fortuitously were the same, ♩=96." The modification of the two tracks presents the listener with a very subtle but audibly surreal manipulation of time. Everett, "Fantastic Remembrances," 369; George Martin, *All You Need is Ears* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 200.

[45] Everett notes the alarm bell, as well as other instrumental commentary on the lyrics. Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 84. I will note here that this alarm bell sounds a rapid succession of triplets, which implies urgency, but the timbre of the bell is so warm and full that it does not imply alarm. Thus, the fireman becomes a character of emergency without alarm; he seems more like a fireman who would save a cat from a tree than the fire brigade experience of his father, putting out raging blazes from air raids, which further idealizes life on Penny Lane in a perfect post-war dream world. Of the four characters in

of "Penny Lane" also veers from the expectations of a typical late 1960s pop song, instead sonically calling upon an idealized past. The typical rock ensemble is absent in "Penny Lane," replaced by pianos, trumpets, flutes, and other orchestral instruments, and Starr is relegated to punctuating the bounce of the lilting melody every two beats, most often with a simple snare or tambourine hit. McCartney even requested a piccolo trumpet in the song after being inspired by a performance of J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major.[46] The musical nod to the Baroque through this highly ornamented piccolo trumpet solo gives Penny Lane an air of pomp.[47] The past and the present mingle together in its idealized musical depiction.

"Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" together opened the Beatles' new identities as non-touring artists with a musical exploration of nostalgia, and the double A-sided single successfully assuaged the public's and record executives' fear that the Beatles were over. According to Jonathan Gould, there had been an idea to expand out the Liverpool theme into an entire album, but by releasing the two songs by themselves, the idea for a Liverpool album was tabled:

> With the release of the astonishing 'Liverpool single,' rumors that the Beatles might be breaking up were immediately replaced by rumors that they were immersed in a recording project so ambitious that it would change the face of rock. From the group's perspective, however, their plans for a 'Liverpool' album had been seriously compromised . . . Early in February, McCartney come into the studio with a catchy, rather contrived number called 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,' and any thought of an overtly autobiographical album went out the window for good.[48]

The ideas behind the Liverpool album, however, were not entirely forgotten, but instead simmered on the horizon of their psyches, bubbling up in different ways throughout 1967.

"Penny Lane," two of them hold the occupations of his parents during the war: a fireman (like Jim McCartney), and a pretty nurse (Mary McCartney was a nurse during and after the war). McCartney took his own family history and cleaned it up to fit in an idyllic scene.

[46] Martin hired professional orchestral trumpet player David Mason to play a melody that McCartney dictated. Martin, *All You Need*, 202.

[47] Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 85.

[48] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 384

Nostalgic Visions in the *Magical Mystery Tour* Film

During the fall and winter of 1967, nostalgia remained a large part of the creative mindset

of the band with *Magical Mystery Tour.* The Beatles started working on *Magical Mystery Tour*

almost immediately after finishing recording *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, recording

the title track in April 25-27 and May 3 of 1967, running off the same energy that fueled the

creation of the nostalgic *Sgt. Pepper's*, but then they left the idea until the fall of that same year.

The months in between proved to be a time of great flux for the band. Beyond the general

uncertainty of what to do next and how to follow the enormous popularity of *Sgt. Pepper's*, the

summer of 1967 brought the somber news of manager Brian Epstein's death from a drug

overdose. He had typically been the one to take care of managerial details, so the Beatles, as

well as being left emotionally bewildered, were also scrambling professionally in the wake of

Epstein's death.[49] While coping with their loss, the Beatles met at the beginning of September,

only a few days after Epstein's death, to discuss plans for their immediate future.[50] McCartney

took the initiative, suggesting their next project should be a film that would be a solely-Beatles

endeavor consisting of basically home video-style shots with musical interludes.[51] This idea

resulted in *Magical Mystery Tour.*

With this project, the Beatles found themselves still navigating their reinvigorated

identities as artists, this time without the guidance of Epstein. As they experienced earlier in the

year through their creation of alternate egos in *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, a

problem with identity arises: who are the Beatles? In an essay on identity and memory, historian

Allan Megill claims: "Where identity is problematized, memory is valorized."[52] This proved

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[49] Ibid., 440.
[50] Ibid., (2007), 438.
[51] Beatles, *Anthology*, 272.
[52] Allan Megill, "History, Memory, Identity," *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 3, (1998): 40.

true for the Beatles at the time, as one of the creative outlets that was particularly fruitful in this year of shifting identities was returning to their childhood home of Liverpool that resonates with memories the postwar dream.

Nostalgia's role in emphasizing the Beatles' British postwar identity is visually represented in the film *Magical Mystery Tour,* which created the framework for the soundtrack released shortly before the film aired on BBC1 on December 26, 1967.[53] Unlike the films *Help!* and *A Hard Day's Night,* where the Beatles romp about as touring rockstars, emphasizing their identities as global celebrities, in the film *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles return to their working-class roots and act out nostalgic fantasies as fellow travelers on a bus trip. Before the film aired, *Rolling Stone* reported to readers that for the filming, the Beatles "wore the oldest, straightest clothes they could find: Paul wore a hand-knitted Fair Isle pullover and baggy pants in the manner of a typical English father, and the rest of the group wore Al Capone suits."[54] No longer donned in the matching suits of *A Hard Day's Night* or the uniforms of the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, the Beatles presented themselves as old-fashioned. Two of the guiding principles of the entire film shoot were that they would be on a bus, and that they would head toward Newquay, Cornwall, which, McCartney noted in a recent documentary, was a place of childhood memories that he and Harrison had hitchhiked to as youths.[55] The pillars of stability for the trip in *Magical Mystery Tour*, and indeed for the filming of the project—the bus trip and the Cornwall destination—are grounded in nostalgia for the Beatles. McCartney further claimed in interviews that most of the scenes were not preplanned, and that they happened organically, based on suggestions from other band members, as well as the random people who

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[53] One detail of the project that begins to tell the tale of how deeply connected this whole project was to Britishness is that the film premiered on Boxing Day in 1967 in the U.K., a holiday widely observed in the U.K. but not in the U.S.

[54] Susan Lydon, "New Thing for Beatles: Magical Mystery Tour," *Rolling Stone*, December 14, 1967.

[55] "Magical Mystery Tour Revisited," *Great Performances*, PBS, aired December 14, 2012.

inhabited the bus, and choices were often influenced "by memories from our childhood, things that we'd remembered or we'd remembered seeing or doing ourselves . . . there'd often be a tug of war between the burly men of the neighborhood . . . I suppose the whole film has a bit of a village fete atmosphere to it"—once again bringing a nostalgic air to the filming process.[56] The destination of Cornwall, the bus itself, and the inclusion of the fete-like atmosphere were all markers of Britishness that the Beatles claimed as their own, albeit with a 1960s twist.

The other guiding principle of the filming process was the circular structure McCartney conceived, and it is here where memories of the war turn into whimsical postwar fantasies. According to accounts by both McCartney and Starr, McCartney approached the group with a piece of paper that had a drawing of a circle divided into eight parts, and each of the eight segments represented a different sequence in the film. Even though the segments that fill it in seem to function entirely randomly, the film ends up being cyclical in nature: it ends where it begins: with references to World War II. The film begins with a distorted reenactment of what had been a typical rite of male passage of military service before conscription ended in 1958. The first stop the bus makes is at a military recruitment office, so the Beatles begin their journey with a nod to the moment when the postwar dream became possible. The scene cuts to McCartney and actor Victor Spinetti in this office, dressed as a major and an army sergeant, respectively, their costumes more reminiscent of uniforms from the 1940s than the late 1960s because of the cut of their jackets and pants.[57] Two British flags adorn the wall behind them, and when the camera zooms out, the viewer sees that an entire wall is painted like a British flag. Also behind McCartney and Spinetti is the famous British recruitment poster from World War I, featuring an illustration of Lord Kitchener, former British Secretary of State for War during

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[56] "Magical Mystery Tour Revisited."
[57] I would like to thank Natalia Wieczorek, the Senior Collections Access and Outreach Curator at the National Army Museum, for her help in identifying the battledress costumes in *Magical Mystery Tour*.

World War I, above the words "WANTS YOU." After a tour of the office, the mystery-trip

patrons then line up, greeted by the sergeant shouting gibberish. This scene, however, strips the

military of its serious connotations, and instead becomes an activity that tourists engage with for

entertainment purposes. The barking commands of the drill sergeant are nonsense, and no one

quite knows what to do.[58] Consequently, the military imagery becomes this fanciful game rather

than a combat-training exercise. The Beatles co-opt the symbols of war to create an alternative,

nostalgic narrative of the present as a postwar dream playground.

The final scene of the film is likewise militaristic yet nostalgic. As the Beatles perform a

Fred Astaire-inspired, grand Hollywood dance scene accompanying the song, "Your Mother

Should Know," the festive dance party is interrupted by an orderly line of marching Women's

Royal Air Force cadets. McCartney strips another military image of its martial meaning, and

instead turns it into a source of aesthetic objectification. The military is represented through this

line of attractive women whose marching orders seem to involve decorating the party rather than

enforcing any kind of order. Coincidentally, the scene for "Your Mother Should Know" was

filmed in an airplane hangar in RAF West Malling Air field, previously the home of several

Spitfire, Hurricane, and Mosquito squadrons that fought against the German Luftwaffe. The

former sites of wartime horror became a veritable playground for the Beatles as McCartney took

the trappings of the British military and turned them into an innocently nostalgic nod to the

postwar dance hall for the film.

In between these opening and closing scenes of military fantasy, the film is populated

with other vignettes of varying levels of absurdity, as well as varying levels of nostalgic

references. For example, the "Magical Mystery Tour Marathon" scene, where the travelers leave

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[58] For these scenes in *Magical Mystery Tour*, Spinetti drew heavily from his performance as an
unintelligible drill sergeant in the 1963 play by Joan Littlewood, *Oh, What a Lovely War!*

the bus to participate in games of tug-of-war and foot races, is highly reminiscent of village fete

scenes from the Beatles' postwar childhoods. Similarly, the scene in which Aunt Jessie (played

by Jessie Robins) daydreams of a future with bus courier Buster Bloodvessel (played by Ivor

Cutler) is set to a sweeping string arrangement of the Beatles' 1963 hit "All My Loving," so that

the Beatles' own musical past is nostalgically reimagined as a Romantic-era love motive.

Contrastingly, in the scene for the song "Blue Jay Way," the viewer glimpses George Harrison in

the fog through a kaleidoscopic lens as he sings along to his song while pretending to play a

harmonium drawn in chalk on the pavement. For McCartney's "The Fool on the Hill," the

viewer only sees McCartney standing on a hill, smiling. These scenes are cerebral and

psychedelic without any nostalgic connotations. The film is a collection of several ideas from

the Beatles and from their mystery trip crew, so it presents the viewer with several different

versions of who the Beatles could be in this psychedelic postwar dream world they inhabit.

Taken in its totality, most viewers did not focus on the nostalgic elements of the film, and

instead were puzzled, impressed, or outraged by the nonsensical nature of the film. Letters to the

editor from *The Guardian* on January 2, 1968, reacted to this holiday television offering from the

Beatles, with one person raging, "No amount of analysis of its context can cover up the fact that,

as a programme, it made thoroughly unsatisfactory television" while another lauded the

inventiveness of the film, comparing it to French surrealist cinema of the 1920s and claiming,

"Apart from a performance of Mozart's C major quintet, 'Magical Mystery Tour' was the only

genuine work of art I was fortunate to experience during the holiday."[59] Pop critics commented

on the varied public reaction, with one *Melody Maker* critic suggesting, "As an experimental film

for consumption by the Beatles themselves and their acolytes, it perhaps succeeded. But as an

offering to a vast and largely uncomprehending viewing public, it was far too subtle even though

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[59] "Letters to the Editor: More About Magical Mystery Tour," *The Guardian*, January 2, 1968, 8.

individual moments and filmic tricks may have impressed."[60] The poor reception of the film in

the U.K. was exacerbated by the fact that it aired in black and white, despite being filmed in

color, with many scenes relying on the visual effects of vibrant psychedelic colors.[61] It was the

randomness of the film, however, that seemed the most striking element to critics. One news

article from *The Globe and Mail* decisively stated that the Beatles had produced "their first flop,"

largely blaming the fact that "The film had no plot. It was based on a bus tour with passengers,

including the Beatles, taking off on disconnected flights of fantasy to Beatles music in the

background."[62] An article at *The Guardian*, however, offered that the fantastical nature of the

film did not necessitate a plot:

> Those critical of the film had expected it to have a plot, whereas it was a fantasy. It was a
> tour in which anything could, and did, happen. There was not meant to be any good
> reason for what happened. [McCartney] said that a possible defect was that the 'magical'
> aspect had not been emphasized. They could have obtained the assistance of a good
> director and editor and asked them to produce a Christmas show for them, but they had
> wanted to be themselves.[63]

Observing that the Beatles had just "wanted to be themselves" strikes at the heart of production:

in being themselves, the Beatles presented multiple visions of what is included in the Magical

Mystery Tour, but a theme that they revisit multiple times in the film is postwar nostalgia. The

film is indeed fragmented, but what ends up framing these scattered images inolves nostalgia.

Nostalgia drives the choice of the bus as the mode of transportation; it informs the choice of the

seaside as the mystery trip destination; it plops the tourists into a military recruitment office for

their first stop; and it closes the film with a dancehall number. The Beatles' identity as a group

and as separate members finds many outlets in the film, but nostalgia returns them to their

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[60] Andy Walsh, "The Beatles: *Magical Mystery Tour* (Apple Corps/BBC)," *Melody Maker*, January 6, 1968.
[61] Broadcasters planned to air the film in the U.S. in March of 1968, but because of its critical failure with British audiences, the show was canceled. American fans, then, only had access to the soundtrack.
[62] "Boos Greet Beatles' Not-So-Magical Tour," *The Globe and Mail*, December 28, 1967, 10.
[63] "Beatle Put Controversy Before Boredom," *The Guardian*, December 28, 1967, 2.

British roots and serves as an organizing force. The film *Magical Mystery Tour* visually depicts

nostalgic references amongst a blend of other visual cues, while still using them as a structural

grounding force that emphasizes the Beatles' British identities.

Musical Nostalgia and Class Identity: Mystery Trips

The soundtrack of *Magical Mystery Tour* reinforces different aspects of the Beatles'

postwar identities: amongst all the "psychedelic themes and effects" (as Beatles scholars Reising

and LeBlanc describe the album) are sonic references to the Beatles' postwar British pasts.[64] As

an opening example of this, the Beatles' working-class backgrounds inform the song "Magical

Mystery Tour."[65] The soundtrack begins with the title track, which celebrates a mystery trip, a

term that is impossible to disassociate with hallucinogenic drugs, especially since 1967 marked

the height of the Beatles' involvement with drug experimentation, with Paul McCartney publicly

admitting to having taken LSD in an interview with *Life* magazine published June 17.[66] The

song has not received much analytical treatment, as it is often written off as a less impressive

version of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," albeit this time inspired by countercultural

figures of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters. Beatles scholar Tim Riley declares it "a

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[64] Reising and LeBlanc. "Magical Mystery Tours," 98.

[65] Harrison, McCartney, and Starr all grew up in working-class households, while Lennon spent his childhood in the middle-class household of his Aunt Mimi. Lennon, however, often allied himself with the working class, which aligns with an attitude in postwar class identity that historian David Cannadine observes in *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*. In the 1950s and 1960s, Britons conceptualized themselves as existing within either a tripartite class system (upper, middle, and lower) or a bipartite system ("'a more stark division' between 'gentlemen' and 'the rest,'"). It is likely that Lennon fell in the latter category, seeing himself as part of Cannadine's collective "rest" as opposed to the "gentlemen." David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 158-159.

[66] Only a few months later, however, at a press conference on August 26 with their newfound guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Beatles publicly renounced drug usage, turning instead to Transcendental Meditation.

warmed-over rewrite of *Pepper's* opening without the same layers of self-awareness."[67] Everett

agrees with Riley, noting that the harmonic progression of the chorus and the verse of "Magical

Mystery Tour" are the same as what Everett identifies for the Beatles as the "'Sgt. Pepper'

Progression" of I-♭III-IV-I. To further underline the song's status as less impressive than "Sgt.

Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," Everett writes, "The transcendent modulation is not

accompanied by compelling enough lyrics or sufficient melodic interest, let alone enough of the

'Penny Lane' magic, to rise to greatness."[68] While these assessments are fair, what brings some

analytical interest to "Magical Mystery Tour" is viewing it in light of it having one foot in

British traditions, setting the tone for the album of bringing out memories of an innocent post-

war dream world and celebrating British working-class identities.

The nostalgia that informs "Magical Mystery Tour" stems from the Beatles' working

class backgrounds. The concept of class identity in Britain during the postwar era is an intricate

one, particularly because of the economic shifts that took place during and after the war. In *The

Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*, historian David Cannadine parses out some of the complexities

of class for Britons in the twentieth century:

> The Second World War was the defining experience of more than one generation,
> whether in the blitz, or because of evacuation, or on account of military service.
> Thereafter, the pace of change never let up. Domestically, there was the creation of the
> welfare state, the nationalization of industry, the success of the postwar mixed economy,
> the unprecedented prosperity of the affluent society, the decline of the traditional working
> class, the marginalization of the traditional aristocracy, the moral and behavioral
> revolutions of the 1960s, and the recurrent financial crises of the Wilson-Heath-
> Callaghan years.[69]

In the late 1960s, Britons were juggling contrasting social conceptions: that "wartime

camaraderie" had paved the way to a classless society, that the British Empire and its global

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[67] Riley, *Tell Me Why*, 236.
[68] Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 133.
[69] Cannadine, *Rise and Fall*, 149-150.

system of hierarchies had fallen together, but also that contemporary political rhetoric still drew heavily upon an "us" versus "them" argument between classes, making class distinctions still relevant.[70]

For many British youth, the Beatles embodied the idea of rising above one's station, and that someone from a humble background was capable of shaping British artistic culture. Hanif Kureishi's essay "Eight Arms to Hold You" reminisces on the impact of the Beatles during his school years, remembering his music teacher's consternation at the sheer impossibility of the idea that working class youth had written such well-crafted songs. In youthful rebellion, Kureishi and his classmates refuted that this was impossible, and instead saw it as something to aspire to: "The ordinary wasn't enough; we couldn't accept the everyday now! ... And so the Beatles came to represent opportunity and possibility. They were careers officers, a myth for us to live by, a light for us to follow."[71] The weightiness of this experience of transcending class was not lost on the Beatles, who frequently emphasized their awareness of the British social class system and their unique position within it, albeit most often with humor.[72] "Magical Mystery Tour" is an artifact of their class background, as both the cultural history of charabanc mystery trips (bus vacations to a destination unknown to the travelers) that served as the inspiration for the lyrics and the unique arrangement of the accompanying instrumentation for the song work to highlight the influence of social class identity on the Beatles' artistic work.[73]

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[70] Ibid., 150-164.

[71] Hanif Kureishi, "Eight Arms to Hold You," *London Kills Me: Three Screenplays and Four Essays* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 363.

[72] For example, on November 4, 1963, at the Royal Command Performance—where members of the British royal family were among those in attendance—Lennon introduced the song "Twist and Shout" by requesting: "For our last number, I'd like to ask your help. The people in the cheaper seats clap your hands. And the rest of you, if you'd just rattle your jewelry." Beatles, *Anthology*, 105.

[73] This return to their working-class roots in their songs stands in stark cognitive disconnect to the lifestyles the Beatles led by the summer of 1967. Among many other luxuries their wealth brought them, by July of 1967, the group was in a position to be considering buying a set of islands in Greece to live

The song "Magical Mystery Tour" is credited to Lennon/McCartney, but was mostly composed by McCartney, and the Beatles initially recorded it on April 25-27 and May 3 of 1967, right after they had finished much of the recording for *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.* In fact, as Jonathan Gould observes, this opening track is reminiscent of the opening track of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,* with the same declamatory style of advertising entertainment. Instead of welcoming the audience to a musical performance ("they're guaranteed to raise a smile . . . so may I introduce to you . . . Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band"), Lennon and McCartney lure listeners into a travel opportunity ("that's an invitation . . . to make a reservation . . . the Magical Mystery Tour is coming to take you away").[74] This whole concept of an announcer enticing passers-by ("Roll up, roll up for the Magical Mystery Tour") is reminiscent of childhood, working-class entertainments—it would be rare to have this kind of aggressively vocal advertising for aristocratic entertainments—which run in the same vein as the Salvation Army fetes or military brass band parades Lennon was drawn to as a child, or the church carnivals like the one at St. Peters Church in Woolton, where Lennon and McCartney first met. As travel agents for the local countryside in "Magical Mystery Tour," the Beatles take on the role of directors of a traditional entertainment available to working-class patrons. The subject of this song subverts the upper class: It is not a mode of entertainment that one might expect them to enjoy with their celebrity status and wealth—sailing on a yacht, flying on a jet, drinking champagne, or any other more exotic pastimes that require wealth—instead, they musically depict and reenact the entertainments they grew up with as part of the working class.

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together as musicians and friends. This makes it all the more striking, then, that symbols of the working-class feature so heavily in their music at this time, as it emphasizes the multi-faceted nature of identities present within the Beatles at this time. Beatles, *Anthology*, 258.
[74] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 453.

McCartney started with the idea of a mystery tour—a vacation to a destination unknown to the travelers—which has its roots in the *longue durée* of British history and working-class culture. Harrison said of the film's plot that "It was basically a charabanc trip, which people used to go on from Liverpool to see the Blackpool lights—they'd get loads of crates of beer and all get pissed (in the English sense)."[75] Charabanc trips were a popular mode of vacation in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century, belonging to a centuries-old British tradition of retreating to the idyllic countryside, as travelers hoped to somehow regain a simplicity that is inherent to this pastoral world that represents the opposite of modern, urban life. By the 1950s, charabanc tours consisted of a large, motorized vehicle taking groups of working-class travelers to a vacation destination, and for working-class Liverpudlians, this destination would often be the promenade on the piers of the then seaside resort town of Blackpool, as Harrison mentioned. For further entertainment, charabanc vacationers could partake in journeys where the destination of this trip was a mystery. Radio and television broadcaster Paul Gambaccini said of the film: "The part of *Magical Mystery Tour* that I didn't get, and which I knew Americans would also not get, were the things that were very English. For example, the concept of a mystery tour. America didn't have it. You had to know where you were going before you got onto a bus."[76] Many Americans placed the mystery trip in the context of its meaning to the American counterculture: McCartney had spent some time in 1967 with the members of Jefferson Airplane, who described to him the cross-country, LSD-fueled bus tours of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters.[77] This narrative places the work solidly in the world of modernizing, American psychedelia, but other details about the provenance of the *Magical Mystery Tour* project begin to complicate the song's sphere of influences. Psychedelia represented a way to assert their identity

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[75] Beatles, *Anthology*, 272.
[76] "Magical Mystery Tour Revisited."
[77] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 438-439.

as the younger generation, but the fact that their psychedelia is so steeped with the working-class

Britishness of charabanc trips also asserts another national- and class-oriented side of their social

identity.

The premise of "Magical Mystery Tour" centers on a trip to an unknown destination, and

although the lyrics leave the mode of transportation ambiguous, the bus sound effects that pan

from channel to channel (0:48-0:50, 1:36-1:38) indicate that some sort of large, motorized

vehicle is waiting to take the listener away. The Beatles had spent the last half of the decade

traveling all over the world, and considering how much time they spent in the air, the iconic

image of them coming off the plane when they landed in New York in 1964, as well as the

novelty of the modern technology of the jet airliner, it is telling that their much-lauded mystery

tour of the song and film should be in a mode of transportation as mundane as a bus.[78] Everett

explains that McCartney requested that Mal Evans find posters "advertising mystery tours, as

such a thing had worked well for John's 'Mr. Kite.'"[79] That compositional strategy for "Magical

Mystery Tour" did not work quite as planned since Evans did not find a mystery charabanc tour

poster (unlike "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite," where most of the lyrics are based on a circus

poster belonging to Lennon), but through the invented advertising slogans that open the song

("Roll up," "step right this way") McCartney immerses the listener in a sonic nostalgic fantasy

world, situating the title track of the film in the world of British childhood memories. His

restoration of a British vacation tradition whimsically mixes motorized bus sounds with trumpet

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[78] There is a piece on *Magical Mystery Tour* entitled "Flying," but does little to reference actual flight.
The lack of specific sonic or lyrical reference in "Flying" makes more unique the specificity of the bus
references in "Magical Mystery Tour," further celebrating this working and middle-class mode of travel
by *not* celebrating the high-class novelty of flying. Also, the sound of the bus once again provides a
reference to time with the movement of sound through space—like the Doppler effect in "Strawberry
Fields Forever"—while also being a diegetic sound effect, much like the ones incorporated in "Penny
Lane."
[79] Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 132.

fanfares against a drum set and electric bass background, sonically creating a nostalgic present utopia that at once references three sound worlds together: postwar working-class diversions, *auctoritas*-invoking brass lines, and modern rock, respectively. The past and the present combine into one escapist sound amalgam.[80]

Blaring trumpets herald the entrance of the tour, where one of the trumpet players was David Mason, who had also added his trumpet expertise on "Penny Lane." The Beatles' endorsement of working-class entertainments and pleasures is glorified by the inclusion of the trumpet fanfares that bring to mind England's rich regal tradition. Everett observes in his fantastically thorough *The Foundations of Rock* that trumpets "are heard in 120 top-twenty pop songs of 1955-69," but even though the use of trumpets was not uncommon in popular music of the time, the nature of the trumpet line in "Magical Mystery Tour" is unique.[81] The trumpet lines stand out because they are the most melodic component of the song outside of the vocal lines, and instead of sounding more firmly rooted in the trad jazz or Dixieland band idiom that was resurging in popularity at the time (e.g., the clippy, lighthearted, jazzy sound of the New Vaudeville Band's "Winchester Cathedral"), the trumpet lines in "Magical Mystery Tour" sound as if they are straight out of British brass band repertoire. The trumpets of "Magical Mystery Tour" sound more related to the piccolo trumpet line in "Penny Lane" than to the jazzy horn line in "Got to Get You Into My Life" (1966): there is far less syncopation in "Magical Mystery Tour," and the lack of other instruments in the horn line make the brass effect one of generalized, classical historical reference than one of swinging, more modern, jazz.

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[80]To further emphasize the escapism inherent in the song, the destination in the song is unclear: The listener only knows that the tour is here to "take you away, take you today." The language in the song is similar to Lennon's lyrics of mutual escape in "Strawberry Fields Forever"; Lennon's "let me take *you* down" and McCartney's "coming to take *you* away," both enticing the listener with second person familiarity to a destination that represents a utopian fantasy (Italics my own).

[81] Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock: From "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 102.

In her article on embodied memories, nostalgia, and the *sarangi* (a North Indian stringed instrument), ethnomusicologist Regula Qureshi states: "Instruments mean. They have meaning through cultural knowledge permeated with physicality and affect: embodied knowledge."[82] She further explains that musical sound is capable of immediately evoking a "construction of place" through the organization of collective memories.[83] By evoking the brass-band style in "Magical Mystery Tour," the Beatles reference the British working class. In an extensive history of British brass bands, Trevor Herbert remarks that these bands evoke "resonances of place, class, and time," and that there exists a stereotype of brass bands in England as being working class and Northern, a description that also easily matches the Beatles' hometown of Liverpool.[84] He further explains that these bands historically are associated with being a communal activity at the heart, and that since most members even today are mostly male, the genre has a masculine connotation.[85] The inclusion of this sound in "Magical Mystery Tour," then, carries with it a set of values—community-building, a representation of masculinity, and a celebration of Northern England's working class—that align with the life the members of the Beatles grew up with in postwar Liverpool. This sound also had a personal connection for McCartney, as well as for the Beatles as a group. Everett notes that not only was McCartney's father, Jim, a trumpet player (albeit in a jazz ensemble he fronted, Jim Mac's Jazz Band), but also McCartney's grandfather Joe played tuba in the Territorial Army Band and the Cope Bros. & Co. Ltd. Tobacco Factory

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[82] Regula Qureshi, "How Does Music Mean? Embodied Memories and the Politics of Affect in the Indian 'sarangi'," *American Ethnologist* 27, No. 4 (Nov., 2000): 810.
[83] Ibid., 810.
[84] "Many writers have characterized the British brass band as one of the greatest achievements of the working class." Trevor Herbert, ed. *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2-4.
[85] Ibid.

Brass Band.[86] Bands such as these were common at community gatherings, and as Everett

further details, the Band of the Cheshire Yeomanry led a parade at a fête at St. Peter's Church in

Woolton, Liverpool on July 6, 1957. This was the same event where Lennon's skiffle band, the

Quarrymen, later took to the stage while a young Paul McCartney watched from the audience.

This marked the first time the two met, and thus the inception of the Beatles was partially

accompanied by the sound of a brass band.

The British brass band idiom comprises a few broad characteristics: homogeneity (with

"'organ-like' sound as the ideal band sonority"), discipline, precision of rhythm, and virtuosity

through articulation, most often through the "fastidious neatness and clarity" of single-, double-,

and triple-tonguing.[87] The emphasis on conformity led to a national continuity that saw very

little change in the typical sound of a brass band from the nineteenth into the mid-twentieth

century.[88] The trumpet lines in "Magical Mystery Tour" achieve these same organ-like

harmonies and quickly articulated, double-tongued lines, meaning that these can be situated in a

long-standing sonic tradition in Britain. The trumpet has five main roles in the song: 1) a

descending dotted-quarter, eighth, quarter note figure that opens the song and returns to

introduce the chorus, (0:00-0:05, 0:39-0:44, 1:09-1:13; See Ex. 1.1); 2) punctuating remarks that

are either quarter notes or sometimes two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note, both played

straight on the downbeat (0:52-1:03, 1:24-1:26, 1:42-1:54; see Ex. 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.2.3); 3) the

arpeggiating quarter notes in strict quadruple time against the quarter-note triplets in the vocal

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[86] Walter Everett, "Beyond American Rock 'N' Roll: The Beatles put their own stamp on borrowings from classical, folk, and early British rock sources," (Working paper, Faculty of Music Theory, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 2017), 14.

[87] Herbert writes that these values stand in contrast to performance techniques held in high regard in orchestral brass playing, where "the ability to play in long passages in the extremes of the tessitura, to play widely separated intervals in quick succession, and to employ so-called 'special effects'" are the sign of virtuosic ability. Herbert, *British Brass Band*, 287, 295-297.

[88] Ibid., 292.

line at the end of the verses ("The magical mystery tour is coming to take you away") (1:55-2:22; see Ex. 1.3); 4) an excitement-inducing ascending terrace of three groups of eight eighth notes, culminating in sixteen staccato sixteenth notes that are double-tongued (0:32-0:38, 1:04-1:09; see Ex. 1.4), and 5) the melodic content of the organ-like, dreamy reverie in the instrumental break that meditates in V (B) before moving back to I (E) (1:15-1:23, see Ex. 1.5).

Example 1.1: Descending introductory motive by trumpets at 0:00-0:05, 0:39-0:44, 1:09-1:13.

Example 1.2.1: Repeated punctuating remark by trumpets at 0:52-1:03

Example 1.2.2: Punctuating remark by trumpets at 1:24-1:26

Example 1.2.3: Repeated punctuating remark by trumpets at 1:42-1:56

Example 1.3: Arpeggiating motive by trumpets 1:55-2:04 and again at 2:08-2:16

Example 1.4: Terrace of eighth notes followed by double-tongued sixteenth notes by trumpets at 0:32-0:38 and 1:04-1:09.
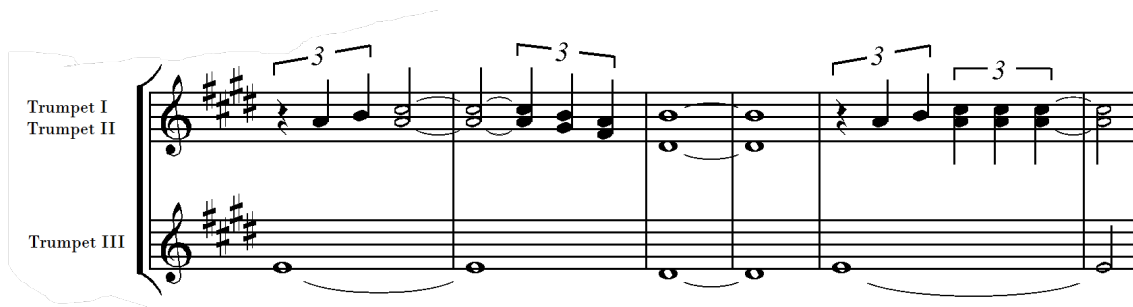
Example 1.5: Trumpets during melodic, organ-like instrumental break at 1:15-1:23

The sonic effect of these trumpet lines harkens back to cheerful childhood fetes. Although these bands also carried the historical association of performing at memorial services for those who had died in the war, the brass sounds present in "Magical Mystery Tour" revel solely in victorious fanfares, melding a utopic vision of a working-class past into a vital part the present.

Social psychologist Janelle Wilson states, "Nostalgic recollection gives us the opportunity to observe and juxtapose past and present identity."[89] The Beatles sonically juxtapose their past and present with the combination of rock instruments, brass band idioms in the horn line, and the noises from the bus. Tying these sounds together enabled the Beatles to connect their past identities with their present, a key function of nostalgic memory. As psychologist Clay Routledge explains, "Nostalgia makes people feel like they have a self that is continuous and stable across time. … Self-continuity reflects a sense of connection between one's past self and present self."[90] "Magical Mystery Tour" presents the Beatles as existing

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[89] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 35.
[90] Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 76-77.

within both their late 1960's rock identities, as well as still familiar with the working-class

British identities of their childhoods.

Musical Nostalgia and National Identity: English Gardens

Nostalgia also functions on *Magical Mystery Tour* as an affirmation of the English

national identity of the Beatles, and this is apparent on Lennon's composition, "I Am the

Walrus."[91] This song is a darker addition to the collection, and it presents the listener with

questions about identity through its many iterations of selfhood (e.g., "I am he," "I am the

Walrus," "I am the Eggman"). In "I Am the Walrus," Lennon sings mostly nonsensical lyrics

over a collage of dense instrumentation that devolves into noise. Beatles scholar Tim Riley

describes the song as communicating loss, and that it meanders, suspending "normal time

boundaries—it creates its own world of sound so completely that we forget what came before

and what comes after."[92] In their chapter on the Beatles' psychedelic years in *The Cambridge

Companion to the Beatles*, Russell Reising and Jim LeBlanc point to "I Am the Walrus" as a

psychedelic work that is both nonsensical and a "reflective questioning of one's own identity."[93]

This fits into their larger discussion of psychedelia as "mind-manifesting," where recreational

use of LSD leads to hallucinations of fantastical images, "thoughts can flow unusually freely and

dreamily, and LSD users often turn reflectively inward."[94] Reising and LeBlanc then turn from

this idea of identity to focus on the psychedelic elements in the music, including the surreal

lyrics, the distorted vocals, and the harmonic progression of the song as evocative of a "drug-

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[91] Of the six songs on the soundtrack, four were credited to Lennon/McCartney—where three were written by McCartney, and one by Lennon—one is credited to and written by Harrison ("Blue Jay Way"), and one is an instrumental track credited to all four Beatles ("Flying").
[92] Riley, *Tell Me Why*, 238.
[93] Reising and LeBlanc, "Magical Mystery Tours," 106.
[94] Ibid., 91.

induced paranoia."[95] Everett also posits the song to be an exploration of identity, writing: "As impenetrable as the images of 'I Am the Walrus" are, the song can be heard as a continuation of Lennon's exploration of his own identity, which he had begun in earnest with 'She Said She Said," and "Strawberry Fields Forever."[96] He refers to the opening line as an example of this identity work, where Lennon sings, "I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together."[97] Everett suggests Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) as a possible inspiration for these opening lyrics, specifically a scene in which Alice questions her identity. Within the framework of the Alice story, Everett then views Lennon as both "the egg man, the nonsense riddler Humpty Dumpty" and Tweedledee's Walrus ("a costumed conversationalist").[98] This is an apt reading, but the concept of "I Am the Walrus" as an introspective work on identity is worth pursuing even further than what these Beatles scholars provide. Amidst the swirl of psychedelic imagery, undertones of nostalgic memories informed by national cultural history appear in this track, which serve to highlight the Englishness of Beatles' identity, providing a potential answer to the challenge of lost identity presented by the song. Furthermore, these references to national identity construct points of support within an otherwise enigmatic work.

Even though Lennon wrote "I Am the Walrus" with the intention of being indecipherable by using vivid, stream-of-consciousness imagery mirroring that of a hallucinogenic trip— including lyrics such as "sitting on a cornflake," "elementary penguin singing Hare Krishna," "they are the egg men," etc.—the sheer Englishness of the song cannot be denied.[99] The national

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[95] Ibid., 106.
[96] Everett, *Beatles As Musicians* (1999), 135.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid., 135.
[99] "[Lennon] decided to confound his scholarly and journalistic audiences by writing a song so inscrutable that it could only yield the most laughable attempt at analytical parsing." Ibid., 133. The fascination with

cultural references in "I Am the Walrus" are presented in a few ways throughout the song. When Lennon wrote the eccentric, sometimes grotesque, lyrics to the song in August of 1967, he was attempting to mimic Bob Dylan's lyrical style, but Lennon also had two main sources of inspiration for his lyrics: the literary works of Lewis Carroll—a favorite English author of Lennon's childhood, source of the Walrus and Eggman characters—and a chant from his school days at Quarry Bank School, where "Yellow matter custard, green slop pie/ All mixed together with a dead dog's eye" became "Yellow matter custard/ Dripping from a dead dog's eye."[100] Despite their ultimate nonsensical nature, the roots of the lyrics are grounded in Lennon's postwar British childhood. Lennon's references to a poem from his grammar school days and to an English cultural work that was meaningful to him during his childhood are certainly nostalgic, and these references also speak to his English identity and the cultural experiences his postwar youth afforded him.

In addition to the foundation that it provided in the creation of the lyrics, Lennon's English national identity also functions as a point of musical stability within "I Am the Walrus." Two minutes into the song, there is a psychedelic departure from the plodding drums and vocals as radio sounds, buzzes, and a high ringing tone interrupt, creating the most experimental moment on the album thus far. These noises then cease as a solo cello section glissandos into a return to normalcy, and Lennon reestablishes the command of the vocal line, singing the lyrics: "Sitting in an English garden waiting for the sun/ If the sun don't come we get a tan from

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nonsense itself has strong roots in English literary history: Along with the nonsensical scenarios in Lewis Carrol's works, English author and illustrator Edward Lear produced several popular nonsense works, including *Book of Nonsense* (1846), *Nonsense Songs and Stories* (1870), and *Nonsense Botany* (1880), among many others. Contemporary critics compared Lennon's own published writings *In His Own Write* (1964) and *A Spaniard in the Works* (1965) to the works of Edward Lear. Although professing to have been previously unfamiliar with Lear's writings, Lennon was compelled to read some of Lear's output after reading the reviews for his own books. Beatles, *Anthology*, 176.

[100] Everett, *Beatles As Musicians* (1999), 133.

standing in the English rain" (See Example 1.6).

Example 1.6: "I Am the Walrus," 2:00-2:18 psychedelic break and the return to stability

Thus, after the experimental psychedelic break, stability is regained in none other than the form of the return to a very stereotypical English scene. Although their nationality had played a large role in their touring years in terms of how they were marketed as part of the British Invasion in popular music, it had not played as visible a role in the Beatles' lyrics until 1967.[101] It is significant, then, that the word "English" appears in the lyrics, and this is made even more symbolic by its placement within the song as a moment of stability after the experimental electronic break.

Perhaps the most memorable sonic reference to the Beatles' English national background comes in the song's coda, during which random radio noises tune in and out over a crescendoing, ascending orchestra. This coda serves a similar purpose as the one in "Strawberry Fields Forever," where Lennon is providing the listener with a sonic meditation to bring the listener in and out of his musical reverie. One of the radio sounds present in the coda of "I Am the Walrus" is a quotation from a BBC production of Shakespeare's *King Lear*.[102] Lennon had an interest in *avant-garde* compositional techniques, and this manifested itself in "I Am the Walrus" through Lennon incorporating the element of chance into the recording process: he taped the results as he tuned into different radio stations, and then he added whatever he happened upon into the song's coda.[103] Although this was a purely random occurrence, there is something to be said for the fact that it was on the British airwaves at the time of the recording of "I Am the Walrus," and that it remained in the final version of the song, instead of being muted out or recorded over on the

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[101] Before 1967, the Beatles had not used the word "England" or "English" in their lyrics, but with "A Day in the Life" on *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and "I Am the Walrus" on Magical Mystery Tour, their country of origin made an appearance.

[102] Act IV, scene vi of *King Lear*.

[103] Everett notes that the week he recorded "I Am the Walrus" in late September 1967, Lennon had begun his artistic collaborations with Yoko Ono. Ono had studied with American composer John Cage, who incorporated the element of chance within his own compositions, so it is likely that Lennon was inspired by Cage's work via Ono. Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 134.

working tape. The inclusion of this short *King Lear* excerpt places "I Am the Walrus" in dialogue with historical English culture, inextricably linking the Beatles with an older cultural icon of their nation. As such a prominent cultural figure, Shakespeare certainly played a role in the Beatles' postwar upbringing.[104] In his recollections on publishing his first book, *In His Own Write* (1964), Lennon mused, "I'm too near school to read Dickens or Shakespeare. … The only classic or highbrow things I'd read or I knew of were at school. I must have come across James Joyce at school, but we hadn't done him like I remember doing Shakespeare."[105] Lennon draws from his own past as well as English cultural past to sonically create a narrative that places the Beatles within the context of their nation's cultural products, musically solidifying a formation of identity as part of that longer national culture.[106] Beyond this sonic statement of national cultural heritage, the Shakespearean quotes have a further function within the song. Lennon interspersed these Shakespearean lines in the coda to a curious effect: amidst the chaos of a series of electronic buzzes and screeches, the chorus repetitively intoning the near-inscrutable lines "Everybody's got one" and "Oompah, Oompah, stick it up your jumper," and the strings repetitively ascending an A Dorian scale, the Shakespearean lines arise out of the noise as quick islands of intelligible language. It is a striking listening experience as the listener's ear tries to grasp onto something within all the noise, only to grab hold of Shakespeare.

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[104] The musical references to the Beatles' national heritage also appear in the instrumentation. There is a nod to British brass bands once again on this soundtrack from 1:36 to 1:46, where a French horn plays a confident lyrical passage--once again sounding as if it stems more from regal fanfare than from a jazzy horn line typical of 1960's rock—rising above the almost violently persistent snare snaps and dark cellos.

[105] Beatles, *Anthology*, 176.

[106] A similar effect is achieved in "All You Need Is Love," a single from 1967 that was also included on the U.S. release of the *Magical Mystery Tour* soundtrack. In the coda of this song, the listener can hear the melodies of the British carol "Greensleeves," a keyboard invention by J.S. Bach in F major, Glenn Miller's "In the Mood," and the Beatles' own 1963 single "She Loves You." The result of this is that the Beatles sonically cement themselves within a musical historical dialogue that emphasizes their place within Western music history.

Beatles scholars have noted the references to *King Lear,* to Lewis Carroll, and to the Quarry Bank School, but they do not extrapolate much further beyond pointing out their existence. How do these references serve the song? What do they achieve in terms of communicating identity? In "I Am the Walrus," Lennon once again in 1967 drew from nostalgic memories of his childhood, albeit this time heavily cloaked in psychedelic imagery. In *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning*, social psychologist Janelle Wilson examines the nostalgia inherent in collecting. Although she refers specifically to antique collectors, her observations about what a collector chooses to keep are relevant to a broader discussion of nostalgia and cultural references. She found that for collectors, "the objects individuals select to place in their homes are not meaningless, coincidental, or haphazard. Rather, conscious choices are made, and these choices reflect one's identity, connection to the past, and connection to others."[107] As much as Lennon attested to the meaningless nature of "I Am the Walrus," parts of the song belie this assertion, the most notable of which—the lyrics coming from Lennon's school day chant and his adoration of Lewis Carroll, the image of the English garden in the rain, and the Shakespearean play—all fall under the category of being references to the national cultural history the Beatles grew up with. These are compositional choices on Lennon's part, just as all of the nonsensical psychedelic lyrical images and sounds are, but the fact that the references to nation serve as anchors within the song reveals that these references function in a very specific way of asserting national identity as a source of stability amidst chaos.

Musical Nostalgia and Collective Identity: Songs Your Mother Should Know

The dialogue between identity and nostalgia emerges a third time in the *Magical Mystery Tour* soundtrack with the closing song, "Your Mother Should Know." With this song,

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[107] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 127.

McCartney depicts nostalgic memory within the family unit as a confirmation of a collective

identity informed by the postwar dream. "Your Mother Should Know" was recorded on August

22-23 and September 16 and 29 in 1967, and the mixing took place October 2 and November

6.[108] McCartney had originally attempted an arrangement of the song as a military march.[109] He

left that musical idea behind for the vaudeville style, but this military connection was not entirely

forgotten, as can be seen through the presence of the Women's Royal Air Force cadets in the

film's rendition of "Your Mother Should Know." The title for the song was taken from a line

from the 1961 British film *A Taste of Honey*, based on a 1958 play of the same title by Shelagh

Delaney.[110] Music critic Ian MacDonald describes the film's soundtrack as showcasing the

"blunt vitality of working-class Northernness."[111] This film about a pregnant teenager's troubled

familial relationships reflects the postwar disillusionment that many British artists explored

during the 1950s and early 1960s as part of the Angry Young Men artistic scene, upon which

Chapter 2 of this dissertation elaborates. What is interesting to note here is that McCartney once

again drew from stark postwar reality by referencing this film, which connects to his own

background of working-class Northernness, but then turned that realism into postwar fantasy

through tying that line to a cheerful melody.

  This song has often been critically brushed off as a poor man's "When I'm Sixty-Four"—

another nostalgic track from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*—that was undeveloped and

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[108] Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 141.
[109] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 454.
[110] Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2007), 264.
[111] Ibid., 60.

rushed in production.[112] In his retrospective of the Beatles' works, Tim Riley blasts the song's

old-fashioned style:

> "'Your Mother Should Know' is a lesser version of 'When I'm Sixty-four': it's got plenty of Paul's hokey affection for old-time singalong pleasure but none of his flair for characterization. The harmonic turns are bright and clever: the bridge is a piano solo that disrupts the oom-pah-pah meter, but it suggests more than it actually expresses. With a new lyric in this section, he might have turned the song into a more wistful standard—a song within a song would work well here."[113]

A *Record Mirror* critic evaluated the song more positively, albeit in the context of drug

consumption: "'Your Mother Should Know' is a medium tempo ballad with a corny sort of

tune—but the atmosphere developed is fantastic. It's a hazy, stoned kind of sensation which

reminds you of hearing old tunes, in smoky rooms…"[114] The "old-time" and "corny" nature of

the song might seem ill-suited to the Countercultural psychedelia of late 1967, but when viewed

in the context of the Beatles' exploration of identity through nostalgia that informed their work

in 1967, the song's presence gains coherence.

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[112] Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, 454; Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 141. "When I'm Sixty-Four" is nostalgic in its music-hall style and an oom-pah bass line that brings in the British brass band feel, but it is also nostalgic in the sense that the song is about a nostalgic future. Sociologist Fred Davis expounds on this phenomenon of "whether it is possible to feel nostalgia for the future," noting that several respondents in his interviews could "envision themselves at a relatively distant point in the future looking back on events that were imminent or whose occurrence could be anticipated 'in the normal course' of the life career." Davis, F., *Yearning for Yesterday*, 12. "When I'm Sixty-Four" is not a modernist, utopic vision of the future that permeated late 1960s science fiction television culture, but rather a future deeply entwined with nostalgia for the important moments typical of a postwar, middle-class life: owning a house with a garden, having children and grand children, and saving up for the vacation to the Isle of Wight. This track was recorded in between "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane" in December of 1966, so it was already part of this heavily-nostalgic creative period, but was saved for the *Sgt. Pepper* album instead of being released as a b-side to Strawberry Fields or Penny Lane. To further complicate the chronology of the future-projected nostalgia in this song, McCartney actually wrote the melody sometime around 1957-1958, when he was a teenager. So, for this Sgt. Pepper track, the 24-year-old post-Beatlemania McCartney is writing a song about being 64 while drawing from a song he wrote as a 16-year-old in his pre-Beatlemania days. McCartney's nostalgia in this track is straight out of Boym's theories on how nostalgia functions, where McCartney escapes the "conventional confines of time and space." Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xiv.
[113] Riley, *Tell Me Why*, 238-239.
[114] Norman Jopling, "The Beatles: Magical Mystery Tour," *Record Mirror*, December 1, 1967.

"Your Mother Should Know" offers a pertinent commentary on collective memory and forgetting. The song repetitively extols the action of getting up and dancing to "a song that was a hit before your mother was born" that "your mother should know." The acknowledgement of a family relationship in "Your Mother Should Know" communicates a very basic level of identity expression of a self in relation to a group. Indeed, the presence of a family structure evident within the song's title is remarkable in and of itself. Prior to 1967, there are no references to family relationships in the Beatles' lyrics.[115] That these familial references then appear in a year during which the Beatles are challenging their identities, then, is telling. Psychologist Janelle Wilson understands nostalgic memories of family as a part of self identity, a way of placing oneself within a community.[116] Nostalgic memories of family serve to ground the nostalgic within a preexistent collective support system:

> …[For respondents who related nostalgic memories of family] the exercise of nostalgia may be a way of recreating a sense of community and constructing a sense of collective hope. It is clear that personal identity is very strongly linked to the community that is being remembered. Informants' nostalgia for a time when certain institutions and relationships were strong seems to express faith in the possibility of realizing that kind of strength again in the present and future."[117]

 Through the existence of a mother character in the song, then, a relationship between identity, community, and nostalgia is formed.

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[115] With *Sgt. Pepper's* stories of family members began to permeate the lyrical imagination through the father and his wife in "She's Leaving Home" and sisters in "Lovely Rita." Lyrical references to "mother," "momma," and "mommy" ("Your Mother Should Know" [1967], "Cry Baby Cry" [1968], "Happiness is a Warm Gun" [1968}, "Mother Nature's Son" [1968], "Yer Blues," [1968], "Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill" [1968], "It's All Too Much" [1969], "Let It Be" [1970]); to "father" and "daddy" ("She's Leaving Home" [1967], "Yer Blues" [1968], "Back in the U.S.S.R." [1968]); to brother ("Revolution," [1968], "Cry Baby Cry" [1968]); and to sister ("Lovely Rita" [1967], "Mean Mr. Mustard" [1969]) all occur after the Beatles' reformed their identities as purely studio artists in 1967. (N.B. The "father" of Father McKenzie in "Eleanor Rigby" serves as a religious title rather than a demarcation of family identity; nonetheless his character appears in 1967.)
[116] Wilson explains, "systems within intact and supportive families, close-knit neighborhoods, active and protective churches, and entertainment help the individual to know who she is and how she is connected to others." Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 87.
[117] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 86.

There is an act of community, of everyone gathering together to achieve a particular goal, reminiscent of the communal spirit present in the postwar dream of McCartney's childhood. The mother, representative of an older generation, acts as the guardian to the treasures of the past, which really only she can unlock in this communal act of collective memory, reflecting what philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs observed on memory, "the greatest number of memories come back to us when our parents, our friends, or other persons recall them to us . . . it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories."[118] Psychologist Clay Routledge confirmed this through an extensive study on nostalgia and people's sense of "belongingness," concluding through the experiment's participants that "nostalgic memories tend to be highly social in nature"[119] Throughout the song, McCartney continually emphasizes the relation between individual and group remembering in the lyrics: the entire group is supposed to get up and dance to a song ("Let's all get up and dance to a song that was a hit before your mother was born"), but the memory of this song hinges on the memory of the mother ("Though she was born a long, long time ago, your mother should know").

What is the point of this activity? The answer may lie in the act of remembrance itself, for Halbwachs suggests that by revisiting a story from the past, "we believe that we can recall the mental state in which we found ourselves at the time."[120] McCartney attempts this same aspiration to a particular mental state through song, trying to engage with the past and with older generations: "I've always hated generation gaps. I always feel sorry for a parent or child that doesn't understand each other. . . . I was advocating for peace between generations. In 'Your

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[118] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* trans. Lewis A. Coser (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, 1992), 38.
[119] Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 31.
[120] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 46.

Mother Should Know' I was basically trying to say you mother might know more than you think she does. Give her credit."[121] During the recording of *Magical Mystery Tour,* McCartney was also working on a piece for a traditional jazz ensemble, so he was already submerged in the idiom of this older style he adopted for "Your Mother Should Know."[122] With the music hall references in both the song and the Beatles filmic interpretation of the song, it would not be a stretch to consider the intergenerational nostalgic reference of the swinging vocables at the end of "Your Mother Should Know" as pointing to a memory of one of these songs of the past that might have helped citizens deal with the harsh realities of wartime through humor and music.

Although it was part of McCartney's compositional style to fill in a melody with nonsense words and syllables until he went back and re-edited (for example, the original lyrics to "Yesterday" were "scrambled eggs, oh my baby how I love your legs"), he would also commonly use vocables in songs to evoke emotion that escaped definable meaning (e.g., the ending of "Hey Jude" [1968] or "Maybe I'm Amazed" [1970]). As the song progresses, the lyrical meaningfulness breaks down into a vocable melody: Is this the tune that the mother remembers, or is it an invented replacement for the lost song itself? There is an underlying sense of nostalgic loss in the song because of the lack of specificity in the vocable melody. Halbwachs explains that when we remember something from our past, even though we believe ourselves to be afforded the chance to relive the memory exactly, most often we experience only vagueness: "
. . . precisely because these memories are repetitions, because they are successively engaged in very different systems of notions, at different periods in our lives, they have lost the form and

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[121] Paul McCartney in Barry Miles, *Paul McCartney: Many Years from Now* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1997), 355.
[122] As Everett explains, "McCartney was busy in the studio in July [1967]. . . producing and playing piano on his 1962 composition, then called 'Catswalk' but released in 1967 as 'Catcall,' for the traditional jazz outfit called Chris Barber's Band." Everett, *Beatles as Musicians* (1999), 141.

appearance they once had."[123] Social psychologist Janelle Wilson also muses upon the nature of forgetting within collective nostalgia: "Collective nostalgia can serve the purpose of forging a national identity, expressing patriotism. It might also reflect selective remembering and selective forgetting that occur at the collective level."[124] Within the assuring safety of a collective family identity McCartney presents in "Your Mother Should Know," the repetitive vocables leave the melodic reference to the older song devoid of specific meaning, and McCartney takes the specificity out of history and leaves us with a tenuous memory of an almost forgotten song, but one whose lilting syncopations still evoke a chipper dance tune. "Your Mother Should Know" acts as a nod to the older generation, but one where the placement within the security of the nebulous collective remembrance removes the wartime trauma and replacing it with victorious, postwar cheer.

Conclusion: In the Shadow of World War II

The Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* is disparate and at times inscrutable. It poses several visions of and challenges to identity for the Beatles as performers. Although some of the album tracks stem from songs that they had begun earlier in 1967, it is important that they returned to what was available as a means of coming together as a group after Epstein's death. The presence of the Beatles' postwar pasts in *Magical Mystery Tour*—that the past should play a role at all amidst everything—carries meaning. In her study of nostalgia, Wilson writes: "postmodern society presents its members with the problem of identity formation and authenticity. Contemporary American society is characterized by fragmentation, confusion, and lack of

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[123] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* 46-47.
[124] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 31.

continuity. I suggest that behind individuals' and groups' nostalgia is a search for meaning."[125]

Although Wilson arrived at her theories by examining the interviews of American respondents,

her description of society as "characterized by fragmentation, confusion, and lack of continuity"

can be seen as well in *Magical Mystery Tour*, as can the search for meaning through nostalgia.

In a time of fluctuating identities as performers and their collective grief over the loss of Brian

Epstein, the Beatles' shared history of postwar Liverpool served as a grounding mechanism.

Drawing on their own histories allowed members of the Beatles to explore multiple facets of

their identity through nostalgia, including their social class, national, and community identities.

1967 stands out in the Beatles discography as a year of nostalgia. The albums that

followed *Magical Mystery Tour* did not address nostalgia with the same depth.[126] Some later

tracks draw upon musical styles of the World War II and immediate post war era—musical styles

the band members would have been familiar with in their childhoods—"Honey Pie" (1968), "Her

Majesty" (1969), and "Maggie Mae" (1970) come to mind. It was not until later in each

individual member's solo careers that they returned to the theme of nostalgia: McCartney with

The Liverpool Oratorio (1995)*, Run Devil Run* (1999), *Chaos and Creation in the Backyard*

(2005)*,* and *Kisses on the Bottom* (2012); Harrison with "When We Was Fab" (1987) and his

covers of Cole Porter, Hoagy Carmichael, and Harold Arlen tunes on *Thirty Three and 1/3*

(1976), *Somewhere in England* (1981) and *Brainwashed* (2002); and Starr with *Sentimental*

Journey (1970) and "Never Without You" (2003).[127]

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[125] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 82.
[126] These include *The Beatles* (commonly known as "The White Album," released in 1968), *Yellow Submarine* (1969), *Abbey Road* (1969)*,* and *Let It Be* (1970).
[127] McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio* of 1991 begins with World War II—complete with a movement about air raid sirens and another about the dance hall—and the protagonist of the story is raised with the adage "being born where you are born carries with it certain responsibilities"; the 2005 album *Chaos and Creation in the Backyard* includes a picture on the cover of his childhood backyard and contains the song "English Tea," which—similar to the line in Lennon's "I Am the Walrus"—extols the very British

The near absence of nostalgia in the remaining years of their careers as members of the

Beatles after such focus on it in 1967 is likely due to shifting identities that led to new directions

on individual projects and fractured the solidity of the band as a stable unit. Walter Everett

describes 1968 as a time of "rejuvenation and dissolution" for the band, pointing to Lennon's

blooming romantic and professional interest in Yoko Ono, Harrison's solo project composing the

soundtrack for the film *Wonderwall*, Starr's temporarily quitting the Beatles in August, the

failure of the Beatles' business ventures with Apple Corps. Ltd., and the band's disenchantment

with their spiritual guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as examples of the group members' growth

(and growing pains) as individual artists.[128] Everett continues: "Every member of the group—

with the possible exception of McCartney—was to begin finding more pleasure in solo projects

than in group endeavors." Nostalgia had provided one means of direction for the Beatles as a

group in 1967—for, as Clay Routledge concludes, "nostalgic memories are typically social in

nature and revisiting those memories increases perceptions of social connectedness"—but the

desire of each individual to begin moving away from the group in turn spelled the end of

nostalgia for the Beatles.[129] In other words, nostalgia had, for a time, served its purpose for

constructing identity for the Beatles in 1967, but 1968 marked a time for each Beatle to move

forward and away from the past, as well as from one another's shared pasts.

It is worth noting that is was McCartney who proposed the overarching nostalgic

elements of *Magical Mystery Tour*, and also McCartney who revisited nostalgia frequently in his

solo work. In an interview in 2011 about his experiences in New York after the terrorist attacks

on September 11, 2001, McCartney stated, "I grew up in the shadow of World War II. You saw

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pastime of sitting in an English garden, sipping tea; and his 2012 album *Kisses on the Bottom* is
composed almost exclusively of cover songs of jazz standards from the 1920s-40's.
[128] Everett, *Beatles As Musicians* (1999), 149.
[129] Routledge, *Nostalgia*, 68.

how they dealt with it and it was with humor and it was with music. That's how they dealt with it."[130] This statement suggests again how McCartney turned to nostalgia as a way of reestablishing order and identity in otherwise turbulent times, just as he did with *Magical Mystery Tour*. McCartney's engagement with nostalgia indeed displays how it can serve as an erasure to any pain in the present or past. Ian MacDonald writes in *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties,* "the true subject of English psychedelia was neither love nor drugs, but nostalgia for the innocent vision of the child."[131] This is certainly true for McCartney, and indeed, the Beatles were not the only British rock group engaging with nostalgia in the late 1960s. While this chapter explored some of the many ways nostalgia can function as a confirmation of identity, the following chapter on the Kinks' *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* demonstrates that nostalgia can challenge identity, and be at once a source of pleasant reverie and at the same time an instigator of discomforting rumination.

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[130] Paul McCartney in Albert Maysles, dir., *The Love We Make* (Showtime. Aired on September 10, 2011).

[131] McDonald, *Revolution*, 216.

CHAPTER II

The Kinks' *Arthur*, or the Decline and Fall of British Postwar Nostalgia

"The twentieth century began with a futuristic utopia and ended with nostalgia. Optimistic belief in the future was discarded like an outmoded spaceship sometime in the 1960s."—Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*[1]

The trade of futuristic utopia for nostalgia that Boym pinpoints as occurring in the 1960s in the opening epigraph is reflected in the discography of the Kinks. By taking a razor blade to the speaker cone of the guitar amplifier to create the iconic guitar sound of their first hit single, "You Really Got Me" (1964), the Kinks scrambled onto the spaceship of pop optimism, and then promptly jettisoned themselves from it a few years later, seemingly sending the band through a musical time warp as they embraced a saccharine-tinged nostalgia for the remainder of the 1960s. They wrote overtly nostalgic music ("Waterloo Sunset" [1967], *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* [1968], *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* [1969], to name a few); their record companies' marketing schemes compelled fans to harbor nostalgia for the Kinks (in 1969, kits for fans included a consumer's guide that described their music as "nostalgic"); and even the Kinks were nostalgic about the Kinks (the cover of their 1986 compilation album wistfully presents the lead singer Ray Davies stylized as a 1950s ballroom dancer).[2] The group's near career-spanning relationship with nostalgia offered them the opportunity to explore the many affectual facets of looking back to the past.

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[1] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiv.
[2] *Come Dancing With the Kinks* [1986] is a compilation album of the band's works from 1977 to 1986, and the cover features Ray Davies—the lead singer and primary songwriter for the Kinks—dressed to

On October 10, 1969, the Kinks released their second concept album, *Arthur*.[3] This album revolves around nostalgia as lyricist and lead singer Ray Davies brings to life the recollections of a fictional, aged, British man named Arthur. After the first three quarters of the album take the listener through the course of Arthur's memories of British life spanning two world wars and the postwar era, the final quarter wallows in the stark contrast to reality that the process of remembrance brings with it: in "Young and Innocent Days," Arthur—given voice by Ray Davies—intones "I wish my eyes could only see/ Everything exactly as it used to be/ It's too late, so late"; in "Nothing to Say," Arthur's son relates to his father "Those happy days we spent together/ We thought our world would never change/ How the days go by/ And things will never be the same"; and in the closing song, "Arthur," the Kinks provide a retrospective view on Arthur's wasted life of memories: "How is your life and your Shangri-La?/ And your long lost land of Hallelujah/ And your hope and glory has passed you by." The lyrics of these last three tracks show the characters acknowledging that things are not what they used to be and even questioning what that aphorism means. In *Arthur*, the Kinks not only employ nostalgia as a means of evoking memories of an idealized past, but also come to understand it as a reflective process that serves to highlight both the pitfalls and the comfort of living in the past. By incorporating a nuanced presentation of nostalgia in *Arthur*, the Kinks opened up a contemplative space to consider how one can at once be critical of the past while also respecting meaningful ideals from the past.

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invoke the music hall era, visually imbuing their greatest hits with a nostalgic sense of being old-fashioned.

[3] Hereafter I refer to the album as *Arthur*.

Shortly after the album was released, one reviewer described *Arthur* as "at once poignant and derisive."[4] This apt assessment emphasizes the core of the problem with the exercise of sentimental remembrance that the Kinks encounter in the album: it is difficult to maneuver between the pride in inherited national memories and the stifling nature of these memories. The dualities that nostalgic memory can produce—between imagined past and the realities of the present, between the glorification of the past and the denigration of it, between the expectations of older generations and those of younger generations, between current location and the idealized alternate destination—all make an appearance on this album, making *Arthur* a concept album that provides an a complicated, affectively comprehensive exploratory discourse on the emotional ambiguity that nostalgia entails.

Nostalgia does not always hinge on one emotion and, in fact, is often a mixture of different emotions.[5] It is not a clearly-delineated psychological process. One might experience nostalgia as a positive affect when fond memories are recalled, or a person might experience it as a negative affect because of the unsatisfactory assessment of the present when placed in contrast with an idealized past, or a person might harbor both positive and negative feelings at once while undertaking a nostalgic reverie.[6] Its multi-faceted emotional nature makes sense when one considers the temporal leaps that comprise these remembrances. By recalling the past within the

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[4] Timothy Crouse, "The British Scourge," *Show Guide Magazine* (1969), Replicated on *Dave Emlin's Unofficial Kinks Web Site,* accessed June 21, 2017, http://www.kindakinks.net/.

[5] There have been numerous studies in psychology and sociology the last decade to reach a better understanding of the emotional aspects of nostalgia, and these reveal that nostalgia is far more complicated than simply being homesick, as believed when the term first came into existence in the seventeenth century. Clay Routledge's book on nostalgia provides an excellent bibliographical review of psychological studies on nostalgia. Clay Routledge, *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[6] The emotional ambiguity of nostalgia is further complicated by the fact that people launch into nostalgic memories from both positive and negative emotional departure points: a person might begin to wax nostalgic when they feel lonely and isolated as a self-curative mechanism, or a person might be happily bonding with others through nostalgia as a socially-motivated practice (e.g., former classmates discussing fond memories of friends in high school at a class reunion).

present, one inhabits multiple emotional spaces: how one feels now (which can be positive, negative, or neutral) and how one imagines one felt or would feel in the time at which the nostalgia is aimed. As the nostalgic thinker juggles these two temporal spaces, that person also must balance between alternate emotional spaces, and thus affective ambiguity arises.

Exploring these issues made sense as an avenue for The Kinks because of the band's performance identity. Nostalgia inhabits the ambiguous territory of the elision between past and present, and the Kinks thrived on chronological and affective ambiguity throughout their performance careers.[7] At a time when popular music often acted a significant testament to youthful rebellion and the generational divide between the postwar generation and their elders, the Kinks would sometimes ally themselves with the older generation.[8] Fans and critics alike were often uncertain as to whether the Kinks were sincere or ironic in their use of older styles and their appraisal of British life, and this was further confounded by the bewildering public image of Ray Davies. Davies is typically mercurial in his interviews, and many scholars have noted Davies' idiosyncratic bent toward the ambiguous, noting how it shaped his works.[9] For

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[7] They were on the cutting edge of recording techniques (e.g., their aforementioned innovative guitar amplifier distortion on "You Really Got Me" [1964] as a proto-punk sound or their use of a drone on "See My Friends" [1965] as a precursor to raga rock), but they drew heavily upon musical idioms of the early twentieth century and frequently employed decidedly old-fashioned lyrical themes.

[8] As Kinks scholar Carey Fleiner points out in her book *The Kinks: A Thoroughly English Phenomenon,* the Kinks "remarked on the hypocrisy and despair that resulted when the younger generation did rebel against the older." Carey Fleiner, *The Kinks: A Thoroughly English Phenomenon* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 126.

[9] Carey Fleiner introduces her book on the Kinks with the caution, "One necessary caveat must be given to the reader: as the primary authors of the myth of the Kinks, Ray and Dave have woven over the years a story filled with contradiction. They can be fiercely private on the one hand and mischievous on the other, dropping enigmatic hints to the press about reunions and controversial comments concerning their own history, relationships, and credit for various achievements." In *Living on a Thin Line: Crossing Aesthetic Borders with The Kinks.* Michael Kraus argues that for Ray Davies, interviews are just as much a creative endeavor as his compositions, where Davies has the opportunity "to display, develop, and discard a far greater number of personas" in addition to his songs. Even Ray Davies' first autobiography, *X-Ray*, had a heavily fictional element, where Davies acted as an unreliable narrator to his own life story, which he projected forward into a dystopic future as he looked back at his performance career. Fleiner, *Kinks*, 3; Michael J. Kraus, "Revelations, Revisions, and Reinventions: Davies Interviews as Essential

example, English literature scholar Michael J. Kraus noted, "antitheses are evident in Davies's work at several levels" and pointed to Davies' "embracing of ambivalence" as two creative characteristics that placed him as an artistic descendant of the English Romantic poets of the nineteenth century.[10]   Kinks scholar Carey Fleiner observes that the Kinks' "songs about home, rejecting home, and returning home mirror how youthful rebellion rarely falls into a black-or-white divide, and the Kinks musical thoughts on the subject embodied ambiguity," and more generally that "Ray Davies has been ambiguous politically from one end of his professional career to the other."[11]   Antitheses, ambiguities, and ambivalence abound in the music of the Kinks, so the affective gray area of nostalgia provided a thematic haven for Ray Davies as a songwriter to flesh out contradictory musical commentaries on what it meant to be British in the postwar era.

That the Kinks explored their Britishness through their music appears in much of the bibliography on the Kinks. Biographies of the Kinks often begin by extolling their cult favorite status and how quintessentially British the band was.[12] Nick Hasted opens *You Really Got Me: The Story of the Kinks* by describing some of the imagery the Kinks use in their music as offering "a musical haven for misfits and innocents" because it creates a dream world that symbolizes Britain's "unreachable promise."[13] In *God Save the Kinks: A Biography,* Rob Jovanovic

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Works in The Kinks' Canon," in *Living on a Thin Line: Crossing Aesthetic Borders with The Kinks*, eds. Thomas M. Kitts and Michael J. Kraus (Rumford, RI: Rock 'n' Roll Research Press, 2002), 265; Ray Davies, *X-Ray* (London, UK: Viking, 1994).

[10] Michael J. Kraus, "The Greatest Rockstar of the 19th Century: Ray Davies, Romanticism, and the Art of Being English," *Popular Music and Society* 29, no. 2 (2006): 204.

[11] Fleiner further notes that in Kinks songs, "Striking out on one's own was one thing that might bring a change in fortune, if one remembered one's roots and visited occasionally, but outright rejection of home and family (and by extension social class) could lead to misery and home- or classlessness. Fleiner, *Kinks*, 103.

[12] For a general biography of the band, see Nick Hasted's *You Really Got Me: The Story of the Kinks* (2011), Rob Jovanovic's *God Save the Kinks: A Biography* (2013), Neville Marten and Jeff Hudson's *The Kinks: A Very English Band* (1996), and Jon Savage's *The Kinks: The Official Biography* (1984).

[13] Nick Hasted, *You Really Got Me: The Story of the Kinks* (London: Omnibus Press, 2011), ix.

introduces his biography of the Kinks by praising the band's "enforced dedication to the English scene," and that "[m]ore than The Beatles, the Stone, or The Who, The Kinks were an English band."[14] As scholarly attention to the Kinks has expanded in the last few decades, some authors have spent time parsing out the band's intricate explorations of nationality, as well as their penchant for nostalgia.[15] For example, Fleiner's book *The Kinks: A Thoroughly English Phenomenon* places the discography of Kinks within the broader context of historical events and cultural trends in Britain, while Nick Baxter-Moore ties together Englishness and working-class identity in select Kinks and solo Ray Davies songs.[16] In these analyses, the concept of national identity is clearly of great importance to the Kinks, but as both authors point out, the Kinks will at once champion markers of nationality while also mocking them. This chapter argues that it is *because* the Kinks engage with these topics through the lens of nostalgia that allows for the ambiguous interpretations.

Art historian Paolo Magagnoli describes nostalgia as having a "protean nature."[17] He asserts that it is not until one understands the specificities of an artwork that one can "evaluate whether nostalgia is progressive or reactionary, critical or ideological, generative or sterile."[18] In the case of the Kinks' *Arthur*, nostalgia functions in multiple ways, that is, it does not fall neatly into one of the binaries Magagnoli suggests. This is fitting in the context of the Kinks' artistic approach, however, since they thrived on multiplicity in their artistic personas. This

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[14] Rob Jovanovic, *God Save the Kinks: A Biography* (London: Aurum Press, 2013), 3.

[15] This expansion of scholarly works on the Kinks is due in large part to conference proceedings and special journal issues devoted entirely to the Kinks, particularly a special issue of the journal *Popular Music and Society* in 2006 (Vol. 29, no. 2) and the essay collection *Living On a Thin Line: Crossing Aesthetic Borders with the Kinks*, edited by Thomas M. Kitts and Michael J. Kraus.

[16] Fleiner, *Kinks*; Nick Baxter-Moore, " 'This is Where I Belong'—Identity, Social Class, and the Nostalgic Englishness of Ray Davies and the Kinks," *Popular Music and Society* 29, no. 2 (2006): 145-165.

[17] Paolo Magagnoli, "Critical Nostalgia in the Art of Joachim Koester," *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 1 (2011): 99.

[18] Ibid.

understanding of the Kinks' engagement with nostalgia resonates with one reviewer's observations on Ray Davies:

> Unlike the other poets of rock, Davies took no single stand, but rather, personified the confusion of this generation. He could simultaneously be a revolutionary and a conservative espousing both the new and the old. He reflected that 'agonizing reappraisal' of the world, showing the comedy it put on the individual as well as the loneliness of it. He made you laugh and cry. Whatsmore [sic] Davies never professed to show *the* way. He often seemed to say, 'Look at this side of the issue, now look at that side.' Confusing? Yes. Cynical? Yes. Honest? Most definitely![19]

In *Arthur*, the Kinks do celebrate the past, but they also critique it. At the end of the album, the listener is not left with one takeaway message about the relative merits or ills of nostalgia.

The Kinks turn the nostalgic action into an existential question. In *Yearning for Yesterday*, Davis elaborates upon reflexive nostalgia, where a person "does more than sentimentalize some past [moment] . . . in perhaps an inchoate though nevertheless psychologically active fashion he or she summons to feeling and thought certain empirically oriented questions concerning the truth, accuracy, completeness, or representativeness of the nostalgic claim."[20] Essentially, the person questions the meaning and accuracy of his or her memories. Davis compares this to an inner Greek chorus, "wanting to question, deflate, correct, and remind."[21] This is a useful facet of nostalgia to consider in terms of the efficacy of *Arthur* as a cultural commentary. Certain musical aspects of the album draw the listener in to participate in Arthur's reverie, while others beg both Arthur and the listener to question whether these past and present utopias are really as good in reality as they seem to be in the nostalgic imagination.

Other scholars have noted the presence of nostalgia as a theme in the Kinks' discography, such as writer Andy Miller's study of *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968), which begins with an epigram from Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia,* thus

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[19] Andy Bernstein, "The Kinks Are Koming," *The Aquarian*, Jan. 26-Feb. 9 1977, 1.
[20] Fred Davis, *Yearning For Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 21.
[21] Ibid.

framing his discussion of the album as influenced by nostalgia.[22] Dan characterizes the Kinks'

incorporation of nostalgia on *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society* as "an

expression of consternation over the ways in which society is developing."[23] These discussions,

however, do not go much further beyond simply identifying nostalgia as a theme in some Kinks

songs. This hesitancy to deeply engage with this theme in the Kinks' work may be due in part to

Davies' own protestations against being labeled as a nostalgic: in her biography of the band,

Carey Fleiner states outright that "Ray [Davies] has always insisted that he is not nostalgic and

'longing for an England that never was' but that he has always been instead moved by the

optimism of his parents and grandparents even at the darkest times."[24] As noted above, however,

Davies is often mutable in his performance of self in interviews, and the reticence to be labeled

as nostalgic is likely a reaction against a popular perception of the negative connotation of

nostalgia as being mired in the past, rather than the nuanced understanding offered by nostalgia

studies.

The scholarly discussions of the Kinks and nostalgia usually focus on *The Kinks Are the*

Village Green Preservation Society (1968), while *Arthur* receives less scholarly attention in

general. The dearth of analytical work on *Arthur* is surprising given the importance of the album

in the band's history. Due to a row with the American Federation of Musicians, the Kinks were

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[22] Andy Miller, *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society* (New York: Continuum, 2004).

[23] Dan C. Shoemaker, "Village Green Consternation Society: The Kinks and XYC vs. Fredric Jameson," in *Living on a Thin Line: Crossing Aesthetic Borders with The Kinks,* eds. Thomas M. Kitts and Michael J. Kraus (Rumford, RI: Rock 'n' Roll Research Press, 2002).

[24] Fleiner later qualifies her discussion of Davies not being nostalgic by stating, "This is the attitude that prevails in the Kinks' works: they've not necessarily advocated escaping to the past; on the contrary, they urge the listener to draw on the joys of the past to make for a happier future." Recent studies in nostalgia—such as Svetlana Boym's *The Future of Nostalgia* or Pertti Grönhom's article "When Tomorrow Began Yesterday: Kraftwerk's Nostalgia for the Past Futures"—view the action of drawing from the past to inform the future as still falling under the purview of nostalgic thinking, in which case Fleiner's explanation of the Kinks' aim still ends up being nostalgic. Fleiner, *Kinks*, 17, 125; Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*; Pertti Grönhom, "When Tomorrow Began Yesterday: Kraftwerk's Nostalgia for the Past Futures," *Popular Music and Society* 38, no. 3 (2015): 372-388.

banned from performing in the United States from 1965 to 1969, so *Arthur* marked the first album that the Kinks could return to touring the U.S. with, and the album was also intended to be the Kinks' first large-scale work for television before the show was abandoned due to budgetary issues. Despite the album marking a crucial point the Kinks' career, *Arthur* is typically either referenced as a less effectively sentimental version, or contrastingly as a more scathingly critical version, of the nostalgia raised on *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*.[25] What these stances miss is the middle ground that nostalgia provides that allows for both sentimentality and criticism to occur at once.

Literary critic Andrew Palmer provides a productive reading of *Arthur*, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia, or "many-voicedness." He concludes that Davies "expresses a deeply unresolved attitude to the end of empire" and brings "complexity—and tenderness—to an exploration of working-class responses to the end of empire."[26] I agree with Palmer's reading, and I build on it by placing this many-voicedness within the concept of nostalgia that drives the album. The very nature of nostalgic memory allows for a multiplicity of views since it relies on chronological juxtaposition and oftentimes varied emotional states. Sociologist Janelle Wilson emphasizes the importance of such juxtaposition, explaining that "Nostalgic recollection gives us the opportunity to observe and juxtapose past and present

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[25]For example, popular culture scholar Michael Lupro writes that while "*Arthur* extends the nostalgic mode of *Village Green,*" it is "a very cynical look at its subject and is less descriptive than *Village Green.*" Michael Mooradian Lupro, "Preserving the Old Ways, Protecting the New: Post-War British Urban Planning in The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society," *Popular Music and Society* 29, no. 2 (2006): 194-196.

[26] Andrew Palmer, "'In a Land that I Love': Working-class Identity and the End of Empire in Ray Davies' *Arthur of the Decline and Fall of the British Empire*," *Popular Music and Society* 37, no. 2 (2014): 227.

identity."[27] Musical and lyrical juxtaposition in *Arthur* create an observational space for a critical take on remembrance.

The term "critical nostalgia" serves as a particularly useful framework for considering this observational space the Kinks create in *Arthur*. Musicologist Lawrence Kramer uses the term in an examination of Charles Ives's *A Symphony: New England Holidays*, in which the melodic layering in the work causes the audience to ponder "the nation's legacies and losses" without buying into the grand myth of the American nation (as they might with the works of Aaron Copland).[28] Although the Kinks pursue the same strategy, there are helpful similarities between their approach to nostalgia in *Arthur* and the way in which Kramer frames Ives' work, especially in terms of using juxtaposition to challenge the listener. In *Arthur* the mix of typical rock style with other genres creates a similar effect to what Kramer discusses with Ives, where the listener is given space to pause and consider the disparity between national myth and the modern reality. Scholars in folklore studies and art history have also used critical nostalgia as a means of reading and interpreting artworks. For example, folklorist Ray Cashman shows how Catholics and Protestants in Ireland preserve and display local material culture "as symbols necessary for inspiring critical thought that may lead to positive social change."[29] Cashman understands nostalgia as "a cultural practice that may serve as a response to a wide variety of personal and collective needs." Art historian Paolo Magagnoli demonstrates how the photographs of Danish artist Joachim Koester dually "point at modernity's catastrophic effects"

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[27] Janelle Wilson, *Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 35.

[28] Lawrence Kramer, "Music and the Politics of Memory: Charles Ives's *A Symphony: New England Holidays*," *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 2, no. 4 (2008): 475.

[29] In this case study, "local community and shared identity" subjugate the boundaries of "contemporary political, religious, and ethnic divisions between Irish Catholic nationalists and Ulster Protestant unionists." Ray Cashman, "Critical Nostalgia and Material Culture in Northern Ireland," *The Journal of American Folklore* 19, No. 472 (Spring, 2006): 137-160.

while also pointing at "possible futures."[30] Kramer, Cashman, and Magagnoli all emphasize

nostalgia as an action that creates space for contemplation through juxtaposing the past with the

present.

Kramer and Cashman understand the communities and artists they examine as using

critical nostalgia as an interpretive device to present specific solutions to cultural problems their

artworks address. For example, Kramer sees Ives' *A Symphony: New England Holidays* as

projecting a "protest against the political culture responsible" for the collapse of national unity,

and that his symphony asks listener to question partaking in a "patriotic mob."[31] Cashman sees

the practice of critical nostalgia in Northern Ireland as a means to rebuild community.

Magagnoli recognizes the aforementioned "protean nature" of nostalgia, and examines Koester's

artworks individually, but still places these artworks into categories that attribute a specific goal

to the nostalgia in the artwork. What I see happening in the Kinks' *Arthur*, however, is the

deployment of critical nostalgia not to present a specific solution to a cultural or social problem,

but rather to simply display the problem itself, a multitude of affective attitudes toward life in

postwar Britain, and yet remain neutral as to any judgment upon which life view is ultimately

best.

This chapter delves further into nostalgia as an affective guiding principle in *Arthur*,

where its "protean nature" reveals several modes of emotional engagement with the past. This is

a crucial way of analyzing the album particularly because the album is entirely framed by a

nostalgic stance. Through the Kinks' songs and the accompanying album text written by

novelist Julian Mitchell, it becomes clear that *Arthur* is the story of an average, elderly, working-

class man who looks back on his life, first recalling his childhood years during World War I and

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[30] Magagnoli, "Critical Nostalgia," 113.
[31] Kramer, "Music and the Politics of Memory," 460, 475.

memories of the death of his brother Eddie during the Battle of the Somme ("Victoria," "Yes Sir,

No Sir," "Some Mother's Son").[32] The story then moves to the present day ("Drivin'") and to

the entrance of Arthur's grandson Ronnie, who accosts Arthur for living in the past, for being

contented with his working-class life, and for being duped by the government ("Brainwashed").[33]

This first side of the album closes with as Arthur's son Derek announces that he is taking his

family to live in Australia ("Australia") while, as Mitchell describes, "all the time Arthur is

remembering his life."[34] The second side sees less action and even more reflection: "Shangri-la"

is both an ode to and a mockery of Arthur's working-class life spent attaining a house and a

family and a car, "Mr. Churchill Says" reminisces on Arthur's life on the home front during

World War II, "She Bought A Hat Like Princess Marina" again alternately cheers and condemns

working-class pleasures, "Young and Innocent Days" finds Arthur wishing that life was the way

it used to be, and "Nothing to Say" narrates a stilted conversation between Arthur and his son

Terry, who both remember a time when they used to communicate, but now lament having

nothing to say to one another. The album closes with "Arthur," which gives a retrospective of

his life, painting Arthur as pathetic, but then the narrator professes a position of kindly pitying

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[32]Despite having a name that conjures up legends of former British myth and glory as King Arthur of Camelot, or, in more recent history, the son of Queen Victoria, Arthur leads an ordinary life (the same as "millions of English people like him"). Mitchell's album notes for *Arthur* describe the main character as having "spent most of his life on his knees laying carpets" and who "doesn't like risks, never has." Intriguingly, the character's model, Davies' brother-in-law Arthur Anning, also had a brother who died in battle during World War II. Dave Davies divulges in his autobiography, "[Arthur Anning's] brother, an RAF pilot, was killed in the Second World War. Arthur also wanted to be a pilot and follow in his brother's footsteps, but he failed the medical test because of his weak eyesight and was forced to spend his war years in the RAF ground staff, personnel. To Arthur that was tantamount to failure. . . ." Dave Davies, *Kink: An Autobiography* (New York: Hyperion, 1996), 117.

[33]Mitchell's text reveals that Arthur's grandson Ronnie is the son of Eddie, Arthur's other son who died in combat in Korea and who was named after Arthur's brother, who died at the Battle of the Somme.

[34] Another way in which Arthur epitomizes a nostalgic character is through his roots in Davies' own family history. As a young boy, Ray Davies lived with his sister Rose and her husband Arthur until the couple moved to Australia, while Ray stayed in the U.K. with his parents.

him.[35] *Arthur* and its titular character are consumed by nostalgia, but the nostalgic exercise is presented alternately as a wound and as a salve, as both abhorrent and endearing.

To further the nostalgic nature of the album, not only is it an album about a man looking back on his own life, but it is also an album based on the childhood memories that the Kinks' co-founding brothers, Ray and Dave Davies, had of their brother-in-law Arthur Anning.[36] Ray Davies was particularly fond of creating characters who were fictitious versions of different people he knew because, as he claimed, "That gave [the Kinks] the opportunity to write about subjects that really interested [Davies] . . . Britain's recent history, how it had survived the war, how its class system operated and the way it treated the ordinary people who made Britain great."[37] The protagonist of *Arthur* stands as the epitome of this type of character, for through the whole album, the Kinks use him to examine twentieth-century British history through the lens of nostalgic memories, incorporating war as one of the focal points of the protagonist's nostalgia.[38]

This chapter focuses specifically on the Kinks' relationship between war and nostalgia because it is within this intersection that the Kinks present the listener with an especially

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[35] ("Arthur, the world's gone and passed you by … You can cry, cry all night but it won't make it right"), "Arthur we know you and we sympathize/ Don't you know it, don't you know it/ Arthur we like you and want to help you/ Somebody loves you don't you know it."

[36] Kinks drummer Mick Avory commented on the personal, nostalgic nature of the album for Ray Davies: "*Arthur,* that was a good album. Because I knew where it was coming from. It was fairly personal. Ray had found something to write about, nostalgia, and his family." Avory in Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 140.

[37] Davies quoted in Jovanovic, *God Save the Kinks*, 158. Carey Fleiner also emphasized that the Davies brothers would write lyrics that drew from their personal lives to comment upon social class and the nation: "Ray and Dave wrote (and write) about personal interests, drawn from ordinary experience, creating works which often illustrate a sense of national identity and working-class solidarity." Carey Fleiner, "The Influence of Family and Childhood Experience on the Works of Ray and Dave Davies," *Popular Music and Society* 34, no.3 (2011): 345.

[38] Whereas the nostalgia in the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* plays only a partial role in the whole album, albeit a significant one, nostalgia encompasses the totality of the Kinks' *Arthur*. The nostalgic presentation of history was a major theme throughout the Kinks' oeuvre, as well as throughout the solo works of both Ray and Dave Davies. British nostalgia is a lyrical theme in tracks on *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968), *Muswell Hillbillies* (1971), *Preservation Act 1* (1973)*, Preservation Act 2* (1974), and *State of Confusion* (1983).

challenging web of postwar perspectives where nostalgia becomes a critical act. To that end, the analyses of this investigation center on the songs that directly engage with memories of war— "Yes Sir, No Sir," "Some Mother's Son," and "Mr. Churchill Says"—to demonstrate how nostalgia functions for the Kinks as a tool for cultural criticism. With the juxtaposition of the songs "Victoria" and "Yes Sir, No Sir" at the beginning of the album, the Kinks take a critical eye to the ideologies of the imagined past, where nostalgia leads Arthur to revel in national pride and then wallow in it. Amidst the mixed emotional states of "Some Mother's Son," the Kinks present nostalgic memory as a blessing and a curse, giving the listener space to both empathize with characters of multiple generations and question the futility of war. Through the fusion of historically-rooted lyrics and contemporary musical styles in "Mr. Churchill Says," the Kinks use Arthur's nostalgic act as a way to bridge generational divides.

Even with the critical nostalgia that arises from the juxtapositions in these songs, the Kinks do not champion one generation over another, nor do they point to an alternative solution to the problems they criticize. This fits in with the inclination toward non-progressive satire that was popular in British television in the 1960s, a medium with which Ray Davies was deeply familiar. Historian Stuart Ward understands the British satire boom of the 1960s to be essentially rooted in both a disillusionment with *and* a nostalgia for a lost, mythologized Britain, and because of that inner conflict, a satire is rendered that offers multiple critical viewpoints while not proferring any solutions.[39] *Arthur* demonstrates this same type of 1960s non-progressive satire. The listener is certainly meant to question Arthur's life of memories, but the world views of the other characters on the album—Ronnie's cynical but unproductive attack on Arthur in "Brainwashed" or Derek's geographical escape in "Australia"—are not championed

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[39] Stuart Ward, *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2001), 108-109.

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over Arthur's as better solutions. By incorporating multiple emotional states available in the

experience of nostalgia, the Kinks avoid drawing clear conclusions about the present, but instead

create a musical space of reflection about both the past and the present.

Young and Innocent Days? The Kinks and Postwar Britain

The nostalgic nature of *Arthur* did not come out of thin air for the Kinks. A combination

of the band's own musical interests and their historical context—including the sense of decline

after an economic downturn in England and the 1960's satire boom in British television

programs—led to a creative environment in which the theme of nostalgia flourished for the

group, as well as for other British rock bands. The Kinks' interest in this theme at the end of the

1960s was part of a *zeitgeist* occurring in Britain at the time.[40] As British historian Dominic

Sandbrook explains:

> This emphasis on nostalgia helped to distinguish the Beatles and the Kinks from their
> American counterparts while linking them with British creative artists in other genres,
> from fiction and poetry to the theatre and television, whose gaze was similarly fixed on
> the past. Nostalgia was one of the most powerful forces in post-war British culture, which
> was hardly surprising, given the collapse of the empire and all the talk about national
> political and economic decline.[41]

Art, literature, television, fashions and design took a nostalgic turn away from the modern that

had been driving the trends in the earlier part of the decade, and by the late 1960s, nostalgia had

become a distinctive component of British rock.

The Kinks' performance identities were largely informed by nostalgia stemming from

their experiences of coming of age in postwar Britain. Ray Davies and his brother and fellow

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[40] Historian Dominic Sandbrook illuminates: "Although the nostalgic tendency in British culture had
deep roots, it clearly gathered strength towards the end of the sixties. Instead of throwing themselves into
the pursuit of futuristic modernity, artists and designers began to turn back towards Britain's imperial past
and 'self-conscious historical revivalism.'" Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the
Swinging Sixties 1964-1970* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), 422.
[41] Sandbrook, *White Heat*, 420.

band member, Dave, grew up in a working-class household in Fortis Green, an area in the suburb of Muswell Hill in northwest London. Biographer Thomas Kitts relates that their parents, Fred and Annie Davies, had moved the family (a family of six daughters before Ray was born as the seventh child and first son) to Muswell Hill in January 1940, despite the government recommendation to evacuate children to the countryside to avoid the damage of the impending *Blitz*. His father stayed home during the war because he was a butcher, which was a "Reserved Occupation," wherein he needed to stay in the country to produce food for civilians.[42] Ray Davies was born two weeks after D-Day on June 21, 1944, and his brother (and guitarist) Dave Davies, whom Ray would later cofound the Kinks with, was born on February 3, 1947. Bassist John Dalton, who had replaced Kinks' original bassist Peter Quaife by the time *Arthur* was recorded, was born on May 21, 1943, in the London Borough of Enfield. The Kinks's drummer, Mick Avory, was born on February 15, 1944, in East Molesey, a suburb outside of Greater London. *Arthur* was shaped by the musical vision of Ray Davies, and to a lesser extent, Dave Davies (the reasons for which I discuss below), and in light of that, I will focus on their postwar background.

Biographical narratives of the Davies brothers in many ways echo the fourth track on the second side of *Arthur*, "Young and Innocent Days," where Ray Davies as Arthur tenderly sings over Dave Davies' finger-picked acoustic guitar accompaniment, "I look back on the way I used to look at life/ Soft, white dreams with sugar-coated outside/ It was great, so great/ young and innocent days." Accounts of the Davies' childhood are steeped in postwar idyll: the suburban home in Fortis Green was "a musical place" with a gramophone and an upright piano, which Davies family and friends would all gather around with beer and sandwiches on Saturday nights

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[42] The war makes little impact on his account of his youth, which is otherwise colored by stories of family parties on Saturday nights: "It was always fun and exciting there [in Muswell Hill], and I have very great memories of parties every Saturday night in that house." Dave Davies, *Kink*, 4-6.

for sing-alongs featuring standards of the British music hall.[43] It is this vision of postwar

harmony that enters into the imaginations of many authors who write about Ray and Dave

Davies, and even into Ray Davies' own lyrical writing. Musicologist Gordon Thompson

describes Davies' lyrical inspiration as stemming from a "suburban life" that sought "blissful

retreat."[44] This is not to say that Ray and Dave had perfect childhoods—far from it, as the

brothers fought so much that Ray had to live with his older sister for a while to separate the two

quarrelling brothers—but what is striking is the consistent lack in autobiographical and

biographical narratives of the band members of rising out of bleak postwar conditions, and the

narratives instead focus on mostly positive memories of wartime camaraderie related by the

Davies' mother and sisters.

Indeed, Ray Davies' understanding of Britain's experience in World War II was largely

shaped by stories from his family. Carey Fleiner explains:

> [Ray] composed songs that reflected his parents' and grandparents' reflections on times
> past and not necessarily times past itself. They had lived through the hard times of
> Depression and World War II, and they described to him those years as 'the good old
> days.' Ray was impressed by this as a child, and he longed for the same camaraderie that
> united them happily in the face of adversity, happiness that was expressed through their
> music. As Ray remarked, "My sisters [were amazing]—they enjoyed their life. They
> lived through the Second World War. They remember the blackouts and the bombs and
> having to hide in shelters in the back garden—going in the subway when there were
> bombing raids in London. And—but yeah. They loved it. They wouldn't have
> exchanged that time—amazingly—wouldn't have exchanged that for any other reason."[45]

Much like the irony of the song "Young and Innocent Days," however, where the preceding

songs that relate Arthur's childhood memories expose that his youth is not entirely innocent,

filled with "soft, white dreams," or "sugar-coated," this narrative Davies presents belies the

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[43] Neville Marten and Jeff Hudson, *The Kinks: A Very English Band* (London: Bobcat Books, 1996), 17;
Thomas Kitts, *Ray Davies; Not Like Everybody Else* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 5.
[44] Gordon Thompson, *Please Please Me: Sixties British Pop Inside Out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
2008), 222.
[45] Fleiner, *Kinks,* 128-129.

struggle of the wartime years for British civilians. It is instead reflective of a nationalistic

sentiment elaborated by historian Peter Clarke, who claims, "there was general agreement that

this was a 'good war'": fighting the Nazis was a worthy cause, there was a large consensus that

Britain had not started the war nor entered it hastily, and the type of warfare itself—that British

soldiers were not experiencing the complete horrors of trench warfare—was an improvement on

the combat during World War I.[46] Clarke further parses out one phrase that became popular

around 1940-1941: that World War II was "a people's war."[47]   British national camaraderie was

at a peak: "Saving for victory, digging for victory, sewing for victory—this was a war in which

everyone could 'go to it' and do their bit on the 'home front.'"[48] Whether or not this sentiment

was faithful to Ray Davies' childhood experience, or to his family members' experiences of the

war, it is the vision that Davies revisited in his music, as I discuss below in my analysis of "Mr.

Churchill Says."[49]

The roots of the Kinks as a band are found in the Davies brothers' participation in the

fellowship of music hall-style family room sing-alongs, which is why so many biographies focus

on this aspect of the Kinks' history, but another formative force that brought a critical element to

the Kinks' music was Ray Davies' time attending Hornsey College of Art from 1962 to 1963.

These schools were instrumental in introducing their students, now adult members of the War

Babies (or Bulge) generation, to a network of artistic thought and to political concerns outside of

the realm of the grammar schools of their childhoods. Art schools were hotbeds of intellectual

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[46] Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 207.
[47] Ibid., 207-208.
[48] Ibid., 207.
[49] Most notably this sentiment appears in his 2008 musical *Come Dancing*, a paean to his sister Rene's enjoyment of music hall dances.

activity for the postwar generation and were the sites of numerous political demonstrations.[50] It

is no surprise, then, that a musician such as Ray Davies coming out of this intellectually vibrant

and politically active community would want to use his artistic medium to explore cultural,

national, and political issues that extended beyond the lyrical content of his earlier pop hits.

The Kinks' turn toward their British background was part of the shift in lyrical content

amongst rock musicians in the mid-1960s from teenage-centered topics about the frustrations and

glories of relationships to autobiographically and geographically specific subjects, and the Kinks

were on the vanguard of this transformation. The Kinks had first reached prominence during the

early years of the British Invasion with the infectious riffs of danceable rock singles such as

"You Really Got Me" (1964) and "All Day and All of the Night" (1964), but their rise to fame

was encumbered by being banned for four years from performing in the United States in 1965 by

the American Federation of Musicians after union officials tired of the band members'

destructive stage antics.[51] The ban severed the Kinks from their growing audience in United

States, prematurely stunting their role in the British Invasion. After being denied work visas in

the United States, the Kinks spent more time at home in the United Kingdom, and they used this

time to turn their lyrical attention to what it meant to be British. By 1966, Britishness was a

defining characteristic of the Kinks, as well as of Ray Davies himself, as one music journalist

relates:

> It is one of the many paradoxes about Ray that, despite his reputation as a rebel, he is
> passionately pro-English—an unusual patriotism which shows in two of his interests
> outside of music, football and the music hall. "I hope England doesn't change," he [Ray

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[50] British historian Robert Hewison imparts: "by June 1968 sixteen colleges and universities in Britain
had had demonstrations and sit-ins attacking the authoritarianism of the educational establishment, the
most serious at the art schools of Hornsey in London, and Guildford in Surrey." Robert Hewison, *Culture
& Consensus: England, Art, and Politics Since 1940*, (London: Methuen, 1995), 149.
[51] Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 61.

Davies] told me . . . "I hope we don't get swallowed up by America and Europe. I'm really proud of being British.' . . . I want to keep writing very English songs."[52]

Two clear examples of the shift in lyrical inspiration for the Kinks arrived in "Waterloo Sunset" and "Afternoon Tea" from *Something Else by the Kinks* (1967), which reference the British ritual of drinking tea and to the site of a London train station, respectively. With the new direction of the concept album during 1968 in *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society*, Davies began to delve more into exploring the post-World War Britain he had emerged out of than on the Swinging Sixties—the youthful, optimistic, future-oriented cultural movement in Britain, particularly in London, in the early 1960s—of which he had previously been on the forefront.

In retrospect, Davies came to view the *Village Green* album as a direct result of the Kinks' band from the United States: "It was a culmination of all these years of being banned from America. I wanted to do something English. As I've said, I somehow thought our music came from nowhere, and it didn't have influences from America, and there was also lots of music hall and classical standards and English music in The Kinks. With *Village Green,* I wanted to write something that, if we didn't get another chance to be a mainstream, contesting band, if we were never heard of again, this is where we came from. This is what we like, and who we are.'"[53] Although Ray's claims of not being influenced by American music are certainly a wild exaggeration, the sentiment remains that Ray was looking toward his own homeland for musical inspiration, more so with *Village Green* than he had in his earlier compositions.[54]

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[52] Bob Dawbarn, "Ray—the Patriot Kink," *Melody Maker,* April 16, 1966, 3.

[53] Ray Davies in Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 123.

[54] Dave Davies also commented on the Britishness of the album: "It's such a turning point in our career. Because all the things we aspired to were driven by American music. When you really listen to 'You Really Got Me,' although it sounds unique, you can sense The Ventures in there somewhere. But with *Village Green*, we had to turn into ourselves, because we couldn't go to America. And it makes you look at what you've got around you." Like Ray's comment, Dave Davies' also over overstates the Kinks' isolation from the United States, as they still would have had access to American records and radio play

In *Village Green*, the Kinks immersed themselves fully in musical nostalgia. One of the

album tracks that offers a particularly effective vehicle for nostalgia is "Village Green,"

throughout which a Baroque harpsichord, oboe, and cello almost drown out the drums and guitar,

sonically suggesting to the listener a fantastical utopia springing out of the British Invasion and

the English Baroque all at once. Thomas Kitts claims that the manipulation of sonic historical

reference in this album captivated listeners and brought the Kinks cult status: "Yes, they were

out of time, but, to however small a following, wonderfully out of time."[55] Listeners could

interpret the Kinks' drawing upon the old-fashioned in the concept album as alternatively earnest

and tongue-in-cheek. The Kinks themselves approached the album with this dual intention of

sincerity and ridicule. Ray Davies touches on this balance between reverence and irreverence

when he described his motivation behind creating the album: "I just wanted to write about the

stupid things I liked."[56] The album was, in part, coming from a frivolous place, but Davies also

seems to have embraced the idea. Guitarist Dave Davies adds weight to Ray's "stupid things,"

by revealing that Ray may have also seen all of these things as markers of cultural importance:

> The destruction and architectural misery of London in the sixties was like someone
> bombed it. You don't throw away everything that's old. There are a lot of old things you
> want to keep, that add towards our future culture. *Village Green* epitomises what Ray
> was starting to realize about observing the world and people around him . . . everybody

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of American musicians, but his statement reveals a conscious artistic decision to turn toward their
homeland for more inspiration than they had before. Dave Davies in Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 124.
[55] Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 115. Kitts continues, "Every song on *Village Green* reveals an acute awareness of
time. Characters seek to preserves both distant and recent artifacts and moments ('Village Green
Preservation Society,' 'Picture Book,' 'People Taking Pictures of Each Other'); others long for a cultural
or personal past of at least perceived peacefulness and innocence ('Animal Farm,' 'Village Green'); some
recall past personal glory ('Last of the Steam-Powered Trains') and others try to deny or slow time
('Johnny Thunder,' 'Sitting by the Riverside,' 'Wicked Annabella'); some escape time through obsession
('Starstruck,' 'Phenomenal Cat,' 'Monica') and some through reminiscence and nostalgia ('Do You
Remember Walter,' 'All My Friends Were There') or contemplation, yearning for understanding ('Big
Sky'). Through this central theme of time, Davies explores identity, spirituality, and the importance of
place" Ibid., 117.
[56] Ray Davies in Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 124.

thought we were out of fashion, out of touch. People just did not know what to do with us.[57]

Through these differing accounts of the creation of the album, it is highly likely that the Kinks, and particularly Ray Davies, approached the album with conflicted attitudes toward the subject matter. With the half-sincere, half-ironic *Village Green*, the Kinks were already exploring a multivalent approach to nostalgia that they would wield to greater critical effect on *Arthur*.[58]

By the time the Kinks were working on *Arthur* in 1969, there was a looming sense that the Swinging Sixties were not turning out as the younger generation had hoped, and the optimistic, futuristic-utopia-aimed attitude was disintegrating. Yes, the nation had begun experiencing what appeared to be an economic upturn at the beginning of the decade after a protracted struggle to reach a competitive level with other postwar economies, such as those of the United States, Japan, and Germany, but this economic boost did not last long. In November 1967, Prime Minister Harold Wilson decided to devalue the pound sterling by 14.3% (from £1=$2.80 to £1=$2.40, the first time the pound had been devalued since 1949, when it was cut by a staggering 30.5%). That, along with the collapse of the London Gold Pool in March 1968, caused an international monetary crisis.[59] Hewison notes that by the end of the 1960s, "The mood of the country was changing. Economic confidence had been dented . . ."[60] Artists, including the Kinks, turned to the politicized realm of popular culture to examine what went wrong.[61] The full title of the Kinks' album, *Arthur: Or the Decline and Fall of the British*

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[57] Dave Davies in Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 131-132.

[58] Andy Miller provides an excellent overview of the album, including a discussion of nostalgia in *33 1/3: The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (2004).

[59] Hewison, *Culture & Consensus*, 152; "On This Day 1967: Wilson Defends 'Pound In Your Pocket,'" BBC.co.uk, accessed April 24, 2014, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/19/newsid_3208000/3208396.stm.

[60] Hewison, *Culture & Consensus*, 152.

[61]The Kinks released *Arthur* during a zeitgeist in British history where cultural output became a highly politicized realm. Hewison suggests that in Britain, the failure of the Swinging Sixties' optimism further

Empire, is a nod to English historian Edward Gibbon's 1776 tome, *The History of the Decline*

and Fall of the Roman Empire. The word "decline" is key, and reflects the atmosphere of the

time:

> 'The devaluation of 1967 more than anything else confirmed Britain's 'decline' in the public mind.' This assessment, made in 1987 by the political and economic historian Alan Sked, places the moment at which post-war optimism gave way to pessimism alarmingly early. . . . when it comes to questions of national morale, the *perception* of decline is as important as its reality. In Sked's view: 'Since 1967 the British seem to have lived in an era of perpetual economic crisis, fearing that growth will never permanently return and that absolute decline may be just around the corner. That period is still continuing.'[62]

The national sense of decline popped the bubble of optimism of the Swinging Sixties. The

changing realities of the world that citizens had known meant that the mythological Britain that

had played such a large role in patriotic morale during the war was being severely challenged.

The home front that British soldiers and citizens alike had fought so hard for was not the same as

it had been, and not the idyll that many had dreamed it would become in the postwar era. Kinks

biographer Nick Hasted relates an interview in which Ray Davies recalled the disappointment at

the divergence of reality from the postwar dream: "[After the war, a friend] told me that we

needed to win the war, but he hated what was left for us all, not just the working classes. I don't

remember the war, but I remember that sense of betrayal."[63]

That sense of betrayal was not unique to Davies, and indeed it shaped an entire British

artistic movement in the decade prior. During the 1950s, a group of British writers who were

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politicized popular culture: "Yet for those for whom the political changes of the sixties had not gone far enough, there was a sense by 1970 that whatever had been thought was going to happen in 1968 was not going to happen after all. The political drama, heightened by anger at the Vietnam War, obscured the fact that what was often called a 'cultural revolution' had been just that. Political failure thrust the issue of 'culture and society' back into the cultural arena, thus making it even more of a political battleground. The struggle became once more about the nature of culture itself, the ideological significance of aesthetic value, the uses of culture in the maintenance of hegemony, and the function of the arts and popular culture in what the Situationists called 'a society of spectacle'." Hewison, *Culture & Consensus*, 158.

[62] Ibid., 159.

[63] Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 142.

part of the literary movement known as the Angry Young Men grappled with the loss of the

mythologized homeland. Writers and artists—including John Osborne, famous playwright of

Look Back in Anger, the keystone work of the Angry Young Men—who had grown up during

World War II were embittered by the stifling traditions of British society and disenchanted with

the mythologized experience of World War II. Although by the late 1960s the time of the Angry

Young Men was over, there was a resurgence of the disenchantment with the nation's

remembrance of World War II, and it found a new voice in those born just two decades after the

artists who comprised the Angry Young Men. As teenagers, both Ray and Dave Davies read

Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, another important work of the Angry

Young Men movement, and they latched onto the class anger it portrayed.[64] Ray Davies even

explicitly referenced the works of the Angry Young Men in his songs.[65] The ideas expressed by

writers of the Angry Young Men resonated strongly with Ray and Dave Davies, and in an

atmosphere of decline they brought this postwar bitterness into the creation of *Arthur*.

The works of the Angry Young Men also influenced writers in another medium in the

1960s, which also proved to be a major artistic influence on Ray Davies during the creation of

Arthur: satirical television, where the anger and disenchantment of the previous decade were

mixed with nostalgia for an irretrievable, mythologized past, creating a critical comedic effect.

The historical context and the technological developments of the 1960s set the stage for an

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[64] Kinks biographer Nick Hasted recounts an interview with Dave Davies, "'In the late fifties and sixties, working-class people at least had the chance to express themselves,' says Dave,' and they could actually write, and they could actually think—and sing' . . . Ray educated himself in theatre's Angry Young Men too, beginning a life-long devotion to the challenging, community-based Theatre Royal Stratford East. He and Dave learnt from those hard, realistic, austere fifties rebels, not the next decade's easier, colourful kind." Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 9-10.

[65] In his biography of Ray Davies, Thomas Kitts details the influence of the Angry Young Men: "In 'Where Are They Now?' (1973), Davies references several 'angry young men' (Barstow, Osborne, Waterhouse, and Sillitoe) and their creations . . . Through the years, the kitchen sink vision has found its way into many of Davies's songs: 'A Well Respected Man,' 'Dead-End Street,' 'Autumn Almanac,' 'Slum Kids,' and many more.'" Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 24:

unprecedentedly wide interest for British citizens in satire, providing fertile ground for what is now called the satire boom of the 1960s.[66] The economic upswing toward the end of the 1950s allowed for more middle class families to own modern conveniences like television sets, leading to a rise in popularity for television programs over the cinema.[67] As discussed earlier, however, this taste of prosperity did not last long before a general sense of decline sank in, a condition that historian Stuart Ward points to as a key ingredient for the satire boom of the 1960s: ". . . British imperial decline . . . permeated much, if not all, of the new satirical reflection on the state of the nation. The underlying question at the heart of the satire boom, 'What's wrong with Britain?', would have been superfluous in an era of relative affluence were it not for the deep sense of loss that accompanied the transition from imperial power to island state in the post-war decades."[68] Satirical shows such as *That Was the Week That Was* attacked the failure of the postwar dream and took comedic shots at key political figures.[69] As Ward writes:

> Just as the 'Angry Young Men' of the 1950s directed their "anger at the present for failing to live up to the imperial standards of the past," so too the satirists of the 1960s poured scorn on those who had promised a more grandiose role for Britain in the post-war world. Or as [British comedian] David Frost commented years later: "We were the Exasperated Young Men—exasperated by Britain's recurring failures, by hypocrisy and the shabbiness of its politics."[70]

This second generation of postwar critics, as "Exasperated Young Men," used satire as their weapon of choice to scrutinize national realities. Much like the Angry Young Men, they were disenchanted with the mythologization of the war and of the British imperial past, but the anger

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[66] Ward, *British Culture*, 91.
[67] Humphrey Carpenter, *Great, Silly Grin: The British Satire Boom of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000), 11.
[68] Ward, *British Culture*, 92.
[69] Mocking British political figures on television was fairly remarkable development at the time since BBC censors had long allowed outdated propriety to hold sway over their programming, nixing many jokes at the expense of government figures. It was very much in vogue in early 1960s Britain to be satirical: ". . . in the context of the early 1960s, the sudden appearance of satirical revue was widely regarded as something new and invigorating." Ibid., 93.
[70] Ibid., 108.

was tempered by a twinge of nostalgia for the mythologized homeland, creating an inherent ambiguity in their works.

For some British artists in the 1960s, satire and nostalgia went hand in hand. Ward describes the satire boom as being influenced in part by a "mournful nostalgia" for the imperial British past.[71] In the historical context of the end of empire, the vantage point of nostalgia gave satirical artists a common base for reveling in imperial glory and power that British citizens had grown up with and were still trained to operate in, while at the same time relegating this imperialist mindset to the past by placing it under the auspices of an exercise in memory, thus putting in stark relief that this way of thinking was outdated, unrealistic, and morally wrong. From this cognitive disconnect, satire could commence. As an example, Ward points to several moments in the satirical show *Beyond the Fringe* where the comedic genius relies on characters who are heavily entrenched in imperialist thinking in contemporary situations for which that manner is highly unsuitable. Ward sees this kind of humor as both revealing shame in Britain's past, as well as belying a pride in British heritage: "[T]he satire boom was a striking manifestation of the deep sense of ambivalence that permeated British culture in the age of imperial decline—evincing at one and the same time an overweening pride, self-deprecatory shame, and a feeling of powerlessness to embrace a post-imperial future."[72] Comedic sketches criticized British life without suggesting an alternative future that should be sought, mired in a "political no-man's land" between past and present.[73]

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[71] Ibid., 91.
[72] Ibid., 108-109.
[73] Ward further explains: [Writer and theater critic] Kenneth Tynan noted at the time that the new breed of satirists were "anti-reactionary without being progressive"—scathing in their criticism of the pomposity and cant of the British establishment, but offering nothing by way of an alternative. This political no-man's-land derived on the one hand from a deep sense of disillusionment with the downward trend in Britain's global fortunes, coupled with a keen awareness that a return to the glory days of empire was neither a credible alternative nor a particularly desirable one." Ibid., 108-109.

It was in this context of the British satire boom and the shift from a national sense of pop optimism to national impression of decline that Ray Davies became interested in writing music for television and began developing his own musical satirical style, creating the foundation for *Arthur*, which draws from the same nostalgic ambivalence that was prevalent in satirical television of the time. In the year before he began working on *Arthur*, Davies had been commissioned to write weekly songs for the ten-week run of the BBC television program *At the Eleventh Hour*, a show of "distinctive English humor and satire" that "deepened Davies's retreat into his own English composing sensibility."[74] In January 1969, he repeated the exercise for a six-week run of the show *Where Was Spring*, produced by British broadcaster Ned Sherrin, who specialized in satirical television programs.[75] A few songs from Davies' work for *At the Eleventh Hour* and *Where Was Spring* demonstrate Davies's musical satirical style, which hinged on the disconnect between the lyrical subject and the musical setting. For example, in the song "Did You See His Name," which was written for *At the Eleventh Hour* and later released in the U.S. on a Kinks' compilation album *The Kink Kronikles* in 1972, Davies writes lyrics about a man who, after his name and address are listed in the newspaper for stealing of a can of beans, kills himself out of shame. The story is morbid, but these lyrics are accompanied by an upbeat, A-Major melody, followed by a series of vocable "la"'s on the melody, giving the song a playful twist. The death of a man is whittled down to a gossipy question: "Did you see his name/ in the local paper?" With the gleeful melody that accompanies the story, one can easily imagine the *Schadenfreude* of the newspaper readers. Musically satirical techniques Davies incorporated during this time included lyrics featuring lists that became increasingly absurd and the

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[74] Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 106.
[75] Ibid.

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deployment of whimsical vocables after a particularly cruel lyric, both of which I will discuss

further in my analysis of "Yes Sir, No Sir" on *Arthur.*

Beyond Davies' own engagement with composing music for the satire boom, what

further ties *Arthur* to satirical television culture in the late 1960s is that while *Arthur* is a concept

album, it was one that was designed to accompany a television program. Television producers

were looking for a project that combined this British love of satire with the newly trending youth

affinity for concept albums. The long format album was finding its way onto television. The

Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* had met with dubious success (more British viewers had tuned

into it than any other Christmas special, but the reviews were so bad that producers decided not

to air it in the US), but programmers were convinced televised concept albums, later to take the

form of rock operas—which I will discuss in the next chapter with the Who's *Tommy*—were the

wave of the future in television programming aimed at the booming youth market. When Davies

was approached with this project idea by producer Jo Durden-Smith, Davies leapt at the chance.

After developing a proposal to co-author a televised musical play, Davies secured a contract with

British broadcasting service Granada TV to air this future project. Davies boasts about the first

meetings to pitch the idea for this televised rock opera, disclosing that from the very beginning it

was meant to be a critical extension of the nostalgic exploration the band had initiated with

Village Green: "I knew that *The Village Green* was about the decline of a certain innocence in

England, and when I suggested I go the whole way and write about the decline and fall of the

British empire everyone, without exception, thought that it was the perfect subject matter."[76] He

began working with novelist Julian Mitchell, whose work was similarly engaged with satire, to

develop the *Arthur* project. Mitchell was open to writing a script that arose from Davies'

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[76] Ray Davies, *X-Ray*, 363.

musical ideas, rather than asking Davies to write songs for a pre-prepared script.[77] This placed

much of the artistic vision for the project squarely in Ray Davies' hands since Davies wrote all

of the album tracks on *Arthur*, and the culminating album reflects this artistic lead.

The televised version of Arthur's story never saw the light of day. Even though the

casting was complete, the script was ready, and the music had already been released in October

by the Kinks, representatives at Granada television ceased production in December 1969 after

deciding it would be too problematic to continue when producer Jo Durden-Smith did not

provide a formal budget. The finished script was never released, but Mitchell did write a brief

outline of the plot of *Arthur* for the album sleeve that was included on both the U.K. and U.S.

releases of the album. Despite the failure of the project to reach television screens, it is

important to note that *Arthur* was conceived of as an audiovisual narrative project. Unlike the

Who's *Tommy* or Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, the album was not constructed with the eventual goal

of a televised version, but rather was created at the same time as the televised version was

developing, with Davies wielding control over both.

Davies approached the album as a television program, and it was not too far removed

from his previous approach to songwriting by using invented characters as a pretext for relaying

his own opinions. Instead of undisguisedly using first-person narrative songs to disclose his

views to his listeners, he preferred to use invented characters to relay his message: "I've always

enjoyed writing to a different character . . . it allows me to say what I think is true . . . I still write

character songs today and sort of cast myself as an actor in them."[78] Critics of Davies' work

have also noticed this trait. As John Atkins notes, "In *Arthur,* one detached observer sings all the

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[77] Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 128. Kitts poses that Ray Davies was secretly relieved that Quaife left the group, as Davies could often sway Dave Davies and drummer Mick Avory to bend to his will, but had a far more difficult time persuading Quaife—"too often the lone dissident voice"—to follow his artistic whims.
[78] Davies in Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 25.

songs as an objective narrator, and subsequently Arthur as a character never comes alive and remains merely a vehicle for observations of that narrator."[79] Biographer Kitts also comments on Davies' use of characters: "Indeed, Davies's songs do seem like brief plays or short films in which he uses his authorial control to create a screen behind which he can camouflage his own anxieties and opinions without being overtly confessional or didactic."[80] *Arthur* acts as a thinly-veiled means through which Davies uses a cast of characters to scrutinize his own postwar neuroses and the process of nostalgia, from reveling in fond memories to realizing those memories do not represent reality.

The crux of *Arthur* depends upon an incongruous placement of imperialist thinking within a contemporary setting, ultimately functioning to highlight the problematic nature of the British Empire, much like the trope Ward identifies in contemporary satirical television. *Arthur*, from the very start, is grounded in Britain's imperial past. This is obvious from the opening track, "Victoria," which indicates how present the British Imperial past still was for British citizens like Davies in the late 1960s. The title of the song references the grand matriarch of all things British Imperial, and the verses are sprinkled with a heavy dose of Imperial belonging and pride ("For this land I shall die/Let her sun never set," "Land of hope and gloria, land of my Victoria") and takes stock of the geographic expanse of the Empire that by 1969 was no longer a reality ("Canada to India/ Australia to Cornwall/ Singapore to Hong Kong"). Despite all of this exaltation of Empire, the album is meant to take place in modern times. Thrown in the midst of this glorification of days of yore are slight chinks in the Imperial armor: the lyric "the rich were so mean" briefly touches on class struggles, Davies' vocal timbre sounds overly cloying

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[79] John Atkins, *The Who on Record: A Critical History, 1963-1998* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), 125. This criticism is not quite accurate—there are multiple narrators, but one does get the sense that it is all coming from the same source, albeit a source torn between a nostalgic world and a realistic world, whereas in *Tommy*, several different characters are fleshed out.
[80] Kitts, *Ray Davies*, 25.

(especially when compared to the Kinks' preceding discography), the rock idiom of verse clashes with the Baroque sounds of the bridge, and the clunking rhythm of the verses undermines the stateliness of the lyrics.[81] When one notices these disconnects, the devotion to Victorianism in the 1960s sounds questionable, just as Arthur, as a character, is out of place in the modern world; from the first song on the album, he belongs to an invented past.

We then begin to see what Davies' heavy referencing to Victorian England has to do with the Swinging Sixties. As sociologist Fred Davis explains, "nostalgia tells us more about present moods than about past realities."[82] In the 1960s, referencing the Empire was a veiled means of calling attention to the failure of the postwar dream. Satirists drew parallels between the Imperialist mindset and the overly optimistic postwar jingoism that Britain would be ever victorious. Ward elaborates on British satirists' exploration of this sentiment:

> The comic relief provided by the satirists' relentless parodying of Britain's flagging fortunes in the post-war world provided a welcome pressure valve whereby these dramatic changes in the national self-image could be rendered less threatening . . . in laughing at the changes that had been forced on Britain in the post-war years, the satirists were by no means articulating a sense of popular indifference towards the end of empire.[83]

Ray Davies, along with other satirists, had an investment in the subjects they mocked in their work; they were part of a national discussion to emphasize the disparity between postwar jargon and postwar reality. By viewing *Arthur* through the context of both Davies' fond memories of wartime and postwar family camaraderie and Davies' interest in satirical humor that challenged postwar life, we see conflicting viewpoints within the musician, which he brought to the album.

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[81] "Victoria" was released as a single shortly after the album's release. Interestingly, the B-side of the single in the U.S. was "Brainwashed" (Oct. 15, 1969), whereas in the U.K., the B-side was "Mr. Churchill Says." Thus, for fans in the U.K., the link between World War I and World War II were further solidified by a single saturated with national historical references, whereas the consumers of the single in the U.S. were given the most modern and rebellious album track as a complement to the A-side.

[82] Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 10.

[83] Ward, *British Culture*, 108.

Whereas in the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour,* nostalgia was a way for the band to find stability

in their postwar identity, in the Kinks' *Arthur*, the band presents nostalgia as a problematic

pastime, for it both comforted citizens from and blinded citizens to the reality of their present

troubled economy. For Davies in *Arthur*, nostalgia for Victorian-era and wartime Britain were

useful because they highlighted the disparities of the present.

Do You Remember, Arthur? Nostalgia and Affective Ambivalence in *Arthur*

After an interview with Ray Davies from 1972, one journalist described the meeting as an

"anachronism," further detailing, "Spending time with Ray Davies is one way of suspending

yourself in time and space . . . He doesn't belong to today . . . he doesn't belong to the future,

he's in love with the past but he knows he can't go back there. Davies is a misplaced person, a

hero to teenage boys, and a character who makes fun of the lifestyle he is very much a part of."[84]

Davies emanated a sense of anachronism not only through the clothes he wore and the topics he

chose to write songs about.[85] With *Arthur*, Ray Davies, as a twenty-five year-old man, deftly

demonstrated his creative time-traveling capabilities by putting himself in the place of an old

man, and Davies skillfully recreated the nostalgic process as both idyllic and unsettling for this

elderly character he brings to life.

Nostalgia can begin as a positive affect, but historians Malcolm Chase and Christopher

Shaw insist that it also contains a tinge of "wistful and knowing pessimism."[86] Sociologist Fred

Davis further explicates that the memories of an older person looking back on life have a

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[84] Janis Schact, *Circus Magazine*, February 1972, 2-4.

[85] The Kinks were famous for their Edwardian style, with Davies commenting on it in 1964: "I mean the jackets—you know, we wear hunting jackets, in dark pink. We imagined ourselves as characters from a Charles Dickens book, and we all think it suits us." Ray Coleman, "Ray Davies of the Kinks owns up: If you want to get ahead—Rebel!" *Melody Maker,* September 19, 1964, 3.

[86] Malcolm Shaw and Christopher Chase, eds. *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1989), 6.

tendency to shift nostalgia toward being a more negative affect: "The nagging sense of the absence of a future undercuts what is perhaps the chief unspoken aim of nostalgia's exercise, that is, to assuage apprehension of the future by retrieving the worth of the past. This perhaps explains why with the old, nostalgia tends so often to drift into bitterness and disillusionment."[87] Julian Mitchell's accompanying text for the album describes a similar pessimistic drift for Arthur at the end of his remembrances: "Is this what he's lived for? He's got the house, hasn't he? And the car? It's been a good life, hasn't it? Well, hasn't it?" By taking on the character of elderly Arthur, Davies created a narrative situation in which he could tackle the range of emotions nostalgia can evoke, from reveling in partaking of British life to being bitterly disillusioned when looking back at those hallmarks of life. Since the character has lived through two world wars, Davies' Arthur spends much of his reverie remembering war: three of the twelve tracks on the album directly reference the war—"Yes Sir, No Sir," "Some Mother's Son," and "Mr. Churchill Says"—meaning a full quarter of the album is spent on memories of war. This might be initially strange to understand as nostalgia, but when analyzing the music it is set to and when put in the context of how satirists incorporated nostalgia as a springboard for contemporary political and cultural commentary, one can see how Davies is toying with a thin line between sincerity and derision.

Arthur's reverie opens with two songs that highlight disparate sentiments: Where "Victoria" exuberantly celebrates empire ("I was born, lucky me/In a land that I love"), "Yes Sir, No Sir" languishes in the travails of service to one's country. From the outset, Arthur's nostalgia is conflicted. This nostalgia also hinges on serving Britain: "Victoria" through its general patriotic statements and "Yes Sir, No Sir" through detailing life in the military. A nostalgic memory the war could focus on the pageantry of militarism, national unification under a sense of

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[87] Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 71.

purpose, and stories of heroism. That is seemingly what "Victoria" sets up as an opening song. "Yes Sir, No Sir," however, turns away from this and into a remembrance of the drudgery of military life and the futility of a soldier's death in war. Immediately after proclaiming in "Victoria" that "When I grow, I shall fight/ For this land, I shall die," in "Yes Sir, No Sir," the reality of fighting for the land and the possibility of death—including the hierarchies and mindless drudgery that it entails—sink into Arthur's reminiscences. "Yes Sir, No Sir" is shockingly sober compared to "Victoria," and it quickly establishes that the past is not all that it is built up to be. The juxtaposition of two different visions of the past at the opening of Arthur's album-long nostalgic reverie establishes a tension that raises questions for the listener regarding national pride.

"Yes Sir, No Sir" directly attacks the nostalgic myth of wartime camaraderie. In this song, Davies brings to life three different military characters of different ranks to address class consciousness during the war, showing a disparity between British citizens rather than celebrating a national unification for a common cause. The vocal unification of "Victoria" is dispersed into three characters on "Yes Sir, No Sir." The Kinks use distinctive vocal timbres and instrumentation to underscore caustic hierarchies during wartime. Ray Davies's voice for the lowest-ranking private's lines is a deep, numbingly acquiescent, guttural timbre; Dave Davies' vocal imitation of the mid-ranking officer is higher and nasally to affect the jeering scorn of the officer bossing around the private; and Ray Davies's voice for intoning the highest-ranking officer takes on a pompous quality as he over-pronounces vowels and consonants (especially the t's in "let them feel that they're important to the cause"). Introducing these three different characters within the song erodes the national unification espoused in "Victoria." At one point, the mid-ranking officer snidely sings to the private, "Pack up your ambitions in your old kit bag/

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soon you'll be happy with a packet of fags," which is a play on a World War I marching tune

"Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag" ("Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag/ And

smile, smile, smile/ While you've got a Lucifer to light your fag/ Smile boys, that's the style").[88]

In the Kinks' song, however, the fellowship of the World War I marching tune morphs into a

cruel taunt from a mid-ranking officer to the lower-ranking private.

To further separate each rank from the other and dispel any mythologized, nostalgic sense

of wartime camaraderie, the musical accompaniment changes from character to character. The

lowly private is accompanied by Dalton's bass plugging away as Avory's militaristic snare line

trudges alongside, snappily playing the sixteenth-note triplets on the upbeat of every third beat,

but still somehow sounding lazy on the arrival of every hard-hitting downbeat: the private is

dutifully following orders, but dragging his feet as he does so. As he continues, Dave Davies

adds in rock solo guitar ornamentations over the bass and snare stamping that sounds wildly out

of place (0:28-55). Dave Davies uses the instrument of his generation, the electric guitar, to

provide a voice for the otherwise unvocalized willfulness of the wartime private: although Ray

Davies as the private acquiescingly sings "Yes sir, no sir/ Where do I go sir/ What do I do sir/

How do I behave"), the guitar line provides an underlying hint of a rebellious attitude that

connects the private, as a representative of the older generation, with the rebellious rock sound of

the postwar generation. This moment acts as an empathetic generational bridge, sonically

placing the contemporary listener in the private's shoes; the plight of this soldier is not so distant

from the contemporary world. The Kinks use this technique to a greater extent for another

album track, "Mr. Churchill Says," which I discuss in more detail below. When a mid-ranking

officer arrives on the scene, a commanding horn line in a scalar descent of eighth notes in B♭

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[88] The song was also sung by soldiers in World War II, and made popular in recordings during World War II by Spike Jones and his City Slickers, the Andrews Sisters, Red Foley, and Bob Crosby and his Orchestra.

major accompanies the officer's command to "stop your dreaming and your idle wishing" (0:55-1:21). As wanderingly melodic as the private's accompanying guitar was, the horns enforce the oppressive order of the B♭ major scale, and suddenly Dave's guitar part seems tamed as it joins in with the same melodic cadence at the end of the higher-ranking officer's verse. The contrast between the private's accompanying music and the upper-class officers is further emphasized as the song modulates to an overly pompous C major for the highest-ranking officer's lines (2:14). The highest-ranking officer's vocals are accompanied by a horn line that decorously ornaments each of his phrases with idiomatic British brass band figures.[89] Rather than emphasizing patriotic unification as "Victoria" accomplishes, the depiction of the wartime experience in "Yes Sir, No Sir" is overridden by the musical representation of oppressive class differences.

In "Yes Sir, No Sir," Davies mocks the nostalgic comfort of knowing one's place within the System by using hallmarks of his satirical television songwriting, including lyrical listing that becomes increasingly strained to the point of ridiculousness (which he used on "Where Did My Spring Go?" [1968] from *Where Was Spring*) and the incongruous combination of callous lyric with cheerful vocable melodies (which he used on "Did You See His Name?" [1968] for the show *At the Eleventh Hour*).[90] Ray Davies as the lowly private in "Yes Sir, No Sir" continually asks for orders from higher-ranking officers who have no investment in whether he lives or not,

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[89] These brass lines are an indispensable part of the *Arthur* experience, as bass player John Dalton elucidated in 1969 that they were one of the big draws for fans for the Kinks' tour to promote the album: "Obviously some places are bigger than others, but we intend to use brass and strings on this trip. We'll be using a lot of material from 'Arthur,' so we'll need the brass. It should be great working with that big sound behind us and it will give the kids something different to look at and hear." Royston Eldridge, "Now . . . A Pop Opera from the Kinks," *Melody Maker*, September 27, 1969.

[90] In "Where Did My Spring Go?"—a song about aging where Davies once again assumes the role of an elderly man—Davies's lyrics list a series of increasingly bitter questions, starting with where his spring went, then where his trees, sun, bluebirds, and rainbows went, then he turns directly to the root of the complaint, where the aging body is the focus, asking where did his teeth, muscles, hair, hormones, liver, heart, and bones go? In "Did You See His Name," Davies used the combination of callous lyric ("Life was much too hard to live/ So he brought it to an end/ In his gas-filled maisonette/ Because he couldn't stand the strain") followed by a repeat of the melody sung on "la."

and the questions to his superiors become increasingly absurd. At first, the questions fall within

the realm of the expected: "where do I go, Sir?" and "what do I do, Sir?" As the song

progresses, however, the questions show a stifling dependence on the hierarchical system: "what

do I say," "How do I behave," "permission to breathe sir?" and "Please let me die sir." The

soldier has stifled his very self, and the mortal sacrifice to country that was glorified in

"Victoria" becomes a hopeless loss of pride.[91] Stuart Ward described that part of the humor for

Satire Boom comedians hinged on undermining the dignity of subordination to higher ranks

(whether that be in the military or in the class system): "The ideal of restraint, self-control and

subordination of the self, far from representing the pillar on which Britain's greatness was

founded, were shown to result in the kind of repressed, inept and degenerate characters so

skillfully rendered by the *Beyond the Fringe* cast."[92] Although *Arthur* is framed as an old man

remembering his life, where ostensibly traits like "restraint, self-control and subordination"

could have been nostalgically celebrated as a stereotypical British wartime stiff-upper-lip

attitude, the memories turn sour as Arthur reveals the disconcerting truth of military hierarchies.

The act of self-subordination was glorified during wartime, but Davies satirizes how this

attitude leads to inglorious ends. At one point Davies takes on the role of a mid-ranking officer,

singing: "Doesn't matter who you are/ You're there and there you are/ Everything is in its place/

Authority must be maintained/ And then we know exactly where we are." This same character

then later sardonically offers "Give the scum a gun and make the bugger fight/… if he dies we'll

send a medal to his wife," followed by insulting laughter and a series of vocable "la's" to the

same melody that the highest-ranking officer introduced when he sang "Let them feel that

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[91] In the soldier's final verse, Ray Davies sings "Yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir," which is a reference to
a nursery rhyme "Baa Baa Black Sheep" about gathering bags of wool. This reference has the effect of
further infantilizing the soldier in the subordinating power dynamic of military ranks, as well as marking
the private's place as a lamb headed toward the slaughter.
[92] Ward, *British Culture*, 97.

they're important to the cause/But let them know that they are fighting for their homes/Just be sure that they're contributing their all." As the mid-ranking officers enter into this vocable version of the highest officer's melody, the "la's" have an adolescent and highly nasal sound (2:50-3:06). The vocal reference draws upon the British choral tradition and the officer's lofty intentions, but makes a joke of it through the inclusion of the laughter and the nasal "la" melody.

In 1960s satirical television, attention to duty and subordination during wartime was wrapped up in the conundrum of how to understand the contemporary postwar world. As Ward elaborates:

> Practically all of the leading comic figures of this generation . . . had been raised on pre-war and wartime notions of duty and service to nation and empire, only to reach maturity at a time when these ideas could no longer be sustained by the external political realities. . . . popular British comedy reflected the reorientation of an entire generation, away from the former conception of Britain's world-wide imperial destiny and towards a more modest awareness of Britain's place in the world. While on the face of it the satire boom had the character of a good-humoured acknowledgement of new post-imperial realities, closer examination reveals an underlying resentment towards those who had promised a more grandiose role for Britain in the post-war world.[93]

Arthur achieves a similar sense of resentment toward postwar fantasies. With the placement of "Yes Sir, No Sir" after "Victoria," the Kinks use the juxtaposition of the imagined past versus the reality of the past to bring to light the fact that personal pride in duty and service to one's country in the first song can result in the humiliation and subjugation of the second. The remembrance of wartime military service in turn acts as an analogy to contemporary issues.[94] Arthur's nostalgic reverie turns to disappointment, and when placed in the context of dissatisfaction with the postwar dream, his memory serves as an example to the postwar

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[93] Ward, *British Culture*, 92.
[94] Davies believed that working-class British citizens were not treated well during the wars or afterward, and this manifests in the music of both Davies brothers. Dave said of the class criticism: "That working-class anger came out in my guitar sound. And the beauty was Ray could articulate it lyrically, and I could express it in pure gritty emotion. Those two elements coming together was really important." Dave Davies in Hasted, *You Really Got Me*, 10.

generation not to buy into the same imperial thinking, for even in this imagined past scenario, it leads to the inglorious ends for the private. With the disjunction between "Victoria" and "Yes Sir, No Sir," the Kinks create a critical distance in Arthur's nostalgic memories, and this continues throughout the album.

This is not to suggest that *Arthur* places blame on the older generation for believing in "a more grandiose role for Britain in the post-war world" and that the younger generation should reject nostalgic thinking outright. Where many satirists might leave the point at mocking victims of patriotic thinking, the Kinks create a musical space that allows for a multivalent nostalgia. This is most apparent in the third track on the album, "Some Mother's Son," in which nostalgia takes a heartbreaking turn. Immediately following the disjointedness of "Victoria" and "Yes Sir, No Sir," Arthur still finds himself reminiscing about wartime, and the lyrics tell a somber story of a young man who has died in battle and the mother he has left behind, both of whom are engaging in the exercise of nostalgia.[95] The nostalgic thinking of the characters manifests as both injurious and comforting. On the battlefield of "soldiers fighting in a trench," "some mother's son" looks up to see the sun and "dreams of games he played when he was young." Unwary of his surroundings as he escapes into childhood memories, the soldier's head is "blown up by some soldier's gun." Nostalgia leads to his death.[96] Back on the home front, the mother puts his picture in a frame and places it on the wall, and then, as an act of remembrance, "they

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[95] From Mitchell's accompanying album cover text, we can glean that this is about Arthur's brother Eddie, who died during the Battle of the Somme, and Arthur's mother, who remembers him.

[96] This is an interesting death in terms of the clinical history of nostalgia. Jean Starobinski wrote in "The Idea of Nostalgia" about the appearance of nostalgia as a malaise-inducing state of mind in an eighteenth-century text on military medicine. Soldiers who had heard strains of a popular song from their homeland experienced a devastating impact on their health, according to military doctors: "a popular tune . . . which had the unusual power to provoke an attack of emotional hypermnesia: the illusion of a sort of presence of the past, all the more pervasive owing to the sadness caused by departing." Nostalgia, then, has its roots as a clinical disease in military experience, so the solider dying in "Some Mother's Son" in part due to nostalgia is apropos. Jean Starobinski, "The Idea of Nostalgia," *Diogenes*. trans. William S. Kemp. Vol. 14 (1966): 90.

put flowers in the picture frame." Ray Davies sings, "Some mother's memory remains," and that even though "some mother's son lies in a field," to "his mother's eyes he looks the same/as the day he went away." The mother finds comfort in memories of her son. Nostalgia, then, plays a double role in this song as both a source of pain and as a healing salve.

This dual affective nature of nostalgia is reflected in music. Ray Davies sings with a crooning, tender timbre throughout the song. Although some of the lyrics sweetly recall touching moments from the past, the lyrics also very explicitly describe a brutal and tragic death, so while Davies' poignant vocal timbre seems fitting as he sings "and dreams of games he played when he was young," it is eerily out of place as he uses the same gentle vocal style to sing "a second later he is dead." While this potentially could have functioned as a satirical tool, in which Davies would continue singing of the horror of the son's death with increasing disjointedness between his timbre and the lyrics—akin to the comedic tool he undertakes in "Did You See His Name?" where Davies sings stoically as the lyrics reveal a worsening and ultimately fatal situation for the song's protagonist—he instead returns to the scene of the mother fondly remembering her son. There is a continual shift back-and-forth between Davies' timbre matching the affect of the lyrics and it being mismatched. For example, in the third verse Davies sings, "Back home they put his picture in a frame" followed by "But all dead soldiers look the same," all in the same hauntingly soft voice. Just as the nostalgic actions depicted in the song are presented by the Kinks as alternately soothing and deadly, Davies's vocal timbre is alternately appropriately gentle and strangely affectively disconnected from the lyrics. To further depict the emotional duality of the nostalgic space, the sincerity of Davies' voice is placed in contrast with harmonizing backing vocals of "oohs" and "ahs." These backing vocals

sung by the Kinks have the same timbral issue as Davies' lead melody, where they alternately sound like a support to the elegy, but also as an ironic comment on the elegiac sentiment.

The affectual duality is further emphasized through the tonality of the verses, where the vocal lines are the site of a push-and-pull between B♭ major and D major chords, which creates an unsettling tonal ambiguity throughout each verse. The lyrical action of the second verse— where the soldier dies—provides a dramatic example of this. The shape of its melody begins in B♭ major with a three-note ascending motive, B♭-C-D ("two soldiers fighting in a trench"), but then moves to F# and stretches up to D (see Example 2.1, m. 3) and then later up to F# (Example 2.1, mm. 7-9), both emphasizing D major, so that while the listeners originally hear B♭-C-D in B♭ major, by the end of the verse they are hearing it in the context of D major. This opening ascending three-note motive, B♭-C-D, shapes the melody through three repetitions of this motive throughout the verse (See measures 1-2, mm. 5-6, and mm. 11-13 in Example 2.1), and the backing vocal harmonies under each iteration of the motive reflect the shifting tonality as the verse moves from B♭ major to D major. The first iteration of this motive appears as rising eighth notes, and the backing vocals support the B♭ major harmonies (I-V-I in mm. 1-2 of Example 2.1) that were originally outlined by the arpeggiating harpsichord at the beginning of the song (0:00-0:12). The following two measures, however, move into D major (mm. 3-4 in Example 2.1), but when the ascending three-note motive B♭-C-D returns an octave higher and in a more lilting dotted-eighth-plus-sixteenth-note pattern in the following measures, the supporting vocals reestablish B♭ as the harmonic center (ii-V-I in m. 5-6 of Example 2.1), dragging Ray Davies' soaring D-major melody of the previous measures back down into B♭ major. This is again followed by an assertion of D major (mm. 7-8), and when the B♭-C-D melodic motive returns a

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third time to close out the verse's melody, that motive becomes the basis of the supporting

harmonies (B♭-C-D), ultimately leading to an Aeolian cadence in D (mm. 11-13).

Example 2.1 Second verse of "Some Mother's Son," 0:49-1:25

"Some Mother's Son" awkwardly ends on a D major chord as Avory chugs away at hard-driving

downbeats on the snare.[97] The constant pull between D major and B♭ major confounds the

markers of sentiment in this song, and leaves the listener wondering where the verse is headed

harmonically. The Kinks confuse the musical vocabulary. This song could be more biting, it

could be more sentimental; it could be more solidly in B♭ major or in D major; but it is instead

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[97]This ending is reminiscent of the end of "Victoria" which also features a sustained D major chord over
Avory's unrelenting downbeats on the hi-hat before cadencing on G major. This neatly ties "Some
Mother's Son" back to the lyrics of "Victoria," showing the mournful reality of the glory of dying for
one's country.

caught in a strange middle ground. The creation of this middle ground allows for two interpretations of nostalgic thinking at once.

This middle ground is also featured in the nostalgic space of the multi-generational exchange in "Some Mother's Son," for it does not favor one generation over the other. Geoffrey Cannon's album review describes the song as "wrenchingly compassionate," while Jon Savage observes, "Ray Davies is not afraid to point out that instead of being on the wrong side of the generation war, parents may have some worthwhile experiences of their own."[98] In a context in which Davies could make a vitriolic remark about the older generation sending the younger generation off to die, he instead includes the sorrow of the older generation at seeing their children go off to war. In the introduction to *The Imagined Past,* Christopher Shaw and Malcolm Chase impart the story of one of their interview participants, who after watching the television series on World War II, *The People's War*, "realised that the events it portrayed were part of the past of her own parents." Furthermore, her reaction "involved not only compassion and sympathy but also a revaluation of the past."[99] She felt nostalgia for her parents' experience during the war, which in turn diminished her sense of the generational divide. Similarly, "Some Mother's Son" puts the listener in the position of feeling empathy for both the mother and the son as both characters turn to nostalgic thinking. By placing the affects of "Some Mother's Son" in combination with the other tracks on *Arthur*, we see that nostalgia, because of its emotionally mutably nature, acts as a departure point for criticism and for empathy.

To further consider the older generation's experience of British life, on the second side of the album the Kinks move the generational dialogue from World War I to World War II—their parent's era—in "Mr. Churchill Says." Arthur once again reminisces about wartime

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[98] Geoffrey Cannon, "Arthur and the Empire," *The Guardian* October 3, 1969: 10; Jon Savage, *The Kinks: The Official Biography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), 110.
[99] Shaw and Chase, *Imagined Past*, 2.

camaraderie, and through the frame of Arthur's memories, the Kinks both playfully chide the older generation's devotion to patriotic devotion and also paint that generation as heroically facing the Blitz. In this song, the Kinks juxtapose late-1960s musical language with lyrics that draw from the language of World War II propaganda. Sociologist Janelle Wilson clarifies that nostalgia "is not simply a 'living in the past,' but rather, an active engagement with the past, and a juxtaposition of past and present."[100] By using the younger, postwar generation's language of rock to depict Britain during the Blitz, the Kinks actively engage with the past, bringing the past and the present together, and in turn, this brings the experiences of two generations together.

From the outset, the Kinks make it clear to the listener that this song is about the older generation: the historical references come into very sharp focus as "Mr. Churchill Says" strongly participates in the language and memories of World War II. Davies identifies by name key political figures of World War II: Mr. Churchill is Prime Minister Winston Churchill; Mr. Beaverbrook is William Maxwell Aitken (also known as Lord Beaverbrook), who served as the Minister of Aircraft Production, the Minister of Supply, and Minster of War Production; Mr. Montgomery is Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery; Mr. Mountbatten is Louis Mountbatten who was Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia; and of course, Vera Lynn, Britain's darling chanteuse during the war. His lyrics even paraphrase and directly quote speeches by Winston Churchill during the war: "We shall fight them on the beaches/ on the hills and in the fields" references Churchill's famous June 4, 1940, address; the lyrics "Never in the field of conflict was so much owed to so few" come from Churchill's August 20, 1940, speech; "And this was their finest hour" draws from Churchill's 18 June 1940, address. He also references the everyday concerns of British citizens during World War II, such as saving tin to send to the military to use for construction material, blackouts, and air raids. By populating the lyrics with

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[100] Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 157.

these famous characters, speeches, and efforts that brought Britain through the war, the Kinks draw from the pages of the mythologized British wartime experience.

Nostalgia for the British national spirit of camaraderie during World War II begins with the title itself. By titling the song "Mr. Churchill Says" and referring to the Prime Minister throughout the song as Mr. Churchill, as well as all the other characters as "Mr. Montgomery," "Mr. Mountbatten," and so forth, Ray Davies treads between formality and affectionate familiarity. This is a trademark in Davies' songwriting, as he would turn to using the title "Mr." in his naming of characters, including in "Mr. Reporter" (1966), "Mr. Pleasant" (1967), "Mr. Shoemaker's Daughter" (1969), "Mr. Songbird" (1968), and "Mr. Big Man" (1977). The appellation of "Mr." gives an air of politeness while also personalizing the government figures Davies lists in the song: it is not Prime Minister or Sir Churchill, but the ordinary, fellow citizen, Mr. Churchill. The camaraderie is further established within the lyrics, as a collective "we" responds to Mr. Churchill. Where the grammatical person of "Yes Sir, No Sir" emphasized hierarchical distinctions between the characters (the private's "What do I say?" versus the mid-ranking officer's "Stop your dreaming/ … Do what I say"), in "Mr. Churchill Says," the use of "we" brings everyone together ("We gotta fight the bloody battle to the very end/ … We're gonna win the way that Mr. Churchill says").

The "we" of the song lyrics refers to the wartime generation, but the musical idiom of the song extends the "we" into the postwar generation. The Kinks create a space for critical nostalgia in "Mr. Churchill Says" by once again juxtaposing serious lyrics with an incongruous musical setting, although this time to the effect of working to join generations across the decades as the sounds of the 1960s narrate the travails of the 1940s. The song begins with a steady groove as Ray Davies lists off the multiple efforts of the everyday citizens to do their part to win

the war for England, followed by the direct quotations of Churchill's speeches. In the first verse,

he adopts the same dull, low timbre as the private in "Yes Sir, No Sir," following the orders of

the government, but as he begins quoting Churchill in the second verse, he assumes a loftier

accent to invoke the Prime Minister's rallying speeches to the public. Davies then returns to the

list of inspirational quotes from political and cultural figures during the war. This is suddenly

interrupted by the World War II sonic reference of an air raid siren at 1:36, signaling that British

life is under threat: all that Arthur has been nostalgic for in this album is in danger of being

erased.

In art historian Paolo Magagnoli's analysis of the artworks of Joachim Koester, he

discusses a series of photographs of the modern day ruins of a 1920s spiritual center, which

Magagnoli views as emphasizing that the temple is "not an eternal, mythical utopia."[101] By

introducing the air raid siren amidst the valiant soliloquies (humbled by the Davies' "everyman"

drawl, but valiant nonetheless), the Kinks achieve a similar effect, where the pomp of proud,

wartime Britain comes under the very real danger of the terrors of war. After this air raid siren,

Davies sings, "Did you hear that plane flying overhead/ There's a house on fire and there's

someone lying dead." Britain is not an "eternal, mythical utopia," but a real place under threat of

destruction. Magagnoli believes that the presentation of the ruined spiritual center in Koester's

photographs is "not to escape the present but to reflect on its condition," and this is also true for

contemporary Britain in the Kinks' "Mr. Churchill says.[102] Britain's experience in the war was

not a grandiloquent collection of phrases to instill a wartime camaraderie that the previous lyrics

might suggest, but also a time when citizens had to respond to national peril. This relates to the

contemporary postwar Britain of the Kinks in that their generation does not inhabit a

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[101] Magagnoli, "Critical Nostalgia," 111.
[102] Ibid., 113.

mythologized utopic Britain, but rather a Britain under threat of economic decline and the realities of failed postwar fantasies.

Cementing the relationship between the wartime and postwar generations is the instrumental interlude that follows the air raid siren. With this interlude, "Mr. Churchill Says" becomes by far one of the most stripped-down, pure rock sounding songs on the album.[103] The postwar generation's voice is linked to the voices of World War II, creating an interesting generational dynamic. The tempo accelerates, and Dave Davies ramps up the energy with a repeating four-chord riff (G-B♭-C-B♭). Dave Davies' guitar solo (2:39-3:39) uses a psychedelic, Aeolian melodic vocabulary, and at 3:48, Ray Davies paraphrases another Churchill speech and turns it into a rhythmic, hand-clapping cheer ("Well Mr. Churchill says/ We gotta to hold up our chins/ We gotta to show some courage and some discipline/ We gotta black up the windows and nail up the doors/ And keep right on 'til the end of the war"). The lively nature of this hand-clapping cheer encourages audience participation, encouraging the listeners to become part of the "we" of the song. Both the psychedelic guitar solo and the rock 'n' roll hand clapping references pull the song out of the World War II setting and place it within a postwar musical idiom. By using the musical language of the postwar generation to illustrate the daily life of the wartime generation, the Kinks bring together the past and present. The problems of wartime do not seem as distant from the postwar generation when placed within a rock setting. When taken in the context of the album as a whole, however, this generational bridge is challenged by the other rock-driven song on the album, "Brainwashed," where Arthur's grandson Ronnie attacks him for living in the past and unquestioningly obeying societal norms. So while the Kinks make one progressive suggestion of musically symbolic empathy for the older generation in "Mr. Churchill

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[103] Dave Davies' guitar solo in "Mr. Churchill Says," along with the song "Brainwashed," the song of the grandson character, Ronnie, who represents the voice of the Kinks' postwar generation, are the two most rock-driven moments on *Arthur*.

Says," that is thwarted within the same work, leaving the listener with a nostalgic album full of juxtapositions, contradictions, ambivalences, and ambiguities.

Conclusion: "And Things Will Never Be the Same…"

In his November 1, 1969 review of *Arthur*, music journalist Greil Marcus wrote: "It's all over for England. They've had their history and it's been written in books; they've fought their wars and buried their heroes. The English have owned the world and jettisoned their empire, and all that's left is—rock and roll."[104] Rock music stands as the last bastion of British culture in Marcus's review, and *Arthur* is British rock's memorial retrospective. Marcus's positioning of the album as looking back through the British past is apt. The Kinks take the listener through over half a century of British history, and by framing the album as the nostalgic exercise of the character Arthur, the band creates a musical space to explore conflicting affective engagements with the past. This provides a different glimpse into the exercise of nostalgia, then, in contrast to the identity-affirming nostalgia in the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*. Although the protagonist of *Arthur* also turns to nostalgia as a source of comfort amidst a time of change in his life, Arthur's undertaking here results in a critique of identity.

Nostalgia in *Arthur* provides a place for questioning, for criticizing both the past and the present. Folklorist Ray Cashman writes, "Nostalgic practices do not offer people the power to literally arrest change, but they do offer them the temporal perspective necessary to become critics of change, and more or less willing participants."[105] The Kinks' *Arthur* demonstrates a keen and sometimes embittered awareness of change: Arthur's world is changing, and even the past is not what it used to be. No matter how much Arthur looks to the past, he cannot return to

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[104] Greil Marcus, "Kinks, 'Arthur'," *Rolling Stone.* Nov. 1, 1969.
[105] Cashman, "Critical Nostalgia," 146.

it (as Davies sings in "Young and Innocent Days," "Time has gone and nothing can ever replace/ Those young and innocent days"), and even as he attempts to do so throughout the album, the memories are fraught with realizations of the struggles and hardships he has endured. Through the nostalgic framing of *Arthur* and the pushback against that nostalgia in the individual tracks, the Kinks open up a musical space to appraise their changing world.

The Kinks continued to incorporate nostalgia in their works throughout the following decades. Their album *Muswell Hillbillies* (1971) was titled after the area in London where Ray and Dave Davies grew up, and it features songs about everyday life and characters that populated the neighborhood of their youths. *Preservation Act 1* (1973) and *Preservation Act 2* (1974) were part of an attempt to create a larger-scale work that revisited and fleshed out the world of *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968). In "Where Are They Now?" from *Preservation Act 1*, Ray Davies turned to his adolescent years, asking the whereabouts of the 1950s British youth subculture of the Teddy Boys, who listened to American rock 'n' roll and wore fashions drawn from the earlier turn-of-the-century Edwardian era.[106] In the 1982 single "Come Dancing," the Kinks sentimentally returned to the dance halls of the 1940s that the Davies' older sister enjoyed ("Come dancing/ That's how they did it when I was just a kid/ And when they said come dancing/ My sister always did").[107] This later became the inspiration for Ray Davies' nostalgically-driven musical, *Come Dancing* (2008). In these works, nostalgia similarly creates a space for critical thought, rather than a place for reverie or fantasy.

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[106] This nostalgia for the 1950s continues on that same album with "One of the Survivors," a song about a character named Johnny Thunder, who, although in the present day "his sideburns are turning gray," still rides around on his motorcycle, listening to the rock 'n' roll of Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny and the Hurricanes. Ray Davies' nostalgia is not solely rooted geographically in Britain; his enjoyment of American rock 'n' roll as a child has made 1950s America another location for his nostalgic fantasies. His 2017 solo album *Americana* nostalgically invokes silent films, rock 'n' roll, and escapist road trips out West.

[107] The Davies' elder sister Rene, whom Ray was particularly fond of, died of a heart attack while enjoying a night out at a dance hall in 1957.

When Ray Davies was recording his solo album *Americana* (2017)—based on his 2013 memoir of the same title—an interviewer asked him about his fascination with writing songs "about a world that was already disappearing." Davies responded that he was not a nostalgic person, but then, being his mutable self, he admitted, "I try to live in the moment, but when I look back on my songs, they're a celebration of a time when I was born, even though I am critical of many things."[108] This interview showcased his continued ambivalent relationship with the past, a stance that has allowed Davies to explore more than a single perspective on nostalgia within his musical works over the years.

While nostalgia remained a creative theme for the Kinks, some of their contemporaries in the 1960s and 1970s began to explore the postwar dream with a different lens. In the following chapters, I turn to two rock operas—the Who's *Tommy* (1969) and Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979)—that have had a continuing artistic influence across the decades. I take particular interest in how these two works chip away at the mythologized British war experience; while the Kinks were not alone amongst British rock musicians in questioning their postwar realities, other bands, such as the Who and Pink Floyd, eviscerated the older generation in their music, calling out that generation's traumatic relationship with World War II. In the works I examine in the second half of this dissertation, the critical eye adopted by the Who and Pink Floyd reveals the war to be an extremely traumatic event. The trauma of the past, which informed their postwar experience, resounds in their music.

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[108] Dave Simpson, "Ray Davies: 'I'm not the godfather of Britpop … more a concerned uncle," *The Guardian* July 16, 2015. www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jul/16/ray-davies-kinks-not-godfather-of-britpop-concerned-uncle.

CHAPTER III

"You Didn't Hear It": The Who and the Denial of Traumatic Narrative in *Tommy*

In an interview with *Rolling Stone* on September 14, 1968, the Who's lyricist and guitarist, Pete

Townshend, enthusiastically related his plans for the band's forthcoming project, the rock opera

Tommy: "the next album is just a huge, complicated, complex story, with lots and lots of aspects

which I hope are gonna come out in the future."[1] Townshend's hopes for the project proved to

be somewhat prophetic: he and his fellow band members—vocalist Roger Daltrey, bassist John

Entwistle, and drummer Keith Moon—not only developed *Tommy* the following year as a double

album marketed as a rock opera (an assertion of the high cultural aims of rock) but also reshaped

the work across the decades as a film in 1975 (*Tommy*) and a Broadway musical in 1993 (*The

Who's Tommy*), with each version bringing out new details of the story. In all three versions of

Tommy, the Who tell the tale of a boy, Tommy, who is traumatized after witnessing a violent act

between his parents. As described at the end of each verse of the song "Pinball Wizard,"

Tommy's trauma presents itself in the physical manifestation of becoming "deaf, dumb, and

blind." During his young adulthood, he rises to celebrity as a pinball champion, and eventually

he experiences a moment of self-realization that releases him from his catatonic state. He

gathers a group of followers by preaching his approach to life, but these followers become

disillusioned with his methods and leave him. Alone, Tommy returns to and maintains the

lessons from his earlier breakthrough, and the story ends with Tommy expressing his amazement

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[1] Jann Wenner, "Pete Townshend Talks Mods, Recording, and Smashing Guitars," *Rolling Stone,*
September 14, 1968.

at his returned senses. The rock opera covers much conceptual ground, touching upon

everything from the insecurities of childhood to the false messiahs of adulthood, but one of the

most significant overarching themes involves Tommy's experience as a trauma survivor and how

that impacts his life.

The plot of the album, film, and musical *Tommy* revolves around a traumatic event that

leaves the protagonist physically disabled, yet, curiously, the act itself is not represented by

musical means in the original album. Instead, the listener only hears Tommy's mother plead

with him after the event has occurred, "you didn't hear it/ you didn't see it/ you won't say

nothing to no one/ ever in your life." In interviews with Townshend following the release of the

1969 album, and in the successive 1975 film and 1993 musical versions of the story, details

began to emerge as to what Tommy witnessed, and subsequent musical depictions of that

moment flesh out the missing moment in the 1969 album in more sonic detail. This progression

from initial denial to forming a narrative over time mirrors how psychologists characterize the

process of integrating a trauma into one's personal narrative. In clinical studies of trauma,

researchers have found that trauma survivors and their communities often lack the capability to

discuss the horrific event, and this incommunicability compels them to turn to silence,

avoidance, and denial regarding the traumatic event's existence as a method of coping to

reestablish a sense of normality. It is only after years of distancing time that some find the

language to be able to communicate a traumatic narrative.[2] This extends beyond the individual

in the case of national traumas, in which a collection of individuals linked by citizenship takes a

long time to come to terms with a large-scale traumatic event and only develops a means through

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[2] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 91-92; Julie P. Sutton, ed., *Music, Music Therapy and Trauma: International Perspectives.* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002), 32-33.

which to discuss a particular traumatic event after several years.[3] At the heart of *Tommy* lies a similar struggle with the denial of the initial trauma event and the eventual formation of narrative specificity after years of processing. In the same year that the Kinks cast a doubting shadow onto the myth of World War II in their album *Arthur, or the Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, the Who used the rock opera *Tommy* to explore the psychological impact of the war on their generation of childhood survivors of a national trauma.

Tommy rises out of the trauma of the British experience in World War II, an event that shook the foundations of many types of British communities. One of the career-spanning themes of Pete Townshend's lyrics reflects the division between, and separation from, communities. According to Townshend, his interest in this subject partly stemmed from his own postwar childhood and the similarity of his experience to those of his generational cohort:

> So many children had lived through terrible trauma in the immediate postwar years in Britain that it was quite common to come across deeply confused young people. Shame led to secrecy; secrecy led to alienation. For me these feelings coalesced in a conviction that the collateral damage done to all of us who had grown up amid the aftermath of the war had to be confronted and expressed in all popular art . . . All good art cannot help but confront denial on its way to the truth.[4]

This claim points to a key element in the postwar generational struggle between youth and their elders: the communal denial of the traumas inflicted by the repercussions of World War II. *Tommy* reflects a narrative reluctance that has its roots in the culture of denial that developed in the postwar era when it came to addressing the traumas of the war.

This process of gradually coming to terms with postwar trauma is reflected not just in the development of the story of the initial trauma in *Tommy* but also in the chronological setting of the rock opera itself. Although the 1969 album was originally set in post-World War I Britain,

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[3] Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 4-10.
[4] Pete Townshend, *Who I Am* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2012), 72.

shortly after its release, Townshend realized that it was more representative of *his* generation and

his post-World War II experiences. Townshend recalled in a 2011 BBC radio interview that his

original intention with creating *Tommy* was for the protagonist to be a voice for the particular

emotional issues of postwar youth. He framed it as:

> [a] story of post war violence, and this [was] the story of a man coming back from the
> war and finding his wife living with somebody else—these were the stories I grew up
> with in my neighborhood—and killing the other man and going to jail for the rest of his
> life or whatever or the other way around, and feeling that what I'd touched on was
> something deeply, deeply, deeply personal as well and that what it was about was *my*
> story of where *I* was at ... I needed Tommy to suffer every story that I'd heard my
> buddies as I've grown up have suffered.[5]

The 1969 album did not have an accompanying program to explain the story to listeners, so the

only evidence that the rock opera's story was set in World War I was from post-release

interviews with Townshend and from the title of the track "1921."[6] This song's title was later

changed to "1951" for the 1975 film version, and "Twenty-One" for the 1993 Broadway musical,

where the number signified the mother's age (turning twenty-one, rather than the year).

Although it was not until the 1975 film version that director Ken Russell changed the setting to

post-World War II Britain, the fact that the original album had a post-World War I setting did not

stop contemporary listeners from viewing Tommy as a representation of their generation's post-

World War II lives. As one reviewer noted, "The British quartet set up Tommy as a symbol of

the younger generation, and attempt to persuade the juve listeners to regain the sensual freedoms

dulled by war and restraint."[7] With the change in chronological setting by 1975, *Tommy* came to

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[5] Pete Townshend, "Before I Get Old," BBC Radio 2, August 23, 2011. Townshend discussed his own
experience of postwar violence in his autobiography, hinting at childhood abuse at the hands of his
grandmother Denny and the men who would stay over at her house while Townshend was living there as
a young boy. Townshend, *Who I Am*, 17.

[6] For one example of post-release interviews with Townshend that clarify the story of *Tommy,* see: Rick
Sanders and David Dalton, "Townshend On 'Tommy': Behind the Who's Rock Opera," *Rolling Stone*,
July 12, 1969.

[7] Pine, "Concert Reviews: The Who (4) (Fillmore East, N.Y.)," *Variety*, October 29, 1969, 60.

reflect the contemporary audience and the creative talent involved with the production, who had grown up in the post-World War II era.[8]

This chronological slipperiness reveals a hermeneutical trend in the twentieth century of relating the two world wars to one another through comparison and sometimes amalgamating the two together. The conflation of the two wars within this one artistic work mimics a rationalization that occurred during World War II, where the reference to previous wars reinforced the confidence of British citizens, inspiring a "We won then, we can win again" attitude.[9] As Angus Calder explains in *The Myth of the Blitz:* "The Great War thus established precedents useful for those in 1940 who wished to mythologise the entire British people as heroic, and even for individuals trying to reconcile the devastation of their home cities with the mythological needs of ongoing everyday life."[10] Indeed, the name of the rock opera and its protagonist stems from a British military tradition throughout World War I and World War II of referring to any typical soldier in the British army as a "Tommy." This military nickname was well-known to Townshend, who admitted that was part of the reason for the opera's title: "'I just lived with the story, invented a name for my hero, Tommy, and started to write songs. … The middle letters were OM which was aptly mystical, and it was an English name associated with the war and heroism.'"[11] The Who took a name that was already steeped in British military history and gave it to their own youth subculture soldier. From the outset, then, *Tommy* had one

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[8] It is worth noting that both the performers and the contemporary audience were, for the most part, products of the post-World War II world, so bringing it into a more modern setting may have been a product of Townshend shifting his artistic vision to align with his audience's expectations.

[9] In his study on the literary impact of World War I, Paul Fussell writes: "One result of the persistence of Great War rhetoric is that the contours of the Second War tend to merge with those of the First. . . . The result was a conflation of wars through language, or, as one might put it, the perception of the Great War running from 1914 to 1945." Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 188.

[10] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1991), 18.

[11] Townshend in Larry David Smith, *Pete Townshend: The Minstrel's Dilemma* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1999), 80.

foot in 1960's rock world with another foot stuck in the mire of British military history. From

the postwar setting—whether it was World War I or World War II—and the conscious decision

behind the protagonist's name, it is clear that the Who wanted to explore a postwar trauma. The

medium of rock opera enabled the Who to experiment with lengthier narratives than was possible

through individual singles, which is why the denial of a particular narrative—despite having the

creative space in which to do so—is so intriguing. By initially setting the rock opera post-World

War I and completely denying the initial moment of trauma, the event was ambiguous and more

distant from the band's lived experiences. Gradually, this element of the plot revealed itself as

part of their post World War II reality, and revealed itself musically with the sonic

representations in the film and musical.

The Who chose to explore this postwar traumatic history at a turning point in their

careers as pop musicians: toward the end of the decade, they were seeking to champion rock

music as an elevated art through creating works that featured longer and deeper listening

experiences. After the band first reached fame in 1965 with U.K. top-ten singles "I Can't

Explain," "Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere," and "My Generation," the band focused on writing

and performing songs that had potential to be hit singles. This approach lasted until 1968, when

the chart performance of their singles lagged behind what they had accomplished in previous

years. The standard single had its limitations, and Townshend was interested in exploring

alternate techniques of musical expression: By the end of the 1960s, he was consulting American

composer and music theorist Walter Piston's 1955 book on orchestration, and had toyed with the

idea of a longer-form song with his self-proclaimed "mini-opera," a nine-minute, multi-sectioned

song about infidelity, "A Quick One, While He's Away" (1966).[12] In the following years,

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[12] As well as being Townshend's first trial at creating musical works with plot development, "A Quick
One, While He's Away" also grapples with the theme of trauma. Townshend said of the song that it was

Townshend spoke in interviews about developing an operatic project, and made it clear in a 1968 *Rolling Stone* interview that *Tommy* was going to be an opera.[13] The Who's manager, Kit Lambert—whose father, Constant Lambert, was a renowned British composer and conductor—also pushed Townshend toward more ambitious rock projects, and Townshend credited Lambert with coming up with the idea of the "rock opera."[14] Lambert suggested that Townshend envision his next project on an operatic scale and with a focus specifically about British life. Thus, the Who developed the genre of rock opera through the creation of *Tommy*.[15]

The history of the term "rock opera" is fraught with issues in definition, but it has come to refer to collections of rock songs that are held together by a loose, character-driven narrative that is usually presented in the lyrics or in a program accompanying an album, which is then often further realized in the form of a film or a stage performance. Rock operas are generally a subsection of the concept album category (i.e., many rock operas can also be considered concept albums, but not all concept albums are rock operas, such as the Beatles' *Sgt. Peppers Lonely*

"full of dark reflections of my childhood time with Denny [his abusive grandmother]." Townshend, *Who I Am*, 138.

[13] Wenner, "Pete Townshend."

[14] Andy Neill and Matt Kent, *Anyway Anyhow Anywhere: The Complete Chronicle of the Who 1958-1978* (London: Virgin Books, 2005), 249. In his autobiography, Townshend recalls that around 1965, he started expanding his musical horizons, listening to recordings of Miles Davis, Stockhausen, and Wagnerian operas. Kit Lambert greatly influenced Townshend's musical tastes, and Townshend found himself particularly interested in a record Lambert had loaned him, *Masters of the Baroque Period* by the Prague Chamber Orchestra. Included on this album was Henry Purcell's *Gordian Knot Untied,* which Townshend found especially striking for its "unique, luxurious use of suspensions" that were "elongated into heartrending, tortuous musical modes." Townshend emulated these suspensions in his own compositions, starting with "The Kids Are Alright" (1966), and was making full use of this technique by the time he began working on *Tommy.* Townshend, *Who I Am*, 83.

[15] As Elizabeth L. Wollman explains in *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from* Hair *to* Hedwig*, although the Who's *Tommy* is one of the most famous early rock operas, and often credited as the first of its kind, there is some contention regarding who first used the term "rock opera" and what the first rock opera to be realized was. Two challengers for the title of originators of the term are the British band Nirvana (not to be mistaken with the American grunge group in the 1990s) who described their 1967 album *The Story of Simon Simopath: A Science Fiction Pantomime* as a rock opera, and the Pretty Things, whose 1968 album *S. F. Sorrow* is sometimes identified as the first. Elizabeth Wollman, *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from* Hair *to* Hedwig (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 77.

Hearts Club Band). Labeling a musical work as a rock opera can sometimes be a marketing

conceit, but it also often denotes an intentional approach on behalf of the creative artist to

conceptualize the work as a theatrical piece. Incorporating the term "opera," imbues the Who's

work with a sense of heightened artistic aims typically viewed as outside the realm of popular

music; it was not merely an album, not even just a concept album, but rather, an album with a

narrative and recurring characters who developed throughout the musical work. The sincerity

with which the group conceived of the work as an actual opera is ambiguous. For example, the

first track, "Overture," functions similarly to a classical overture, introducing musical thematic

material that reappears later in the work, but the closing track on side two of the first album is

titled "Underture," a tongue-in-cheek nod to the absurdity of a rock album having an overture in

the first place. In contemporary interviews, Townshend alternately approached the project with

earnestness and jest.[16] This dual sense of identity navigated the line between the Who's pop art

influences and the desire to use rock music as an affective medium for their generation. Once

Tommy was released, the press made much of the novelty of the idea of a rock opera, sometimes

labeling it a pop opera or simply referring to it as an opera.[17] Following the success of

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[16]In an interview after the release of *Tommy,* Townshend spoke to the lofty goals of the work, saying, "[With *Tommy*] we wanted to turn on the opera lovers" and "I really got very heavy over *Tommy,* I really thought I was doing the world a service at one stage." He also, however, pointed to the farcical nature of the project: "We were going to play the opera houses in Vienna, Moscow, and the New York Metropolitan, but I just thought that was the biggest hype bullshit I've ever heard of." (Townshend in Cott, "Tea.") Townshend often mocks the term "rock opera," relating that during one production of *Tommy*, an opera critic told him that what the Who had produced was really a rock cantata, to which Townshend thought, "they kind of missed the irony, which was, whatever we call it, it is. It is a rock banana, ok?" Townshend, "Before."

[17] A *Detroit Free Press* article from Nov. 1968, months before the album's release, reports the Who working on their next album, which is to be a "pop opera." A headline from *The Atlanta Constitution* on June 7, 1969 reads, "'Who' Creates an Ambitious 75-Minute 'Pop, Rock Opera.'"   One enthusiastic reviewer from the *New York Times* excitedly printed: "a triumphantly successful ROCK OPERA!!!" Jared Johnson, " 'Who' Creates an Ambitious 75-Minute 'Pop, Rock Opera'," *The Atlanta Constitution*, June 7, 1969, 2L; Albert Goldman, "'Tommy': The Red Dawn of Revolt?" *New York Times*. Nov. 30, 1969, D30; Richard Robinson, "The Teen Beat." *Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 15, 1968: 8D; Sanders and Dalton, "Townshend."

performances of *Tommy* across typical rock venues in Europe and the United States in 1969, the Who's 1970 tour of *Tommy* included performances in opera houses, among which were the Théâtre des Champs-Élyséees in Paris, The Royal Theater in Copenhagen, the Theater des Westens in Berlin, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, and the Metropolitan Opera in New York.[18]

With all the grandiosity implied in the concept of a rock opera, and because of its commercial success, *Tommy* has attracted critical and scholarly attention. For a cursory history of *Tommy,* works such as Richard Barnes and Townshend's *The Story of Tommy* (1977), Townshend and Des McAnuff's *The Who's Tommy* (1993), and Nigel Cawthorne's *The Who and the Making of Tommy* (2005) provide insight into the creation and staging of various performances of the rock opera. More academic traction exists when it comes to taking umbrage with or, contrastingly, providing musicological grounding for defining the work as a rock opera. For example, Tibor Kneif carefully dissects what separates *Tommy* and other rock operas from a more traditional definition of opera, noting in particular the lack of recitative, whereas David Nicholls parses out how *Tommy* does indeed function as an opera, pointing to different album songs as arias, duets, and instrumental interludes typical of opera.[19]

Beyond the arguments of how to classify *Tommy*, the rock opera has also been the subject of recent scrutiny for scholars interested in disability studies.[20] As a deaf, dumb, and blind boy, Tommy holds a rare place in the musical world of being a protagonist with multiple

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[18] Neill and Kent, *Anyway*, 246-271.

[19] Tibor Kneif, "Rockmusik und Bildungsmusik," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 8, no. 2 (Dec. 1977): 237-251; Davic Nicholls, "Virtual Opera, or Opera between the Ears." *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 129, no. 1 (2004): 100-142.

[20] The intersection of music theoretical works and disability studies is currently a very active and burgeoning field. Joseph N. Straus's *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music* provides an excellent introduction to a range of topics within the field, including discussions of composers and performers with disabilities and critical receptions of their works, such as Thomas Wiggins, or "Blind Tom," a blind African American pianist during the nineteenth century.

physical disabilities. In their 2015 article on the counterculture's conceptualization of

disabilities, literary scholars Paul Williams and Brian Edgar point out that the story of Tommy's

physical disabilities granting him a journey toward mental and spiritual freedom aligns with the

theories put forth by psychiatrist R.D. Laing, whose work was popular with the counterculture.[21]

Laing suggested in his book *The Divided Self* that the experiences of the mentally ill could be

considered as valid perceptions of existence instead of as merely symptoms of a disease. This

idea was embraced by the anti-psychiatry movement of the late 1960s, which had a strong

following amongst countercultural youth who supported alternative means of experience. Since

Tommy's physical disabilities allow him access to a spiritual plane ("Amazing Journey"), he can

be viewed as a countercultural and anti-psychiatry poster child. Williams and Edgar, however,

complicate this reading of *Tommy* by specifying that Tommy is not a catch-all for alternative

lifestyles as countercultural figure, since Townshend casts a negative light on the countercultural

escape offered through sex and drugs in the album track "The Acid Queen." Another problem

that arises with the Who's interpretation of Tommy is the conflation of physical disability with

mental disability. Musicologist Raymond Knapp argues that *Tommy* is a problematic

representation of disability, most notably because of its "mostly unexamined reciprocal mapping

of physical disability to mental illness"—where Tommy's deafness, dumbness, and blindness are

"mere symptoms of a traumatically induced mental disorder"—and that these disabilities are not

explored with much depth in the rock opera.[22]

Tommy has also been examined in medical journals by researchers interested in the

psychological elements of the work. Psychiatrist David Ingle's review of the rock opera in

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[21] Paul Williams and Brian Edgar, "*Tommy,* Primal Therapy, and the Countercultural Critique of 'Sick Society' and 'Cripple Psychology'," *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 9, no.2, (2015): 207-223.
[22] Raymond Knapp, "Waitin' for the Light to Shine: Musicals and Disability," *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 820.

British Medical Journal claims, "*Tommy* provides an education in psychiatric trauma, abuse, and the psychology of inadequate parenting. This musical film and rock opera is one of the key artistic works responsible for helping move these often intentionally hidden issues into public consciousness."*[23]* Ingle is not alone in identifying the educational aspects of *Tommy* for those who study human mental behavior, as psychologist Jerome Tobacyk also confirmed that the Who's rock opera "is a valuable artistic production for demonstrating psychodynamic processes, particularly those associated with conversion hysteria."[24] Developmental psychologist Uta Frith goes so far as to claim that Tommy very specifically displays autistic characteristics, although communications scholar Amit Pinchevski moves away from that diagnosis in his article on autism in fiction, stating that *Tommy* "probably attests more to intergenerational conflicts of the 1960s."[25] That members of the medical community point to *Tommy* as an example of a work of psychological interest deserving critical attention is important. What these scholars do not do, however, is delve into the work much further beyond the plot summary: Yes, Tommy is traumatized and that manifests as him becoming "deaf, dumb, and blind," but how is this moment of trauma communicated? What does the music divulge to the listeners regarding Tommy's trauma? And how did the passage of time and distance from their postwar childhoods effect the Who's musical engagement with *Tommy's* trauma as they revisited the work over the following decades?

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[23] David Ingle, "Medical Classics: *Tommy*," *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, Vol. 344, No 7845 (Feb. 25, 2012): 34.

[24] Jerome J. Tobacyk, "The Rock Opera *Tommy* by the Who Illustrates the Psychodynamics of Conversion Hysteria," *PsyArt: An Online Journal for the Psychological Study of the Arts* Published July 9, 2011.

[25] Uta Frith, *Autism: Explaining the Enigma* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 25-26; Amit Pinchevski, "Bartleby's Autism: Wandering along Incommunicability," *Cultural Critique* 78 (Spring 2011): 44-45.

To explore these questions, this chapter examines how trauma and reactions to trauma are musically represented in the different incarnations of *Tommy*, paying particular attention to how the initial traumatic scene where Tommy apparently witnesses a murder is presented on the album (1969) and then reworked in the film (1975) and the Broadway musical (1993). The music in the original album implicitly highlights the act of traumatic denial (especially in "Overture," "It's a Boy," and "1921"), and then repeatedly returns to musical themes that reference the impact of this trauma on Tommy throughout the rock opera without ever actually narrating or describing the initial traumatic event. The later film and stage versions peel away the mystery surrounding the initial trauma by expanding upon the musical narrative of the initial traumatic moment. My examination focuses on the denial of traumatic narrative, and the often dysfunctional community of understood silence that it creates in those complicit with the denial. This communal denial was common in postwar Britain, which I explore in depth in the following section. When viewed as a work coming out of this postwar culture, and as a work that the Who revisited over the decades as they gained distance from that postwar culture, *Tommy* provides a glimpse into a compositional process of initially denying a traumatic event, and then, over time, giving voice to and recognizing what was initially denied.

Talkin' 'Bout My Generation: The Postwar Roots of the Who

The Who were cleverly and carefully marketed by their manager in 1964, Peter Meaden, and their following managers, Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp, to fit the image of the newly arising Mod culture in the U.K.[26] The Mod movement, despite its clean-cut look, was still very much a

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[26] Lambert and Stamp signed on as the Who's managers after they had been looking for a band on the rise to make a movie about to appeal to the Mod youth subculture. John Atkins, *The Who on Record: A Critical History, 1963-1998* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2000), 18; Smith, *Pete Townshend*, 17.

rebellious, teenage subculture that celebrated youthfulness and excluded the older generation.

The Who's exuberant, defiant rock songs in combination with their well-tailored suits and close-cropped hair at the beginning of their career situated them well within this movement. With successful singles like "My Generation" (1965), "I Can't Explain" (1965), and "Substitute" (1966), the Who cemented their early place in pop music history as the sound of the teenage insurgency, sonically embodying the Mod front of the British Invasion.

Christine Feldman's *"We Are the Mods": A Transnational History of a Youth Subculture* (2009) provides a wonderfully rich and in-depth cultural study of the Mods and the postwar culture out of which they arose. She describes the subculture as searching "beyond the confines of industry and warfare" to advocate a "new and jubilant lifestyle" in the face of the postwar, post-atomic bomb psychology of globally mutually assured destruction.[27] Feldman positions the Mod movement in its context of coming out Britain's Industrial history, stating that "Mods granted themselves the agency to run as fast as they could from dour Dickensian stereotypes of modernity to something more positive and democratic."[28] She then moves to the Mod movement's more direct chronological roots, stressing not only the historical context of the advent of youthful leisure time after the dissolution of National Service after World War II and the impact of American popular music, but also how the movement fit into a time when the nation as a whole was trying to define itself as modern amidst the postwar economic crisis in the U.K. and the development of a new technological era. This is the context I have been stressing throughout my own project, but what is striking about Feldman's study is the overwhelmingly defiant optimism of the Mods as a subculture within this historical framework. Feldman notes the global psychological shift that occurred after World War II:

[27] Christine Feldman, *"We Are the Mods": A Transnational History of a Youth Subculture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 11.
[28] Ibid., 11-12.

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Wartime destruction, moreover, had disillusioned the populace. Although the brutality of World War I had created a 'lost generation' of young bohemians, the destruction of World War II was unprecedented. The atomic bomb could not only destroy nations, but the world itself, and the Holocaust showed how millions could be killed by prejudice combined with a modern 'production line' mentality. These mass-produced slaughters psychologically affected citizens around the world."[29]

Feldman poses that the Mod solution to the Cold War fears of a destructive future coming from a horrific past was to be very present in a created utopic vision of the future: "In its initial appearance, Mod culture replaced despair with hope."[30] This resonates with the Who's early career, as the simple, catchy riff of "I Can't Explain" masked any hidden fear or despair lying underneath the aggressive optimism. The lyrics of "I Can't Explain" speak to a pervasive feeling among Mod youth coming to terms with their own emotional identities but not quite understanding what was below the surface of those emotions: "I'm feeling good, now, yeah, but can't explain."[31] Deeper question about the roots of the Mod subculture's emotional tensions hid behind the vague retort of "I Can't Explain."

Feldman is right to stipulate that the Mod movement was optimistic *in its initial appearance*. The combative positive outlook of the Mods—and combative they were, for they often engaged in gang fights with other youth subcultures such as the rockers, where one famous conflict in Brighton on May 18-19, 1964 became known as "the Second Battle of Hastings" because of its violence—unwittingly pointed to the other side of the coin: with every stress on how different and modern these youth were, they were calling attention to what they saw as the

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[29] Ibid., 18. Townshend also placed the Mods in terms of World War II: "As a force, [the Mods] were unbelievable. That was the Bulge, that was England's Bulge; all the war babies, all the old soldiers coming back from war and screwing until they were blue in the face—this was the result. Thousands and thousands of kids, too many kids, not enough teachers, not enough parents, not enough pills to go around." Townshend in Wenner, "Pete Townshend."

[30] Feldman "*We Are the Mods*," 3.

[31] In his autobiography, Townshend notes that these seemingly shallow expressions of emotions in the earlier songs usually pointed to uncharted emotional depths: "[Before *Tommy*] I had delved deeply into my personal history and produced a new kind of song that seemed like shallow pop on the surface, but below could be full of dark psychosis or ironic menace." Townshend, *Who I Am*, 137-138.

failures of the older generation to fulfill the promises of the postwar dream.[32] As I described in

the previous chapter, by the end of the 1960s, the pop optimism of British youth began to sour in

the face of economic decline. The music of the Who reflects this generational affective turn, for

as the band reached the end of the decade, their previous reliance on thinly-veiled optimism was

wearing through, and their lyrical content took on a darker tone.

With *Tommy*, the Who shifted their focus from the pop immediacy of Mod culture to

examining their generation's place in British national history, and began to tear apart the

heedless optimism to parse out the denial of war and postwar strife that was imposed by their

surrounding culture. It is here that we see the difference between the critical but playful ironic

nostalgia for World War II of the Kinks in *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British*

Empire) and the representation of the traumatic impact of war in the Who's *Tommy*. British rock

music scholar Gordon Thompson makes an apt comparison between the Kinks' Ray Davies and

the Who's Pete Townshend's lyrical thematic material when it came to singing about Britain,

noting: "Where Davies' suburban life sought blissful retreat, Townshend's held violence in the

shadows."[33] By the end of the decade, Townshend was ready to begin pointing to "the violence

in the shadows"; it was time for the Who to explore their rebellion with more affective depth by

delving further into their postwar national heritage.

The postwar history present in *Tommy* showcased the band's continued reliance upon

their national heritage as a strong component of their artistic identity. An integral part of the

Who's image was their very Britishness: they flaunted their national heritage, particularly in

official images of the band. When the Who graced the cover of *The Observer* on March 20,

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[32] Adrian Lee, "Battle on the Beaches: 50th Anniversary of Violent Clashes Between Mods and Rockers," *Express*, May 17, 2014. <http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/476488/Battle-on-the-beaches-50th-anniversary-of-violent-clashes-between-Mods-and-Rockers>.
[33] Gordon Thompson, *Please Please Me: Sixties British Pop Inside Out* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222.

1966, the band is in front of a Union jack flag, with Townshend prominently displayed up front

in his Union Jack blazer. Another iconic image of the Who is the poster for the film *The Kids*

are Alright (1979), in which the band members are sitting up against a wall, huddled together

underneath a British flag. The band even adopted the Mod symbol of the RAF roundel, co-

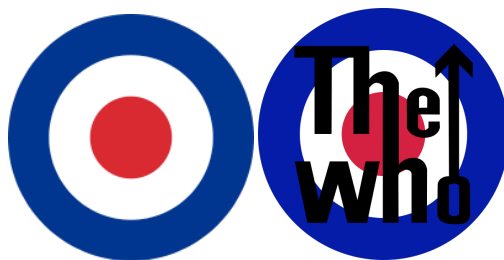opting a powerful symbol of British masculinity for their own.[34]

Figure 3.1: RAF Roundel (left) and the Who logo (right)

In his 2012 autobiography, Townshend stressed the importance of his British roots to his identity

as a musician:

> Many music celebrities simply chose to leave Britain, and it wasn't all about tax:
> America was the main global market for music, and, after all, the country where rock 'n'
> roll began. I had considered moving to America myself, but I didn't want to leave home.
> *Everything I am and everything I have done for myself, all my artistic work, was rooted*
> *in the British way of life, the two world wars and the hidden damage they had done to*
> *four generations. I knew I'd never leave Britain. My roots were too deep.*[35]

Whether or not this is true of Townshend's entire career or just the nationalistic, nostalgic

reminiscences of an artist in the twilight of his career, Britishness is a strong element in

Townshend's work and in the Who's projected identity as a band. That the band highlighted

their Britishness is important for two reasons: by doing so, they distinguished themselves from

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[34] Through wartime propaganda, sensational newspaper stories, and wartime and post-war film and
television, RAF pilots became one of the epitomic images of British masculinity during WWII and
afterwards. In Chaz Bowyer's *Fighter Pilots of the RAF 1939-1945,* he describes the stereotypical vision
of the RAF pilot as "dashing, extrovert, steely-eyed, rock-jawed, even romantic killer." Chaz Bowyer,
Fighter Pilots of the RAF 1939-1945 (London: William Kimber, 1984), 9. Films such as *The Battle of
Britain* (1969), starring the dashing Laurence Olivier as RAF officer Hugh Dowding, furthered this
depiction of RAF pilots as the height of British masculinity, and this was not lost on British rock
musicians of the 1960s and 1970s.
[35] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 152. (My italics.)

their rock counterparts in America, and, particularly in the case of *Tommy*, they underlined their postwar experience as distinctly different from that of other nations.

In fact, partly due to its Britishness, *Tommy* did not always translate particularly well in the United States. For example, American audiences were confused at first by the references to typical experiences in British life found in the film version of *Tommy*, even though, as music writer Stephen Glynn points out, it was made "with an American cast, American money and the focus on an American market."[36] Townshend observed that during the premiere of the 1975 film *Tommy*, he felt nostalgic while it appeared to him that the American audience just felt lost: "Watching the movie I saw my life passing before me, but the rest of the audience response was, at first, quite strange. The first thirty minutes were set in a typical British post-war holiday camp, so the American viewers couldn't relate."[37] Townshend's perception that parts of the Who's work were lost in translation as it traveled across the Atlantic is mirrored by much of the current analytical literature on *Tommy*. Most existing scholarship emphasizes other universal themes in the rock opera, such as spiritual transcendence, which deeply resonated with American Counterculture audiences steeped in psychedelia at the end of the 1960s, instead of focusing on how a specifically British experience informed the rock opera. For example, biographer John Atkins links *Tommy* to Pete Townshend's developing interest in his spiritual guru, Meher Baba, whose teachings focused on self-realization, the same kind of self-realization that Tommy is left with at the end of the rock opera.[38] As well as exploring spiritual themes, however, violent postwar experiences in Britain are a driving concept in *Tommy*. Townshend notes in his autobiography, "*Tommy,* for all its spiritual roots, is full of violence. It begins with bombs dropping, a young RAF pilot lost in battle (possibly captured as a prisoner of war), a domestic

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[36] Stephen Glynn, *Quadrophenia* (London: Wallflower Press, 2014), 26.
[37] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 276.
[38] Atkins, *Who on Record*, 24, 102.

murder, bullying, sexual abuse, extreme drug use by a back-street quack, the incompetent

medical treatment of a disabled child, and finally rioting by an aggrieved populace that has been

promised nirvana but delivered boring day-job medication instead."[39] It is important to

understand this other, more violent side of the *Tommy* story: although Tommy eventually arrives

at a spiritual triumph, it is where he begins that reflects the communal background of violence

for Townshend and his generational cohort in the U.K.

Music and war were intertwined for Townshend from his birth, and he often made

references to World War II when contextualizing his personal history. Townshend identified as

a war baby in his autobiography: "I have just been born, war is over, but not completely. 'It's a

boy!' someone shouts from the footlights. But my father keeps on playing. I am a war baby

though I have never known war, born into a family of musicians on 19 May 1945, two weeks

after VE Day and four months before VJ Day bring the Second World War to an end." [40]   His

father was a saxophonist in the Royal Air Force Dance Band, informally known as the

Squadronaires. Townshend's mother falsified her age to enlist in the military, and because she

was a talented vocalist, she ended up singing in the same ensemble as Townshend's father.[41]

Townshend places this postwar childhood in the context of British national history, noting that

his was not the first generation to grow up in times of war:

> I am British. I am a Londoner. I was born in West London just as the devastating Second
> World War came to a close. As a working artist I have been significantly shaped by these
> three facts, just as the lives of my grandparents and parents were shaped by the darkness
> of war. I was brought up in a period when war still cast shadows, though in my life the
> weather changed so rapidly it was impossible to know what was in store. War had been a
> real threat or a fact for three generations of my family.[42]

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[39] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 171.
[40] Ibid., 6.
[41] Ibid., 9-10.
[42] Townshend comments on the connection between war and music, mirroring a similar anecdote to Paul
McCartney's in chapter 1: "In 1945 popular music had a serious purpose: to defy post-war depression and
revitalize the romantic and hopeful aspirations of an exhausted people. My infancy as steeped in

Townshend also called attention to how his generation was different from previous generations of British citizens, most notably because of the end of conscription, and thus the end of a typical British male rite of passage. He characterized the end of the draft as a particular blow to his generation, and he found solace in the gang-like attitude of the Mods as a replacement for the male camaraderie of the military experience: "We needed a new army to replace the fact that we'd been *denied* the right as young men to be *in* the army."[43] He often couches his personal history in terms of the generation he grew up with in the U.K. Townshend stresses that his experience coming out of World War II was similar to most youth in the U.K. at the time, which is why he thought *Tommy* would resonate with his audience: "I wanted to show the hero of *Tommy* abused by his family, by school friends and by drug-pushers. There was no moral message intended; I simply wanted to demonstrate that my hero was, by my own measure, a normal post-war child."[44] Part of what Townshend believed to be a part of a normal post-war childhood involved traumatic encounters, and thus *Tommy* begins with a young boy born out of World War II who witnesses a traumatic event and from this horrific sight is rendered deaf, blind, and unable to speak. Even though the trauma generates a reaction of silence that defines much of his life, he is nonetheless able to construct a following, or "new army," that defies the trauma inflicted on him by the older generation.

I have focused thus far on Townshend's descriptions and interpretations of *Tommy* because he led the project and wrote a majority of the songs, many of which stemmed from his

awareness of the mystery and romance of my father's music, which was so important to him and Mum that it seemed the centre of the universe. There was laughter and optimism; the war was over." Ibid., 4-5.
[43] Townshend, "Before." (Italics are Townshend's vocalized emphasis.)
[44] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 158-159.

own life experiences.[45] His bandmates in the Who also brought their postwar experience to

Tommy. Fellow band member and lead vocalist Roger Daltrey—who went on to play the part of

Tommy in the 1975 film—was also touched by the violence of the postwar world and the still-

resounding memories of the war. Interviewed in 2011, Daltrey reminisced about his childhood,

recounting how his house was one of only six left standing on their block after the Luftwaffe

bombed the area to destroy a nearby electrical equipment factory. He also recalled the

defensively cavalier attitudes taken by his father and grandfather when speaking about war; both

recounted tales of all the fun they had, enacting the "brave Tommy" stereotype.[46] In this

interview, Daltrey not only describes his childhood memories of the war, but also emphasizes a

common trend of aggressive optimism in the language used to discuss the war:

> David Cavanagh: You were born during the War. When the Luftwaffe bombed your
> street in Sheperd's Bush, is it true your family's house was the only one left standing?
> Daltrey: No, it wasn't the only house. There were about six. The street wasn't very long,
> about 300 yards. There was a block of four houses that got taken out by Stuka bombs,
> and right at the end of the road, the whole lot went. The Germans were after Evershed &
> Vignoles, the [electrical equipment] factory in south Acton, but they could never find it.
> That's why the first V-2 landed in Chiswick. They were trying to knock that factory out.
> And because we were on the south edge of it, we got all the bombs that fell short.
> DC: Are most of your early memories war-related?
> RD: I think my dad was at Dunkirk. He never talked about it. All my family talked
> about was the *fun* they had in the war, but little signs would come out that it wasn't fun at
> all. When you go back through our family, my granddad was in the First World War. I
> saw a letter from him. He was at one of the big battles—might have been the Somme—
> and he's writing home. You wouldn't believe what he's writing. "It's wonderful here.
> The sun is shining. The birds are singing." You know damn well it was exactly the
> opposite. He was in hell. He was just trying to send some hope back to his loved ones. I
> cried when I read that.[47]

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[45] Townshend recalls being encouraged to bring his personal experience into the creation of the rock
opera by the Who's manager: "Kit also recognized the underlying framework of *Tommy* as tightly
biographical. . . . Being aware of this biographical aspect, Kit shrewdly brought it to my attention
whenever my creative process began to meander." Ibid., 157.
[46] As described in Angus Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* and in Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern
Memory*), the brave Tommy figure is a British soldier who faces every obstacle with humor and a stiff
upper lip. Calder, *Myth,* 18; Fussell, *Great War*, 85.
[47] David Cavanagh, "Roger Daltrey," *Uncut*, Take 171 (August, 2011), 52.

Daltrey here identifies the inability of those who have witnessed horrific events to use language to convey what they have witnessed: the impossibility of traumatic narrative. In Britain, when it comes to traumatic events, there is a historical precedent, even a tradition, of denial.

Indeed, at least as early as World War I, the routine practice of veiled and euphemistic language developed in how both civilians and soldiers communicated about the war, and that continued throughout World War II and into the post-war latter half of the twentieth century. Soldiers and citizens alike had been trained throughout both world wars to inhibit their own communication to keep up morale on both the war front and the home front. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell elaborates on the history of the rhetorical hesitation to be descriptive during wartime:

> One of the cruxes of the war, of course, is the collision between events and the language available—or thought appropriate—to describe them. . . . Logically there is no reason why the English language could not perfectly well render the actuality of trench warfare: it is rich in terms like *blood, terror, agony, madness, shit, cruelty, murder, sell-out, pain,* and *hoax*, as well as phrases like *legs blown off, intestines gushing out over his hands, screaming all night, bleeding to death from the rectum,* and the like. . . . The problem was less one of 'language' than of generality and optimism; it was less a problem of 'linguistics' than of rhetoric. Louis Simpson speculates about the reason infantry soldiers so seldom render their experiences in language: 'To a foot soldier, war is almost entirely physical. That is why some men, when they think about war, fall silent. Language seems to falsify physical life and to betray those who have experienced it absolutely—the dead.' But that can't be right. The real reason is that soldiers have discovered that no one is interested in the bad news they have to report. What listener wants to be torn and shaken when he doesn't have to be? We have made *unspeakable* mean indescribable: it really means *nasty*.[48]

Fussell emphasizes the problem of language stemming from a refusal within a much larger community (and multiple communities) to involve themselves with traumatic narrative. This lack of truthful communication widened the gap between those who were experiencing suffering and those who were reading the sufferer's letters containing little reference to any hurt or pain.[49]

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[48] Fussell, *Great War,* 169-170.
[49] Ibid., 183.

Tommy emerged from this community trained in silence: it is a cultural product of the postwar British national struggle with the traumatic impact of World War II.

In earlier singles, Townshend had touched upon some of the frustrations of youth, but *Tommy* came to stand as a singular expression of his generation's postwar angst. In a critique of the 1975 film, Townshend singled out the transmission of generational affect as one of his goals for *Tommy* (that had unfortunately fallen by the wayside in the film): "[Director Ken Russell] knew the rigours of war first-hand: he had been bombed, blitzed, and had performed military service in both the Royal Air Force and the post-war merchant navy. But he had little sense of the next generation's post-war shame and anger, or the way our parents' denial of those feelings might need to be confronted by us, and cast aside."[50] Similarly addressing the postwar culture apparent in *Tommy*, a *New York Times* reviewer likened the main character to the audience of the younger generation, not because of his spiritual enlightenment, his experiences with sex and drugs, or even his interest in pinball; rather, this critic draws the connection between character and audience through a trauma imposed on them by older generations: "Many young people today firmly believe they have been traumatized into something figuratively akin to autism, and it has left them functionally blind, deaf and dumb to the values of the gerontocracy that rules them and us all."[51] The magazine *Women's Wear Daily* also pointed to the generational silence inherent in the character Tommy: "*Tommy* is about a deaf, dumb and blind boy yet. This is not for pathos—he is a metaphor for alienation … He also represents the young who have seen their world do something wrong and have switched off because of it."[52] The stifling silence of the intergenerational denial of postwar trauma was not lost on the creators of *Tommy*, nor on its

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[50] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 276.

[51] Donal Henahan, "'Tommy' Is Poignantly Sentimental," *New York Times*, June 8, 1970, 42.

[52] Martin Gottfried, "Tommy—A Rock Opera," *Women's Wear Daily*, June 2, 1969, 51.

audience, nor, as the following section demonstrates, on the functioning of the rock opera's

characters.

Silence and denial are not uncommon among communities surrounding trauma. As

psychiatrist Julie P. Sutton describes: "A single event can have long-lasting repercussions at

many levels throughout a community and wider society. While the traumatized individual will

never be the same again, nor will the immediate community, and in this way society itself will be

changed."[53] She recounts one of her cases in which a young boy who had survived the violence

of war felt unable to speak about his traumatic experience because of the "mechanisms of denial

and minimization of the severity of the violent" in place within the community in which "neither

the impact nor the reality of what was happening was addressed."[54] The language British

citizens and soldiers alike used to describe war, as shown above in Daltrey's interview, are part

of the process of minimizing the severity of the reality of violence. Sutton also emphasizes the

language communities incorporate that deny violence, such as substituting the words "conflict"

or "troubles" for what is, in fact, a full-blown war. She identifies this as a communal survival

mechanism:

> In order to survive on a day-to-day basis, we tended to minimize the nature of the threat.
> This was necessary up to a point, because in living with potential, identifiable threat to
> survival it would be impossible fully to realise and process such experiences every day.
> Protective mechanisms also included habituating to and denying the severity of the
> violence (Sutton 2000). Adults do not to [sic] express aloud fears and anxieties in order
> to protect their children, and in shielding their families they have also shielded
> themselves.[55]

This communal minimization and silence is a protective mechanism, as well as a typical first

response to trauma. Cathy Caruth highlights the unknowable nature of trauma in her book

Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History, explaining that it is part of the nature of

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[53] Sutton, *Music*, 28.
[54] Ibid., 32.
[55] Ibid., 32-33.

a traumatic event to be unknowable in its initial occurrence, so the attempt at understanding a

trauma through narrative description is often challenging.[56] She describes one theory of the

mental process following a traumatic event: "What causes trauma, then, is a shock that appears

to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time."[57]

Narrativization of the traumatic experience is further complicated by the impact of the retelling

itself:

> In modern trauma theory as well, there is an empathetic tendency to focus on the destructive repetition of the trauma that governs a person's life. As modern neurobiologists point out, the repetition of the traumatic experience in the flashback can itself be retraumatizing; if not life-threatening, it is at least threatening to the chemical structure of the brain and can ultimately lead to deterioration.[58]

So not only does the language that communities use to refer to traumatic events woefully fail to

address the true nature of the violence for a survivor, but also the unknowable nature of the

trauma itself will escape the ability of language to be described. Furthermore, the attempt at

reliving the trauma through a retelling can be retraumatizing in itself. There are many obstacles

in the way of relating trauma to a listener, and this narrative blockage is apparent in *Tommy*.

The Who's Missing Trauma: Narrative Denial in *Tommy*

The 1969 album *Tommy* denies both narrative and musical communication to convey a

traumatic event. With the combination of the descriptive possibility of lyrics and the boundless

choices available through sound effect and instrumental accompaniment, the medium of rock

offered the opportunity to add nuance to any narrative element. Instead, however, the Who

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[56] Caruth defines trauma in terms of unknowablity: "Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness." Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 91-92.
[57] Ibid., 61.
[58] Ibid., 61.

chose to merely imply the existence of a traumatic narrative in the instance of Tommy's first traumatic encounter, where he witnesses the murder of his mother's lover by his father. Tommy's parents begging him to forget he witnessed anything clue the listener into the fact that Tommy saw something he should not have, but there is no lyrical or instrumental representation of the moment of the murder itself. In her dissertation on music and trauma in Eastern European art music in the twentieth century, Maria Cizmic underlines "the need to honor the oblique and indirect ways cultural products reference and reflect history in response to trauma."[59] The concept of obliqueness and indirectness is useful in dealing with subjects that are difficult to express, and when considering *Tommy* through indirect means of approaching trauma, a complicated story arises.

Biographer John Atkins notes that very early in the creative process, the foundations for *Tommy* were the concepts of "sensory deprivation of an individual" and the ensuing "access this can give to an infinite world of the spirit."[60] The sensory deprivation of the main character is clearly a cornerstone of this rock opera, yet its musical treatment does not reflect this. In the song "1921"—when Tommy witnesses a traumatic event that causes him to lose his ability to see, hear, and speak—the song never indicates what the event actually is. To make this moment even more abstruse, when the album was released, a plot summary was not provided for listeners.[61] Instead, the album showcased a series of abstract artworks by Mike McInnerney, along with an inset of the lyrics.

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[59] Maria Cizmic, Maria. "Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in 1970s and 80s Eastern Europe," (PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2004): 13.

[60] Atkins, *Who on Record*, 113.

[61] Atkins notes "the plot of *Tommy* was never explicitly published by Pete Townshend or given on the album sleeve or accompanying lyric booklet, although concert programs used in the U.K. in early 1970 carried a detailed synopsis of the 'story.' Kit Lambert might well have written this text, and it certainly includes detail and elucidation that is not apparent from the song lyrics." Ibid., 121.

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OVERTURE
Captain Walker
Didn't come home
His unborn child,
Will never know him
Believe him missing
With a number of men
Don't expect
To see him again.

IT'S A BOY!
Nurse:    It's a boy Mrs. Walker it's a boy.
          It's a boy Mrs. Walker it's a boy.
Chorus:   A son! A son! A son!

1921
Lover:    I've got a feeling twenty one
          Is going to be a good year.
          Especially if you and me
          See it in together.

Father:   So you think 21 is going to be a good year.
          It could be good for me and her,
          But you and her—no never!
          I had no reason to be over optimistic,
          But somehow when you smiled
          I could brave bad weather

Mother:   What about the boy?
          What about the boy?
          What about the boy?
          He saw it all!

Mother    You didn't hear it
& Father: You didn't see it.
          You won't say nothing to no one
          ever in your life.
          You never heard it
          Oh how absurd it
          All seems without any proof.
          You didn't hear it
          You didn't see it
          You never heard it not a word of it.
          You won't say nothing to no one
          Never tell a soul
          What you know is the Truth.
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Figure 3.2: Opening section of lyrics inset from *Tommy* album (1969)

Not until the group began to perform *Tommy* in live performances did they supply a written

program to the audience. The program notes for the June 7, 1970, performance of *Tommy*

explain the plot of the opening scenes:

> Toward the close of World War I, Mrs. Walker receives word that her husband is missing
> in action. She gives birth to Tommy. While he is still quite young, Tommy witnesses the
> return of his father, wrongly reported missing, and the murder of his mother's lover.
> Fearing that the child might tell others what he saw, Mrs. Walker enjoins the boy to
> forget the scene. The parents are so successful in brainwashing their son to forget that
> Tommy withdraws into autism. His speech, hearing and sight are psychologically
> blocked out. For all practical purposes he becomes deaf, dumb, and blind.[62]

This clarifies that Tommy does indeed witness a murder, and this propels him into a post-

traumatic inner world that, from the outside, suggests Tommy has lost the senses of sight and

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[62] The Who, *Tommy*, Program notes, Metropolitan Opera, June 7, 1970.

hearing, as well as his ability to speak. Although Tommy's trauma of witnessing a murder takes

place in a domestic setting, it is still a trauma that stems from the war. The traumas of war are

not merely relegated to what occurs on the battlefield, but also encompass the acts of those

survivors returning from the battlefield, who are forever changed by their experiences.

Psychologists Tara Galovski and Judith A. Lyons reveal in their article on secondary

traumatization that family members of returning veterans with PTSD often experience the impact

of the veteran's trauma as their own traumatic experience.[63] In the story of *Tommy*, the war was

the cause of Tommy's father leaving his family in the first place, and in his role as a deadly

soldier, he brings the violence of war back into their home by murdering the lover, a man he sees

as an intruder on his family's domestic bliss. This is not the only trauma that Tommy

experiences in the story, but it is notable both for its connection to the violence of war and for its

impact on Tommy's physical abilities.

In the rock opera, the disabled protagonist Tommy is subjected to four distinct traumatic

moments (See Table 3.1). The first trauma, which occurs during the song "1921," the one

trauma that stems directly from events in the war, and the trauma that results in Tommy

becoming deaf, dumb, and blind, lacks a musical presence on the album, unlike the other three

traumatic events. Rather than explicitly narrate this moment in the rock opera, the Who left it

out entirely, and its absence is both bizarre and telling.

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[63] Tara Galovski and Judith A. Lyons, "Psychological sequelae of combat violence: A review of the impact of PTSD on the veteran's family and possible interventions," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 9 (2004): 477-501.

Album Tracks	Traumatic Plot
"Overture"	
"It's A Boy"	
"1921"	1. Tommy witnesses murder of mother's lover
"Amazing Journey"	
"Sparks"	
"The Hawker"	
"Christmas"	
"Cousin Kevin"	2. Tommy's cousin violently harasses him
"The Acid Queen"	3. A prostitute forces Tommy to consume LSD
"Underture"	
"Do You Think It's Alright"	
"Fiddle About"	4. Tommy's uncle sexually abuses him
"Pinball Wizard"	
"There's A Doctor"	
"Go To the Mirror!"	
"Tommy Can You Hear Me?"	
"Smash the Mirror"	
"Sensation"	
"Miracle Cure"	
"Sally Simpson"	
"I'm Free"	
"Welcome"	
"Tommy's Holiday Camp"	
"We're Not Gonna Take It"	

Table 3.1: Album Tracks and the Corresponding Moments of Trauma

The latter three of these events are portrayed in the songs "Fiddle About" (in which Tommy is

left with his pedophilic uncle), "The Acid Queen" (in which Tommy is subjected to drugs from a

prostitute) and "Cousin Kevin" (in which Tommy is bullied by his maniacal cousin). [64] These

three songs narrate the traumatic events with lyrics ranging from coded language describing the

action (the "fiddling about" in "Fiddle About" and "Your boy won't be a boy no more . . . I'll

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[64] As Smith notes in his biography of Townshend, "*Tommy* is not the single stroke of one writer's pen; it is an at times raw mixture of a variety of independent ideas." Smith, *Pete Townshend*, 79. One of the ways in which this fact is most evident is the lyrical content of the songs on the album, particularly in the case of these songs dealing with traumatic events. There are only four songs on the album that are not written by Townshend: "Eyesight to the Blind," for which the Who covered a Sonny Boy Williamson blues song; "Tommy's Holiday Camp," written by Keith Moon; and "Cousin Kevin" and "Fiddle About," both written by John Entwistle, and both explicit in their grotesqueness. Townshend requested that Entwistle write these two album songs to be particularly nasty, and they comprise two of the most traumatic scenes in Tommy's story outside of witnessing a murder as a child. Townshend, *Who I Am*, 159.

tear your soul apart" in "Acid Queen") to very explicit narration of the event ("How would you feel if I turned on the bath/ ducked your head under and started to laugh" in "Cousin Kevin"). Each of these three songs also employ the nuance of the relationship between text and music to further depict the action or allow musically narrative space to convey the action: In "Fiddle About," Entwistle sings the word "fiddle" repeatedly over a braying, insistent French horn one-note motive until he reaches a conclusion, mimicking sexual climax; in "The Acid Queen," there is an instrumental interlude from 2:08-2:55 during which there are four five-bar phrases of increasing rhythmic complexity and instrumental layering as the drug-addled prostitute is plying her trade on Tommy; in "Cousin Kevin," the backing vocals sing eerie, chromatically descending "Ahhs" as Cousin Kevin sings of horrifically sticking pins in Tommy's fingers and treading on his feet. Even without the aid of a program, it is fairly clear to a new listener what action is occurring in the plot in these three songs.

The care taken with these later three traumatic narratives emphasize the peculiarity of the absence of the traumatic narrative in "1921." The narrative is not missing because of either laziness or oversight with developing the plot of *Tommy* because the plot was the driving force of the project, and as noted above, one of the cornerstones of the project was that Tommy be traumatized into sensory deprivation. Townshend began the project by planning out the plot for the entire opera, and the resulting album based on his artistic concept was released on May 23, 1969. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* three months before the release date, he claimed, " … {*Tommy*] is strong and complete, and we've sorted out all the weak points in the plot.'"[65] This

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[65] "The Who Finish Rock Opera," *Rolling Stone,* Feb. 15, 1969. After the album was released, Townshend once again asserted that *Tommy* was a fully-formed album: "'It [*Tommy*] was approached in exactly the way anti-intellectual rock people would hate. We went into it in depth before we worked out the plot; we worked out the sociological implications, the religious implications, the rock implications. We made sure every bit was . . . solid. When we'd done that we went into the studio, got smashed out of our brains and made it. Then we listened, pruned and edited very carefully, then got smashed and did it

elision of narrative specificity was purposeful on Townshend's part. One favorite editorial tool

for emotional efficacy in his songs was leaving out narrative detail: "You can circumscribe an

emotion with a lyric—by telling of an event and leaving out one important chunk—and that can

contain an emotion and put it across."[66] He noted that this was common in the compositional

process of *Tommy*: " . . . there's so much circumscribing in *Tommy* that I wanted to get to the

crunch a number of times."[67] This interview reveals that Townshend was aware of the

indirectness in *Tommy*.

     Tommy's initial trauma is one of these circumscribed moments. The details of this

horrific moment—how the lover was killed, where it happened, why Tommy was able to see it,

and so forth—are missing from the song. In examining the music of *Tommy* closely, we see that

there is a very distinct *lack* of musical narration of Tommy witnessing the trauma that sends him

into his world of sensory deprivation. In the song "1921," Townshend sings the mother's lover's

line as he happily proclaims over G-major chords, "'21 is going to be a good year," and then

barely changes his vocal timbre to narrate the part of Tommy's father, who miraculously

returned unscathed from the war and has just walked in on his wife and her lover. As

Townshend, vocalizing the father, states that it will be a good year for his wife and him, but not

for her lover, the harmonies shift to E♭ Major, preparing the modulation to C minor. Townshend

as the father continues singing "I had no reason to be optimistic, but somehow when you smiled,

I could brave bad weather" over C minor chords in the guitar while the bass further emphasizes

the loss of optimism through a chromatic descent (C-B-B♭-A). When G major returns as the

mother suddenly realizes that Tommy has seen everything, it no longer imbued with optimism,

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all again, all the time playing gigs and grooving. And somehow it came out as if we'd done it all in one
breath.'" Sanders and Dalton, "Townshend."
[66] Sanders and Dalton, "Townshend."
[67] Ibid.

but rather a sense of panic because we hear G major now within its context as V of C minor.
These harmonies and the descending bass line are really the only musical cue that something has gone wrong. The lyrics contain no description of what happened, only that Tommy saw and heard something that he should not have. Between the lines "brave bad weather" and "what about the boy?" (0:58-1:04) there is a six-beat fill of guitar and piano chords moving from Bb Major to G Major (See Example 3.1).

Example 3.1: Excerpt from "1921," 0:57-1:04 on *Tommy* (1969) album

Presumably, this is the moment of the murderous act that Tommy witnesses because the lyrics move from the parents discussing the outlook of the year to proclaiming that Tommy "saw it all." Saw what? There is no sudden cymbal crash, no ominous modulation to a minor key, no brief silence, nor even a change in dynamics. Someone has just died, and the following lyrics proclaim the parents' panicked reactions to the event, but sonic representation of the event itself is missing.

In their previous recordings, the Who had not shied away from musically narrating a vivid musical depictions relying on changes in vocal timbre or including instrumental breaks to paint a scene. For example, music theorist Walter Everett points out that the alarmingly unwieldy French horn motive Entwistle belts out during the instrumental break of "Pictures of

Lily" (1967) sonically captures the moment of frustrated sexual release for the narrator.[68] "Boris the Spider" (1966) includes the band members singing falsetto repetitions of the lyrics "creepy, crawly" in their descriptions of a little spider. Daltrey's vocal performance of "My Generation" (1965) includes the iconic stutter to mimic the amphetamine rush commonly known to Mods of that generation. So the absence of any kind of musical evidence of the altercation that led to Tommy's traumatization is significant. As the parents hammer in the directives of not seeing or hearing what just happened ("you didn't hear it/ you didn't see it/ you won't say nothing to no one/ ever in your life"), the Who sonically make it so, preemptively erasing it from occurring in the first place. It is not on the track: Tommy did not hear it, he did not see it, and there is no sonic evidence left to tell anyone about the incident beyond the vocalized denial of the parents.

This purposeful omission reflects a specific a narrative strategy by the Who. Before the release of the album, there was much discussion between the members of the Who and their manager Kit Lambert concerning the finalized version of all the tracks, including debate over the addition of sound effects and orchestral overdubs.[69] One of the proposed sound effects involved the addition of battle noises at the conclusion of "Overture" to narrate the father going missing during the war.[70] These sonic narrative aids, however, were intentionally discarded, with the exception of the sound effect of the mirror breaking in "Smash the Mirror." Lambert's suggested orchestral overdubs were also left off of the album. There are two explanations for the lack of

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[68] Walter Everett, *The Foundations of Rock: From "Blue Suede Shoes" to "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 102.
[69] Atkins, *Who on Record*, 114-115.
[70] After an instrumental introduction in "Overture," the first words the listener hears bear the news that Captain Walker, Tommy's father, has disappeared: "Captain Walker didn't come home/ His unborn child will never know him/ Believe him missing with a number of men/ Don't expect to see him again." This is followed by a fierce, finger-picking acoustic guitar solo—one of the longer instrumental breaks on the album other than "Overture" and "Underture"—which arrives between the first lyrical idea ("Captain Walker didn't come home") and the second ("It's a boy") (4:19-5:20), creating a narrative dramatic space for the listener to imagine Captain Walker's death during battle. The intensity of this solo functions well enough to convey dramatic action, and there are no overlaid sound effects of warfare.

orchestration on an album that might otherwise benefit from the nuance it could bring to narrative interpretation. The first is that production was so rushed that Kit Lambert's orchestrated version never came to fruition.[71] The second is that it was an intentional choice on the part of the Who to have a stripped-down version they could easily take on tour.[72] In either case, these orchestral overdubs would have been placed in the space of the instrumental breaks (such as the one for the Captain Walker's battle scene at the end of "Overture"). Given the mere six seconds of instrumental interlude (0:58-1:04) during which the modulation and the trauma take place, clearly there was no plan to expand this moment into a much more musically narrative section, as they had planned with "Overture."[73]

The traumatic moment in "1921" is denied narrative space, and this insipid passage is followed by vocalized denials that any event even occurred. The mother and her lover urgently instruct to Tommy "You didn't hear it/ You didn't see it/ You won't say nothing to no one/ Never in your life/ You never heard it/ How absurd it all seems without any proof" through a

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[71] In his autobiography, Townshend mentions "running out of time" and being "under the deadline hammer" during the recording of *Tommy*. Townshend, *Who I Am*, 157-163. Biographer Geoffrey Giuliano also speaks to the rushed manner of the production: "For some reason Lambert used IBC Studios and rushed the boys through recording, allowing them no real time for overdubs." Geoffrey Giuliano, *Behind Blue Eyes* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 89-90.

[72] Townshend highlighted the theatrical intentions of *Tommy* from the outset: "I think that in a sense everything that I did always had—if it were written for The Who—it was obviously gonna be a stage piece, we were a performing band. We weren't a studio band like the Beatles had become and so that was the distinction I would make to myself is that we can't do a *Sgt. Pepper* type thing, we can't do a *Pet Sounds* type thing, we can't do a studio masterpiece, we have to do something that we can play. That's why *Tommy* is so simple, that's why its so unorchestrated, so . . . unscrewed around with in the studio. . . . We kept it really simple because we wanted to play it. So in a sense—although it was recorded—it was recorded and composed for the stage. It had to work live." Smith, *Pete Townshend*, 85. Also, Townshend reiterated this in his autobiography: "Kit also had this powerful agenda involving arrangements for a symphony orchestra. Whenever he mentioned it I took him aside and challenged him; this was my creative work and I believed we should try to play every instrument ourselves. . . . It was anathema to me that Kit should fill the space he had forced me to leave with an orchestra . . ." Townshend, *Who I Am*, 157.

[73] In October 1972, the Who recorded a version of *Tommy* with the London Symphony Orchestra, and even in this recording, where they had an entire orchestra at their command for narrative nuance, the death of the mother's lover is innocuous, as it passes by similarly unremarkably as far as the accompaniment is concerned.

chromatically ascending melody, rising higher and higher in pitch (F-F#-G-A♭-A-B♭) to emphasize their desperation. Townshend, overdubbing the tracks to vocalize both the father's and the mother's part, stretches the upper limits of his vocal range. Meanwhile, Daltrey sings young Tommy's part underneath "I heard it/ I saw it/ I heard it every word of it/ I won't say nothing to no one/ Never tell a soul what I know is the truth." The trio of voices, and the contrast between the insistent nature of the adults' commands and the young Tommy's helpless and ultimately overly obedient response is quite striking. By reinforcing that Tommy did not hear or see anything, they engage in victim blaming by redirecting the incrimination to Tommy: "*You* didn't see it, *you* didn't hear it." The outright denial that anything has happened is crucial to the characters in the rock opera, and lays the foundation for Tommy's sensory deprivation. The parents impose a culture of silence and denial on Tommy that he then becomes physically incapable of escaping. The song ends in defeat with the mother (Townshend) singing "What about the boy?" over an E♭ major chord in the guitar—the same chord that signaled the appearance of trouble earlier in the song with the father's entrance—and the listener is left with Tommy's life forever altered by an event that neither he nor any of the other characters is allowed to recognize. His physical experience of life stops at this point: as the rock opera moves on to the following song, "Amazing Journey," the listener discovers that Tommy is now a "deaf, dumb, and blind boy."

Tommy's silence can be interpreted as a nod toward spiritual enlightenment through detachment from worldly distractions, but it more strongly resembles a traumatic reaction and a refusal to recognize the moment of trauma.[74] He never directly addresses the initial trauma, and

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[74] In his biography of the Who, John Atkins places *Tommy* in the context of Townshend's interest in the spiritual teachings of his guru, Meher Baba. Atkins identifies the major plot elements of the album as "sensory deprivation and the access this can give to an infinite inner world of the spirit." Atkins, *Who on Record*, 112-113.

his silence on the matter continues the group denial of its existence in the first place. One of the main therapeutic approaches for trauma survivors involves the act of retelling, focusing on narrative. Some survivors, however, find this approach too difficult, as the action of remembering and retelling the traumatic event feels too dangerous and can be retraumatizing. Psychiatrist Dori Laub remarks on the trauma survivor's compulsion to embrace silence when faced with the impossibility of telling: ". . . the speakers about trauma on some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to. That while silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath. To *not* return from silence is a rule rather than an exception."[75] It becomes clear as the rock opera continues that Tommy's silence is his sanctuary (In "Amazing Journey," the Who sing of Tommy's inner world of "loving life and becoming wise in simplicity"), an escape into his inner self in which he does not feel the emotional and physical pain inflicted on him by the initial and subsequent traumas. Townshend sought to deny Tommy the ability to express pain in the rock opera *because* Tommy is relegated to his own mind: "'If Tommy is struck a blow,' notes Townshend, 'he does not feel pain, he experiences something like the chord of G.'"[76] In other words, Townshend's vision for the character of Tommy was that the boy only experience emotions in an abstract manner, thereby obscuring

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[75] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 58. Later, Laub writes "The fear that fate will strike again is crucial to the memory of trauma, and to the inability to talk about it. On breaking the internal silence, the Holocaust from which one had been hiding, may come to life and once more be relived; only this time around, one might not be spared nor have the power to endure. The act of telling might itself become severely traumatizing, if the price of speaking is *re-living*; not relief, but further retraumatization." When faced with the impossibility of telling, "silence about the truth commonly prevails." Felman and Laub *Testimony*, 67, 79.

[76] Giuliano, *Behind*, 85. Townshend continues, "That's really what we want to do, create this feeling when you listen to the music, you can actually become aware of the boy and aware of what he is all about because we are *creating* him as we play."

connections to characters outside of his inner world that might interrupt his silence. Tommy is stuck in his inner world, and he does not respond outwardly to external influences.

Tommy cannot leave his inner sanctuary because the price of leaving is too high. In his critical reading of the Who's *Tommy,* Lacanian psychoanalyst Bruce Fink suggests what the fictional psychological impact the initial traumatic event would have had on young Tommy: "His self-image—which had originally been positive and coherent—breaks down. His former sense of self shatters when he is confronted with his parents' powerful new view of him as highly dangerous. He is someone who could, with one false move, one inadvertently uttered word, destroy his whole family forever."[77] Although Fink does not speak directly to how this is portrayed in the rock opera, the lyrics certainly reflect this on a very direct level with Tommy's parents pleading with him that he didn't hear or see the murder, and then Tommy immediately taking this to heart and retreating into his inner world, as a "deaf, dumb, and blind boy" in a "quiet vibration land" ("Amazing Journey"). Tommy's denial of his role as witness to a horrific murder stops him from interacting with his family, even though it allows him the isolated freedom of his own creative world. This stands as a metaphor for the Mod subculture's relationship with older generations: if they were to break the culturally-imposed silence on the horrors of war and the postwar world, they risk the alienation and re-traumatization that might come from the resurfacing of these narratives. By denying the older generation a place in their world of youthful utopia, however, they gain dubious (and ultimately imaginary) freedom from a depressing national history.

Other aspects of the Who's musical work mimic how scholars understand trauma. Beyond the act of self-censorship, there is also the silencing that comes from one's environment.

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[77] Bruce Fink, "Rock Musical 'Tommy' Has Resonance in Real Life," *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 1992.

As Julie P. Sutton points out in *Music, Music Therapy, and Trauma,* the community of which a trauma survivor is a part can act as censor by not addressing the impact or the reality of what happened.[78] This happens on two levels in *Tommy*. On the fictional plane of the story itself, Tommy's parents reinforce that Tommy did not witness any traumatic event, and for their own self-serving purposes, need Tommy not to realize his role as witness. On the creative level, Townshend writes a song in which a dreadful event occurs, but consigns the details to obscurity. *Tommy* continually points to the trauma through traces of its impact on Tommy. The post-traumatic aftereffects of Tommy's loss of sight, hearing, and speech are certainly made clear throughout the album. Immediately following "1921," the song "Amazing Journey" describes Tommy's physical disability. Other tracks that directly reference Tommy's disability are "Christmas" and "Cousin Kevin" on the first record, and "Pinball Wizard," "There's A Doctor," "Go To the Mirror!" "Tommy Can You Hear Me?" and "We're Not Gonna Take It" on the second record.[79] These references to the physical aftereffects of the initial traumatic moment continually call attention to that initial traumatic moment that lacks a sonic, visual, or notated presence on the album. That initial trauma, then, is depicted in the indirect way of only ever referring to the fallout of the event: Tommy's post-traumatic symptoms.

This obstruction to communication between child and parent is not uncommon for families who have experienced trauma. In the song "Christmas," Tommy's parents plead with him, "Tommy can you hear me?" a haunting echo of their earlier command to Tommy not to have heard anything. This question is revisited in "Tommy Can You Hear Me?" and "Smash the

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[78] Sutton, *Music*, 32.
[79] During "Christmas," Tommy's parents lament that he "doesn't know what day it is," highlighting that Tommy's outer life has stopped in time. Sociologist Arthur G. Neal writes of the phenomenon of stopped time for trauma survivors: "The central hopes and aspirations of personal lives are temporarily put on hold and replaced by the darkest of fears and anxieties. Symbolically, ordinary time has stopped: the sun does not shine, the birds do not sing, and the flowers do not bloom." Neal, *National Trauma*, 5.

Mirror." Tommy's responding motive in "Christmas" is "See me, feel me, touch me, heal me,"

and with each appearance throughout the work ("Go to the Mirror Boy" and "We're Not Gonna

Take It"), it obliquely references the moment of unknowingness for which he still carries

wounds. Tommy's pleas evince his desire for recognition, but his parents are unable to respond

to him: to truly recognize the source of Tommy's silence would be to admit the existence of their

crime, the site of the trauma. Psychologists Kjerstin Almqvist and Anders Broberg summarize

the complex dynamics of the "family survival strategy" of denial after a traumatic event.[80] In an

effort to avoid further suffering, parents will avoid talking about a traumatic event, but this can

be detrimental to young children trying to process events they cannot understand.[81] As they

explain:

> If one never talks about a traumatic event and treats it as if it never happened, the
> experience will not be integrated. A husband and wife may treat one another as if
> something which happened never took place, although they know—and each is aware
> that the other knows—that it really did happen. In the relationship between a small child
> and his or her parents, however, a different process comes into play. . . . A small child
> forms his sense of reality partly in terms of the reality which his parents convey to him . .
> . . if a traumatic experience is treated as if it never happened, the child will not only have
> difficulty in dealing with his traumatic mental images, but the ongoing development of
> secondary process thinking may be affected.[82]

Moreover, in her book on music therapy, Julie P. Sutton suggests that this type of familial silence

can be a source of speech impairment for some children. She chronicles her therapeutic sessions

with an eight-year-old boy whose family had suffered a traumatic episode:

> During this difficult period in his life, it had been impossible for Jerry to voice his
> extreme anxiety, either at home or at school. He had been silenced because it did not feel
> safe at home to talk. I believe that this pressure of holding onto how he felt and keeping
> it secret to himself had culminated in the non-fluency. . . . During his therapy, Jerry's

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[80] Kjerstin Almqvist and Anders G. Broberg, "Silence and Survival: Working With Strategies of Denial in Families of Traumatized Pre-School Children," *Journal of Child Psychotherapy* 23, no. 3 (1997): 422.
[81] Ibid., 418. Almqvist and Broberg explain, "Parents often speak of how necessary it is to forget the past and look forward: to recollect what has happened and to speak of it can be, for them, equivalent to opening old wounds and can only cause the child more suffering."
[82] Ibid., 422.

need to be heard was paramount, as was his inner struggle for words to express the reality of the situation.[83]

There are mental and physical repercussions for children who have experienced trauma and who are denied a space in which to discuss it. As a character, the Who's Tommy is an extremely apt representation of a child's reaction to trauma, as well as a community's complicity in the denial of trauma.[84] When Tommy does finally come out of his trauma-induced disabilities as his mother breaks the mirror he is staring into ("Smash the Mirror"), there is no moment of recognition of his childhood trauma. His freedom from the horrific memories comes not from Tommy or any member of his family or community finally allowing space to acknowledge the trauma he witnessed, but rather his freedom is attained through a symbolic destruction of self. As dysfunctional as it is, the denial succeeds as a means for Tommy and his parents never truly having to reveal their traumatic pasts.

Caruth writes: "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence."[85] The plot of Tommy, while not an actual history, is a story meant to represent the history of Townshend's postwar generation. The omission of the moment of initial trauma in the rock opera, one that stems from the violence of World War II, mimics a history of trauma by making the moment literally inaccessible. The reference back to the moment through the motives "Tommy Can You Hear

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[83] Sutton, *Music*, 31-32.

[84] It is worth noting that a tendency toward silence may also be a personal trait of Townshend's. During media events surrounding the release of his autobiography in 2012, Townshend demonstrated his own reticence toward speaking about personal traumatic events. In an interview, he responded to a question regarding the abuse he experienced as a child, "I'm not going to do this to myself. I don't have to remember at all … I don't have to remember because the evidence is in my work. And the evidence is in the way that I operate as a man." Cassandra Szklarski, "Pete Townshend traces childhood abuse in memoir," *Metro* Nov. 28, 2012, http://www.metronews.ca/entertainment/2012/11/28/pete-townshend-traces-childhood-abuse-in-memoir.html

[85] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 18.

Me?" and "See Me, Feel Me" demonstrate a return to the site of the trauma; there is no other

musical moment to return to that would reconstruct the sonic representation of the murder, for it

was missing in the first place. The erasure of the violence is almost complete, save for the most

jarring impact it has on Tommy as a surviving witness to the trauma. His physical handicaps and

his parents' attempts to cure them attest to the trauma where Tommy's musical voice cannot.

"Listening to You, I Get the Music": Traumatic Narrative Development of *Tommy* on Film and Stage

The 1969 album closes with Townshend, Daltrey, and Entwistle singing, "Listening to you, I get

the music." This lyric is one of the lessons of self-realization that Tommy experiences, but it

also coincidentally describes the development of the rock opera's narrative over the decades: As

the Who continued working with *Tommy*, the site of Tommy's initial trauma was finally able to

"get the music," in that musical narrative was finally provided for the scene, as well further

descriptive detail. After its initial release in 1969, *Tommy* experienced several reincarnations.[86]

This is a testament to its lasting appeal, an indicator of Kit Lambert and the Who's attempt to get

as much mileage out of that popularity as possible, and a reflection of the band's continuing

artistic engagement with the rock opera. Notable among the subsequent versions for their

expansion of the traumatic narrative are the 1975 film *Tommy* and the 1993 Broadway musical

The Who's Tommy.[87]

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[86] Among the versions of Tommy are a production of the work as a ballet by Les Grande Ballets Canadiens in 1970 and a joint performance by the Who and the London Symphony Orchestra in 1972 (featuring guest artists including Ringo Starr, Steve Winwood, Mary Clayton, Peter Sellers and Rod Stewart).

[87] The film *Tommy* was released in U.S. theaters on March 19, 1975, and in U.K. theaters on March 26. The Who intended that the original be accompanied by a quintaphonic (five-speaker) sound system, but most theaters were unequipped to handle the new technology. The musical *The Who's Tommy* first opened at La Jolla playhouse in San Diego, California in July 1992. It then had its Broadway debut on

Moving *Tommy* onto screen and stage highlighted two issues: the problem of the missing narratives in the plot and the realization that the plot was more reflective of a post-World War II setting than the original post-World War I setting. Director of the 1975 film Ken Russell spoke of the narrative challenge in an interview in 1993: "There were huge gaps in the story . . . You never knew exactly who the father was, why the father was killed or why the boy went blind, deaf and dumb. It's almost as though [Townshend's] album started almost halfway through the story and the first half was in his mind but had never been written."[88] Des McAnuff, director of the 1993 Broadway version of *Tommy,* also noted the need for tightening up the album's story: "[W]e're telling a story, and we have the obligations of creating narrative, so there are internal changes in virtually everything."[89] So Russell and, later, McAnuff worked with Townshend to create a more cohesive narrative than what was apparent from the 1969 album. In fleshing out the narrative, Townshend recognized elements of his own past in Tommy's story, and he soon came to recast *Tommy* in light of his own post-World War II experiences, moving away from the album's original setting in post-World War I Britain. The impact of war on the story became clear, so both creative teams brought in references to World War II to further develop the story and to frame Tommy's initial trauma as one strongly informed by postwar violence.

In the film, scenes from World War II open the story: it begins with a romantic history for Tommy's parents (Robert Powell as Captain Walker and Ann-Margret as the mother), showing them cavorting about an idyllic countryside, moving to a scene of them dancing in a room until Tommy's father receives a phone call, after which his father and mother are shown

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April 22, 1993, at the St. James Theatre, and performances successfully ran on Broadway for two years until closing on June 17, 1995.

[88] Smith, *Pete Townshend*, 79. In Ken Russell's 1975 film, it is the father who is killed in place of the lover. In the 1993 Broadway musical, the lover is the one who is murdered by Tommy's parents, returning to the 1969 album's plot.

[89] Des McAnuff in Pete Townshend, *The Who's Tommy: The Musical* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 45.

fearfully running through a town that has just been demolished by an air raid; some of the extras wear gasmasks. The next scene depicts the mother looking up at the sky as Captain Walker flies off in a bomber. As she crawls into her bed in an air-raid shelter, we see intercut scenes of Captain Walker's plane crashing. Shortly afterward, the film moves to Victory in Europe Day, the day on which Tommy is born. This scene is accompanied by the nurses and doctor singing "It's a Boy" and a new song, "We've Won," which firmly establishes the V-E Day setting: "Hear the joyful celebrations in the streets/ it's a boy born on this first day of peace/ We've won! A son!/ We've won! A son!"[90] This song is also included in the 1993 musical, so in both stagings, Tommy is literally born out of the violence of World War II. The visual cues of the film vigorously emphasize the post-World War II setting, bringing *Tommy* into the same generation as the Who.

World War II continues to haunt Tommy throughout the film as he grows up. Young Tommy accompanies his mother to a Remembrance Day ceremony, where she plants a cross next to a monolithic, winged bomb statue that substitutes for a crucifix. Also, his childhood room is decorated with a bomber mobile and bomber wallpaper. The root of Tommy's trauma is also referenced visually throughout the film with the addition of the periodic apparition of Captain Walker. After witnessing the mother's lover murdering Tommy's father, the mother and her lover take Tommy to a carnival, where he imagines himself flying with Captain Walker; when Tommy looks in the mirror at a funhouse, he sees his father holding a circle of light; this

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[90] It is interesting to note here that although the new "We've Won" firmly sets the film and musical in World War II, the word "war" is never explicitly stated in the lyrics, only "peace." This is another example of denial through evasive language techniques. Music therapist Julie P. Sutton noticed a similar refusal to acknowledge war in one of her clients: "I noticed that there had been no use of the word 'war' to describe what had happened in Northern Ireland. The media had described this long-term, sporadic violence as a 'conflict', and it was known locally as 'the Troubles'. Hidden within these somewhat understated terms is an indication of one of the coping mechanisms available to those living with the threat of violence (Dunn 1995)." Sutton, *Music*, 32-33.

mirror vision also includes a scene of his father crucified on a bomber silhouette. More symbolically, when the Acid Queen (Tina Turner) injects adult Tommy (Roger Daltrey) with drugs, he hallucinates that he has become Captain Walker, and then returns to his own body, but this time with a crown of Remembrance poppies that are dripping blood down his head. This last scene indicates that not only does Tommy identify strongly with his father, but also that the Christ-like suffering of his father has more to do with his service in World War II than his death at the lover's hands by a lamp. It is not the image of a lamp that pervades the film, but rather images of bombers and bombs. Even Tommy's eventual freedom from his catatonic state is tied back to his initial trauma: as Tommy sings about his self-realization in "I'm Free," he runs through a World War II battle scene, and then as he is awakened by his mother, he has flashbacks to the moment of his father's murder. This visual cue reminds the viewer of the cause of the original trauma and its connection to World War II. After all, it is the war that set all the action in motion for Tommy's initial trauma and ensuing sensory deprivation: If the war had not forced Tommy's father to leave the family, then he would not have gone missing in battle, his wife would not have thought him dead, she (presumably) would not have taken a lover, the father would not have returned at an untimely moment to catch Tommy's mother and her lover in the act, the father would not have been murdered, and Tommy would never have witnessed the death of his father. The conspicuously denied appearance of Tommy's trauma on the album is made less mysterious by the film through linking Tommy's sensory deprivation to the machinations of his father's demise.

The 1993 musical similarly establishes a World War II setting from the outset, with projected black and white images of London during the Blitz, a gigantic bomber, and workers at a military armament factory during the overture. Throughout this instrumental introduction of

the musical, the actors on stage depict the wartime courtship of Captain and Mrs. Walker: meeting at the factory (where the future Mrs. Walker is working as a welder), dancing the jitterbug together on a dance floor, and then getting married as air raid sirens sound. With these sirens, Captain Walker leaves for duty, and is then seated amongst other soldiers in a Wellington bomber that catches fire. Each soldier jumps out of the plane through a trap door on stage, with Captain Walker exiting last. This is followed by projections of parachuting soldiers, and then a parachuting Captain Walker descends from the above the stage, only to be shot at by two actors as German soldiers, and then the theater lights go out at the end of the overture. Scene 1 then begins with the song "Captain Walker," in which two officers enter the domestic setting of Mrs. Walker's home to inform her of the captain's death. In the background this suburban scene, a graveyard morphs into a prison camp, where the audience sees Captain Walker is still alive. The musical then moves to scene 2, in which Tommy is born amidst the cheers of V-E Day ("It's a Boy").

McAnuff emphasized the importance of World War II to the musical's story: "I think a lot of the events in *Tommy* start with the violence of World War II and whatever values come out of that. Clearly, the trauma that plunges Tommy into his state comes directly from World War II."[91] Set director for the 1993 Broadway musical John Arnone also recognized the chronological necessity of World War II, and highlighted it by infiltrating the set with images of the war. Arnone elaborated on the reasons behind his artistic decision: "The importance of World War II for this family is undeniable, and the Wellington bomber serves as a symbol for the war through the entire play from the opening scene in the hangar where the Walkers meet. In the Christmas scene the plane appears as a toy, and then again the bomber shows up huge as the back glass to a pinball machine. It becomes a collective image that builds in the audience's

[91] Des McAnuff in Townshend, *Who's Tommy* (1993), 44.

mind."[92] In the film and musical versions of *Tommy*, World War II appears as the obvious

influence that it covertly was on the album. The details that flesh out the World War II setting

serve to set up the moment of Tommy's traumatic experience.

Along with the aid of the visual representation of the murder presented by the mediums—

in the film with the lover smashing a lamp over Captain Walker, and in the musical with Captain

Walker shooting the lover—the music of the two renditions makes the traumatic event

unmistakably evident. Townshend was responsible for reworking the music for both of these

versions, and he used the opportunity to compose music that embellished narrative details.[93]

The murder scene gained musical narration on screen and stage, which aided in relaying the story

more clearly to the audience.

For the film, the murder occurs during the song "1941" (the chronological replacement

for the album's "1921"). Right after the mother sings to her lover "I could brave bad weather,"

much like the album version "1921," the lyrics are followed by repeated G chords, but then

instead of moving straight into "what about the boy?" there is an instrumental interlude as

Captain Walker returns, looks at his sleeping son, and then walks in on his wife and her new

lover, only then to be murdered by the lover throwing a lamp at him. As Captain Walker looks

in on Tommy sleeping, there is a repeated ascending motive in the solo guitar, switching

between C-D-E and C-D-E♭, alternatively outlining a major third and a minor third, musically

raising the question: is Captain Walker's return a positive event that would be represented by C

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[92] Townshend, *Who's Tommy* (1993), 54.

[93] Biographers of the Who Andy Neill and Matt Kent elaborate in their chronology of the band that Townshend spent much of early 1974 reworking the 1969 album tracks and composing new music to suit the film version of Tommy. Neill and Kent, *Anyway*, 341. Townshend is credited with the music and lyrics for the 1993 Broadway musical, and the credits also list additional music by fellow Who members, Keith Moon and John Entwistle, which reflects the 1969 album credits, where "Cousin Kevin" and "Fiddle About" were composed by Entwistle and "Tommy's Holiday Camp" was composed by Moon. Townshend, *Who's Tommy* (1993).

Major, or a negative event that would be represented by C minor? Whereas the album version

brought Captain Walker in with C minor chords, in the film, there is this moment of indecision,

giving time for the scene to develop.

After the guitar solo touches on C major and C minor throughout the solo and ends on C,

Captain Walker shuts young Tommy's bedroom door and moves toward his wife's bedroom, and

a Hammond organ takes over with a frantic rising chromatic motive, starting on E♭ and rising an

octave. As the organ decisively emphasizes the E♭–the same note that signaled trouble in the

1969 album—the story takes a bleak turn as Captain Walker enters his wife's room. As the

organ performs the rising chromatic motive, it is joined by a hectic drum set accompaniment that

moves from the snares and bass to only the cymbal, with a cymbal crescendo into a *forte* cymbal

crash. This cymbal crash coincides with the moment of Captain Walker's murder (see Example

3.2). The song then returns to a similar plot progression to the album version, with the mother

pleading, "what about the boy?" and then trying to make Tommy forget what he witnessed ("you

didn't see it").

Example 3.2: Excerpt from "1951," 16:56-17:10 on *Tommy* (1975) film

The moment of the trauma in the film, then, is musically represented, thanks to the dramatic

chromatic ascent and the cymbal crash. The viewer is allowed, to some degree, to see what

Tommy saw and hear what Tommy heard, making it easier to place his story within the context

of postwar violence and recognize his role as a trauma survivor.

In the film, then, the complete denial of the traumatic event begins to break down, and an

account of the traumatic event begins to form. Although the narrative development of the

traumatic moment had much to do with shifting artistic mediums from album to film, it also

curiously reflects one of the key characteristics of trauma: It never can truly be denied; the

trauma will somehow resurface. Sociologist Arthur Neal asserts that from a cultural standpoint,

"dismissing or ignoring the traumatic experience is not a reasonable option" because it reemerges. From clinical psychiatry, Judith Herman elaborates upon the same phenomenon:

> The ordinary response to atrocities is to banish them from consciousness. Certain violations of the social compact are too terrible to utter aloud: this is the meaning of the word *unspeakable*. Atrocities, however, refuse to be buried. Equally as powerful as the desire to deny atrocities is the conviction that denial does not work. Folk wisdom is filled with ghosts who refuse to rest in their graves until their stories are told. Murder will out. Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. The conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of psychological trauma.[94]

With the *Tommy* project, we see the central dialectic of trauma between denial and proclamation materializing on the micro-level of the representation of the event itself, which the Who treat with more nuance than the outright denial they invoked in the original album. By revisiting Tommy's story through the visual medium of film, with the directorial input of Russell and the musical additions from Townshend, Tommy's trauma does resurface, this time in a distinctive manner from the album that moves away from denial by uncovering details about Tommy's trauma and its ever-present impact on Tommy's life. Even though it is not a particularly complex musical depiction of murder, it serves to release the moment from the complete denial of nonexistence. Through its very nature, the initially denied traumatic moment demands recognition as part of the plot. Tommy's story *is* one of violence and trauma, and the more detailed appearance of the initial traumatic event in the film speaks to the undeniable impact of this event on his character.

The film, however, still maintains some of the sense of denial that threads through the album. For example, in the scene where Captain Walker is murdered, the only sound comes from the accompanying score. Even though Captain Walker is shown screaming, we do not hear the scream. Furthermore, although visions of Captain Walker return to Tommy throughout the

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[94] Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 1. (Herman's italics.)

film, it is clear that these belong to his inner world, and that his mother and her lover are blind to them. They have forbidden Tommy to see the traumatic event, so he only references it in his own thoughts, meaning that while Tommy is in the process of working toward a traumatic narrative and away from denial, there is no evidence that this can be said of the characters in his surrounding community (the mother and her lover) who were complicit in both the traumatic event and the ensuing denial. In these ways, the film still plays a role in representing a community of silence surrounding trauma.

To obscure the audience's grasp of the trauma even more, film viewers and critics were more caught up in Russell's over-the-top production than they were with Tommy's story. Although one critic managed to see the film through the lens of Tommy as a "somewhat elusive symbol of traumatized, sleepwalking post-World War II Youth" (N.B. Tommy's trauma becomes representative of the traumas experienced by the postwar generation in general for this reviewer), many viewers found Russell's vision distracting.[95] Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* hailed the film as "composed of excesses," and Townshend himself admitted that the film was "an exaggeration in some ways, almost burlesque at times."[96] Another *New York Times* critic was averse to how the film filled in narrative plot holes, stating, "…the real problem [with Russell's *Tommy*] is with the over-all impact. All of the six or seven staged versions of 'Tommy' that I have seen have managed to retain more of its mystery than Mr. Russell has done. … this film transforms Pete Townshend's primitive yet evocative allegory into something blunt and banal."[97] Townshend, however, praised the film's faithfulness to the storyline, with the admission that this was a peculiar feat since "the story line is quite weak and clichéd."[98] In a

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[95] Gary Arnold, "'Tommy': Now a Film," *The Washington Post*, March 27, 1975, C1.
[96] Vincent Canby, "Film: 'Tommy,' The Who's Rock Saga," *New York Times*, March 20, 1975.
[97] John Rockwell, "The Pop Life: After Film, Where for the Who?" *New York Times*. March 21, 1975, 29.
[98] Townshend in Judith Sims, "Pete Townshend's Mixed Blessing," *Rolling Stone*, April 24, 1975.

separate interview, Townshend pointed directly to the father returning from the war as a moment

of cliché, and one that he claimed he would "be ashamed of forever."[99] By the time he was

working with the musical in the early 1990s, however, he left behind the sentiment of shame and

embraced that part of the storyline as demonstrative of postwar violence. The Broadway musical

further fleshed out the narrative details of the traumatic moment, as well as its impact on both

Tommy and his surrounding community.

In *The Who's Tommy* (1993), Townsend and McAnuff worked together to further clarify

the rock opera's plot. This challenge appears to have been a key issue throughout the musical's

creation, as Townshend and McAnuff both emphasized it in their introductions to the *Tommy*

libretto. In Townshend's introduction, he somewhat apologetically notes the lack of detail in the

original album:

> *Tommy* is on Broadway. … This current interest in what was a naïve and impudent rock
> piece back in the late sixties has allowed me to reappraise my life as a writer. And I have
> learned there is a vital difference between the simple rock song and the conventional
> music theatre play—that it's necessary to bring a story to a conclusion, something you
> never have to do in rock-and-roll. The need to complete the story for music theatre is my
> new great challenge. Of course, I will always love to write a good rock song, with a
> loose ending, some poetry, some passion, some dreaming and even sometimes some
> impossible macho. But now that I'm in my late forties, it begins to feel insincere to
> pretend that I haven't arrived at any answers or drawn any conclusions. Because I have.
> My life has been and continues to be filled with vital experiences and the lessons that
> come with them. This book attests to the fact that when you combine rock-and-roll with
> music theatre you have to start telling the complete truth.[100]

In an interview with McAnuff included in the libretto, he noted: "On stage you've got the

obligation of creating a linear narrative, and you need to explore episodes in a satisfying way."[101]

Rock critic Matt Resnicoff also highlighted the emphasis on narrative clarity in the musical

version of *Tommy*: "The most dramatic changes to *Tommy*'s music, therefore, *are* the dramatic

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[99] Robert Hilburn, "The Who After Tommy: What About the Fans?" *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1975.
[100] Townshend, *Who's Tommy* (1993), 7.
[101] Ibid., 41.

changes, those necessary to accommodate the rigors of dance, or support what were once tenuous lyrical connections between scenes. … The story of *Tommy* the album is, in another sense, restored by *Tommy* the musical."[102] For this version of the project, narrative cohesiveness took the place of denial of the traumatic narrative. The emotional reservation and sense of denial from the 1969 album were handed over to the actors, while the music and staging aided in clarifying the details of the narrative. McAnuff specifically requested a sense of denial and restraint in the actors in a post-rehearsal meeting: "Remember all the basic Tommy principles— be careful about indicating (which is suicide) and be careful about no emoting—it's more English to be more reserved. Besides, it's that contained emotion that's so devastating."[103] The music, however, was altered in specific ways to convey the emotional complexity of particular plot point, most notably for Tommy's initial traumatizing moment. The musical narrative depth provides a clear traumatic narrative to the audience, which in turn allows the audience to integrate the traumatic event as part of Tommy's experience and identity, and it allows them to act as witness to this event, rather than be unwittingly participating in a community of traumatic denial.

The 1993 Broadway musical further draws out the sonic narrative potential of the murder scene. In "Twenty-one," the musical's interpretation of "1921," the time between when the mother sings "brave bad weather" and "what about the boy"—the moment in which the murder occurs—is expanded to well over a minute (1:45-3:07), unlike the six seconds on the 1969 album. In this expanded musical time, the stage action is narrated through the music, moving from sounding a jealous rage to the shocking moment of the murder itself and then to a moment of funereal reflection as the characters take stock of their actions. This musical narration begins

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[102] McAnuff in Townshend, *Who's Tommy* (1993), 117-118.
[103] McAnuff in Townshend, *Who's Tommy* (1993), 138.

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much like the album and the film, where "brave bad weather" is followed by a G Major chord (1:49), but then this is followed by a rising chromatic line over an octave (B♭ to C) in the strings and horns (1:54-2:05). Tension mounts through this chromatic ascent. This is then followed by repeated eighth-note G's in the strings and piano (2:15-2:21), where these screeching staccato notes are reminiscent of the horror motive in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). The music narrates the blinding rage, emotional anguish, and murderous intent arising between the members of the love triangle. The musical tension continues to build in the orchestra—foreshadowing the power chords of the later "Pinball Wizard" motive—until it is all undone by a percussive gunshot (2:41): the father has killed the mother's lover. After the gunshot, all the instruments drop out, save for the strings, which play an elegiac melody that once again alternate between outlining major and minor thirds (See Example 3.3).

Example 3.3: Excerpt from Broadway musical *The Who's Tommy*, "Twenty-One" 2:38-3:12, depicting the lover's death and following elegiac moment.

The elegiac motive in the strings provides a moment of regretful, tender reflection over the murder that has just occurred, and it is a requiem missing from the album and the film. Tommy's parents are provided a moment of humanity in this scoring; it is a sorrowful and contemplative break that is the only instance in any of the versions of *Tommy* where the Who carve space to reflect on the trauma. Instead of moving straight from the traumatic event to its denial, the music offers a brief musical lamentation. After this pause, the music returns to the harried questioning form the mother, "what about the boy?" and the musical continues in a similar vein of Tommy becoming physically handicapped due to the denial of his act of witnessing the traumatic moment. Once again, this further musical elaboration upon the traumatic moment is, in part, a result of the shift in mediums from album to stage musical (as noted by McAnuff and Townshend) but also, like the film version, it musically reflects the process of recognizing trauma and turning away from denial. The addition of the elegiac string motive after the gunshot deepens this move from denial to recognition, as the audience also benefits from the moment to comprehend the gravity of the stage action.

With this moment, the musical highlights the familial bond that shatters shortly thereafter as Tommy's parents bed him to forget all he witnessed. The elegiac music begs the audience not to view the parents as selfish monsters who immediately try to erase their guilt, but rather as regretful, pitiable characters who have made a mistake. This humanizing element foreshadows the end of the musical, which, instead of having Tommy go off on his own to maintain enlightenment, finds him reconciling with his younger selves through a trio with the 4-year-old, 10-year-old, and 20-year old versions of himself, and then returning to the embrace of the family unit and finding stability there ("See Me, Feel Me [Reprise]/ Listening to You [Reprise]"). This change was noted by reviewers of the musical, who pointed to this moral-laden ending as both

indicative of the aging artists and the changing times. Critics who were devoted to the rock roots of the musical chaffed at this change—*Rolling Stone* writer Anthony DeCurtis lamented that the ending "reduces it to a tale of an unhappy misfit who finally finds domestic happiness and acceptance"—but others lauded the musical as "a stunning piece of theater" that sees Tommy "making peace with his demons and finding true healing."[104] While there was crossover with the 1969 album's audience, the 1993 musical catered to the audience tastes of theatergoers, who were accustomed to narrative coherence and clearly-defined, often happily-ever-after endings. So not only does this musical communicate the details of Tommy's initial traumatic moment, but it also takes him through a process of struggle with that trauma, healing from the experience, and eventually reconciling with his surrounding community.[105]

The film and the musical both demonstrate how the traumatic event can be musically narrated in *Tommy*. The film is abrupt in its sonic rendering of the moment of murderous impact, with the cymbal crash immediately followed by Ann-Margret's desperate cry, "What about the boy?" Most often, a traumatic event marks a sudden break from the survivor's experience of reality. Stemming from the psychoanalytical works of Sigmund Freud, comparative literature scholar Cathy Caruth depicts one understanding of trauma as, "a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time."[106] Sociologist Arthur Neal confirms this, describing a traumatic experience as "a significant and deplorable departure from the normality of everyday life."[107] The Who's musical choice of pairing the jarring nature of the loud cymbal crash with the instantaneous response of Ann-Margret's wails

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[104] Anthony DeCurtis, "Opinion: *The Who's Tommy*," *Rolling Stone*, June 24, 1993, 23; Marilyn Gillen, "On Stage: *The Who's Tommy*," *Billboard*, May 8, 1993, 37.
[105] The carefulness with which McAnuff, Townshend, and others on the creative team approached Tommy's narrative was rewarded with eleven Tony nominations and five Tony wins.
[106] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 61.
[107] Neal, *National Trauma*, 5.

stays true to the album's frantic pace of propelling the traumatic action forward into its immediate impact on Tommy, but it also is a mimetic musical rendering of the abrupt nature of the trauma itself. Contrastingly, the musical's comparatively lengthy, *Psycho*-esque musical build-up to the percussive gunshot, the gunshot itself, and its four measures of contemplative pause to soak in the murder provide a triple recognition of the traumatic event (i.e., that is about to happen, it happens, and then we reflect on what just happened). This depiction of the traumatic event artistically reflects a historically-removed interpretation of trauma, where, although the murder is still a shocking event to the characters, for the audience there is a musical preparation and a resolution of it within the moment of its occurrence. In his book on post-traumatic culture, cultural anthropologist Kirby Farrell views trauma as "an interpretation of the past," and therefore, "trauma is a kind of history. Like other histories, it attempts to square the present with its origins."[108] This is useful in conceptualizing the framing of the trauma in the musical, since the detail of that particular traumatic portrayal *gives* it a history, and indeed, a story at all. Instead of the traumatic moment being so completely unknowable that it is denied to the listeners, the characters, and the musicians themselves—as it is on the album—the traumatic moment is instead a knowable entity through the music Townshend composed. While the film and the musical relate the trauma to different effect, that they recognize the moment at all marks a departure from the complete denial on the album version of *Tommy*.

Conclusion: Tommy Across the Decades

The chronology of the *Tommy* project calls for reflection across different decades of the twentieth century. Reviewers of the 1993 musical were quick to point to the passage of time

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[108] Kirby Farrell, *Post-traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 14.

between the album and the musical, with one writing that Townshend was still "talking 'bout his generation," albeit a generation that was "slipping into the gray."[109] To *Rolling Stone*'s Anthony DeCurtis, it was not a favorable development for *Tommy* to be informed by a later decade:

> [The musical] is a far cry away from the Who's original *Tommy*, a sprawling, confused, ambitious and altogether compelling album that brilliantly captures the hopes, fears, urgency and inarticulate fury of 1969, the tumultuous year of its release. … [*Tommy*] proved a bold, bizarre metaphor for a period torn by the contradictory undercurrents of revolution and reaction, of communal generosity and individual selfishness. Conservative and heartwarming, *The Who's Tommy* is equally a sign of its far less inspiring times.[110]

The 1993 musical does lack the inherent confusion of the 1969 album, as DeCurtis rightly suggests, but, to its credit, the show demonstrates the impact of distancing time on clarifying Tommy's narrative, providing a window into the machinations of a historically-informed narrative process. It was only when working with a larger community of artists over the decades that the Who, and particularly Townshend, realized the World War II narrative of *Tommy*, a story so closely reflective of life in postwar London. That Tommy's initial traumatic experience developed so much over the passing years is indicative of the change in perspectives for the Who as they continued in their careers, the change in medium from album to film to stage, and the cultural change in audiences from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. As early as 1975, Townshend spoke to the story's ability to reflect the audience: in a review of the film, *Rolling Stone*'s Judith Sims wrote, "Townshend's conception of *Tommy* has changed through the years ([quoting Townshend] 'I've talked about the thing so much with people that I started to learn more about it') and he's confident the work is adaptable, able to change 'with everyone else's state of mind.'"[111] By 1993, Townshend was more clearly communicating to interviewers the

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[109] Richard Harrington, "The Who Sell Out; 'Tommy' Gets a Razzle-Dazzle Update," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 1993, G03.
[110] DeCurtis, "Opinion," 23.
[111] Townshend in Sims, "Pete Townshend."

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autobiographical elements he had come to recognize in *Tommy*—such as the breakdown of the

family structure and the personal pain that comes with it—and how this related to other British

youth of his postwar generation:

> [In *Tommy* there is] an autobiographical thread that I didn't recognize was there when I
> first wrote it. There was so much anger in there and derision and pain, and I wondered
> where it was coming from. So I looked … and I found not so much answers but certainly
> areas of darkness in my own life. And I realized 'Tommy' is probably the most
> unconscious autobiographical piece that I've ever written. I always thought it was an
> exception to the rule, the one piece I hadn't done with reference to the kids from
> Shepherd's Bush—and it turns out to be the one piece I've done for them in which I've
> invested real honesty, [where] I haven't fabricated the character.[112]

It was not just a lack of recognition solely on Townshend's part that led him only to see the

autobiographical elements of the story decades later, but also a larger cultural attitude of denying

postwar trauma that did not abate until decades later that caused this blindness.

The lack of musical narration on the 1969 album demonstrates a unique sonic moment

that reflects a generation of traumatic denial. Townshend admitted to the missing narrative on

the album, but stressed that the album functioned better that way: "There were [instances] . . . in

Tommy's later incarnations in the film and in the [Broadway] show where I've written new songs

to serve particular functions that have been required to help tell the story better, I already had

anticipated that and there are songs that were supposed to serve those functions. But really when

we put the album together we realized that the story shouldn't be too complete, for rock and roll .

. . There should be mystery in it and loose ends."[113] These loose ends, however, are also

reflective of a particular generation of musicians and listeners, one that spent their formative

years in a community of silence concerning the war and postwar violence, and only came to

terms with that trauma over time. Cultural anthropologist Kirby Farrell explains the place of

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[112] Richard Harrington, "Talkin' 'Bout His Regeneration; After the Drugs, the Tumult and the Who, Pete
Townshend Finds New Life on Broadway," *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1993, G01.
[113] Smith, *Pete Townshend*, 94.

denial within a collective post-traumatic culture: "Researchers since Freud have agreed that in traumatic experience, neurophysiological processes often keep an overwhelming threat from registering in memory. This dissociation shades into everyday forms of self-protective denial," and that "Denial…is part of a complex feedback loop that implicates not only immediate victims but potentially a wide circle of witnesses and others."[114] These silencing characteristics were evident in post-World War II Britain, as discussed in this chapter's introduction, and Townshend speaks directly to the influence of postwar denial in his autobiography. While reminiscing on the artistic turning point in his career with the Who that eventually led to the creation of *Tommy*, he recounts a sense of recognition of his own denial informing his compositions that he wished to move away from: "Denying denial didn't seem quite such an urgent matter any more."[115] *Tommy* served as a platform to begin addressing this systemic generation denial of postwar trauma, although it started from a place of denial and took decades for the entire picture to come into focus.

The attention to the moment of trauma in the film and particularly in the musical reflects changing trends in a larger cultural interest in trauma. As psychiatrist Judith Herman explains, the study of trauma has a "curious history—one of episodic amnesia."[116] She identifies three periods from the late nineteenth into the twentieth century when scholarly and more general public interest in trauma was prominent, including studies of "hysteria" during the late nineteenth century, of "shell-shock" in returning veterans from World War I until after the Vietnam War, and of survivors of sexual and domestic violence in the 1990s.[117] Relevant to the

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[114] Farrell, *Post-traumatic Culture,* 15-16

[115] Townshend, *Who I Am*, 80.

[116] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 7.

[117] Ibid., 9. In the case of the first two (exemplified by Freud's interest in hysteria at the turn of the century and shell shock in veterans during World War I and World War II), the interest was followed by a fairly abrupt cessation of discussion. Herman attributes this not to "changes in fashion that affect any

Tommy project is Herman's discussion of the scholarly engagement with trauma during World War II, its disappearance at the close of the war, and then resurgence in the 1990s.[118] The complete denial of the moment in the 1969 album came at a time when postwar societies were neglecting or avoiding an acknowledgement of postwar trauma; the 1975 film, which touches upon the traumatic moment with the chromatic ascent and cymbal crash, arrived around the same time that trauma, as Herman writes, "finally attained formal recognition within the diagnostic canon"; the 1993 musical, where Townshend cultivated the traumatic moment with a more expansive musical narrative, developed as the study of trauma expanded tremendously to include non-combat cases of PTSD. Farrell frames the United States in the 1990s as a post-traumatic culture, as a reaction to the end of the Cold War, the economic insecurity of downward mobility, the AIDS epidemic, increased awareness of domestic and child abuse, along with many other terrors flooding the media.[119] This traumatically-aware culture informs, in part, the artistic interpretation of *The Who's Tommy*, since the musical, as well as the film, had a more direct creative engagement with American audiences. In addition to the distancing time to reflect upon the past trauma, it makes sense that a more developed narration of the initial traumatic moment would find a place in the 1993 musical.

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intellectual pursuit," but rather to the fact that the study of trauma "provokes such intense controversy that it periodically becomes anathema."

[118] She explains that while psychiatrists recognized during World War II that soldiers were being affected by trauma and sought to address it, after the war ended, medical interest in the welfare of these traumatized soldiers dropped as they returned home. After the Vietnam War ended in 1975, the combination of the antiwar movement and the influx of returning U.S. veterans with PTSD forced the medical researchers, and American culture at large, to "recognize psychological trauma as a lasting and inevitable legacy of war." During the late 1980s and 1990s, the impact of the women's liberation movement of the 1970s inspired many women to speak out, opening the floodgates to stories of sexual and domestic abuse that had long been silenced by society. In the field of trauma studies, this illuminated the fact that trauma and PTSD were not phenomena relegated solely to veterans with direct experience of the violence of war. Rather, traumatic experiences were varied and complex, with survivors from all walks of life. Ibid., 26-28.

[119] Farrell, *Post-traumatic Culture,* 2-3.

When placed in the context of these widespread cultural engagements and disengagements with trauma throughout the twentieth century, the Who's treatment of the initial traumatic moment in the different incarnations of *Tommy* resonates with the changing times. Tommy's trauma stands as a fictional representation of the various postwar traumas experienced by Townshend and his generation of postwar British youth, and its appearance, or lack thereof, reflects a generation's struggle with recognizing and voicing their own postwar trauma. While at once laden with all the drug references, sexual explorations, mystical leanings, and musical bombast that came to typify late 1960's rock music, *Tommy*—in all of its incarnations—is an artifact of shifting communities across the decades, from the community of silence concerning the war and postwar violence in which the members of the Who spent their formative years, to the community of traumatic recognition of the violence of war and the postwar years in which the surviving members of the Who perform to this day.

CHAPTER IV

"Feelings of an Almost Human Nature": Pink Floyd and Traumatic Narrative

In "The Trial," the climactic, penultimate song of Pink Floyd's rock opera *The Wall* (1979), the protagonist, Pink, stands before a judge accusing him of the supposedly heinous crime of "showing feelings of an almost human nature." The prosecutor scolds Pink for his emotional impudence, chidingly ending his allegation with a very British admonition: "this will not do!" Roger Waters, the group's bassist and lead singer on this album, gives voice to the different characters throughout the rock opera, and he performs a feat of vocal juggling as the characters gather together for this scene to establish that Pink's display of emotion is ultimately the vilest act he can commit in this nightmarish fantasy world. The prosecutor, the judge, and the witnesses, comprising Pink's grade school teacher, his wife, and his mother—all voiced by Waters—shriek out their condemnations over a bombastic orchestral background. After the judge determines, "Since my friend you have revealed your deepest fear/ I sentence you to be exposed before your peers," background vocalists begin to chant, "Tear down the wall." Pink's metaphorical wall then explosively comes crashing down, marking the destruction of the character's emotional guard. It is both ironic and fitting that the album culminates with a loathing attitude toward emotion paired with the extreme exposure of emotion, for at the center of this work is an exploration of human feelings. Waters based *The Wall* on the mental barriers people contrive to shield themselves from emotional vulnerability, particularly concerning the complex feelings entailed in remembering traumatic events. In contrast to the Who's *Tommy*,

which continually maneuvers around a traumatic moment, making its very presence known

through its absence, Pink Floyd's *The Wall* directly confronts traumatic moments throughout the

rock opera.

 The Wall has the distinction of being one of the most famous rock operas because of the

enormity of its production from concept album to live staging to film, as well as for its success

upon release and its enduring popularity over the decades.[1] Waters began formulating the ideas

behind *The Wall* in 1978 and developed it into a concept album about a fictional rock star,

Pink—heavily based on Waters' life story—who becomes increasingly isolated from his

cheating wife, overprotective mother, screaming fans, fervent groupies, fellow band members

and manager, and eventually all of society.[2] In the process of isolating himself, Pink first builds

a metaphorical wall in his mind to hide his emotions, but as he further withdraws from society,

the wall takes on an increasingly material presence as it becomes his only reality. He enters into

a dreamlike fantasy within the confines of this wall and becomes a fascist dictator, but then ends

up facing the acrimonious judge, leading to the breakdown of the wall. This rock opera was

originally released as a double album: The first side of the first record takes the listener through

Pink's childhood; the second side of the first record through his adult life, including marriage,

fame, and adultery; the first side of the second record through his succumbing to madness; and

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[1] Music journalist John Lewis points out the sales numbers behind the work over the decades: "… *The Wall* is validated by sheer mathematics—by the 2.5 million punters who'll watch *The Wall* on its current international tour, by the millions around the world who witnessed the Brandenburg Gate show on television—and by the 30 million plus who have, to date, bought the album." Lewis, John. "The Wall." *Uncut: The Ultimate Music Guide to Pink Floyd.* Issue 6 (Summer 2011): 103.

[2] When describing the inspiration for the work, Waters has pointed to *The Wall* starting as a piece about the alienation that he felt from his audience, particularly after a concert in Montreal during the 1977 *Animals* album tour, where Waters felt as if the audience was not really listening to the music. After becoming so incensed that he spat on an audience member, Waters realized how distanced he felt from his audience and began to explore the causes of this, which led to the creation of *The Wall*. Mason, Nick. *Inside Out: A Personal History of Pink Floyd.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004: 240; Scarfe, Gerald. *The Making of Pink Floyd The Wall*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010: 51.

the second side of the second record through a fascist fantasy and imagined trial. The concept

album quickly developed into a much larger-scale project as the members of Pink Floyd and

their producers mined the idea for its wealth of artistic and marketing potential, resulting in live

shows in 1980-1981, 1990, and 2010-2013 (complete with large, inflatable, fire-breathing

puppets; a prop plane that flies over the audience and crashes into the stage; and a wall set that

covers the vertical and horizontal expanse of the stage) and a movie in 1982 (a mix of live action

and animation). This chapter's analysis focuses on the album and film, and touches upon some

elements of the live productions, to provide a close examination of how this work engages with

the affects stemming from a traumatic narrative.

The rock opera explores various dramatic themes that could each sustain extended

scholarly analysis, including overprotective mothering, drug abuse, abandonment, isolation, the

distance between performer and audience, and masculinity.[3] Furthermore, the meanings of this

musical work are by no means stagnant: over the passing decades, *The Wall* has operated as a

dynamic artwork, metamorphosing to suit new times and new audiences.[4] One of the most

prominent narratives, however, which remains a crucial part of Waters' conceptualization of this

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[3] Much of the current work on *The Wall* details the creation of the album, live show, and film, including Mark Blake's *Pigs Might Fly: The Inside Story of Pink Floyd* (2007), Vernon Fitch and Richard Mahon's *Comfortably Numb: A History of 'The Wall,' Pink Floyd, 1978-1981* (2006), Hugh Fielder's *Behind the Wall: The Complete Psychedelic History from 1965 to Today* (2013), and Gerald Scarfe's *The Making of Pink Floyd: The Wall* (2010). Phil Rose's *Which One's Pink?: An Analysis of the Concept Albums of Roger Waters and Pink Floyd* (1998) touches upon some of the many thematic threads in *The Wall*, incorporating analytical morsels concerning mother-son relationships, ego, power hierarchies, fear of castration, paranoia, desire, obsession, and drug abuse. One work that explores some of the aforementioned themes throughout the rest of Pink Floyd's discography is *Pink Floyd and Philosophy: Be Careful With that Axiom, Eugene!* (2007), edited by George A. Reisch.

[4] For instance, *The Wall* was performed by Roger Waters in Berlin in 1990 to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall, and in Waters' 2010-2013 tour of *The Wall*, he used the music, projected images, and stage props to highlight a narrative attacking capitalism and greed, displaying his support of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

work to this day, relates to the impact of the trauma of World War II.[5] Three of the story's key

components are born from the traumas involving the war: the personal trauma of Waters' father's

death as a soldier in World War II, the national trauma of the Blitz and German V-1 and V-2

rocket attacks, and the international trauma of the Holocaust. The works this dissertation has

examined thus far were produced in the late 1960s, but the emotional impact of World War II on

postwar British Youth—nationally referred to as "the War Babies"—was not only artistically

addressed at the beginning of this generation's adulthood. Pink Floyd's engagement with World

War II in *The Wall* demonstrates that the war proved to be a site of artistic attention for the band

well into the late 1970s (and even to this day for Waters himself). By the end of the 1970s and

into the 1980s, Pink Floyd virulently articulated the cross-generational traumatic repercussions

of the war with *The Wall*.

Few written works about *The Wall* note the importance of trauma as a theme in the work,

and my analysis is unique in that it highlights how the creation of a traumatic narrative functions

as a driving force in the musical structure.[6] There exists a hefty amount of literature about *The*

Wall published by journalists, documentarians, discographers, and fans. These sources are

helpful in terms of tracking down important details about records and providing biographical

information; however, they are not the types of publications that engage with issues such as

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[5] In fact, the 2015 documentary *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall*, Waters frames the performance of *The Wall* around his visits to war memorials and the grave of his father, cutting between film from the live show and scenes of Waters participating in acts of remembrance.

[6] As mentioned earlier, Phil Rose's *Which One's Pink?: An Analysis of the Concept Albums of Roger Waters and Pink Floyd* grapples with some of the psychological themes in the album, especially the concepts of Self and Ego. He notes that the death of Pink's father, the terrors of the Blitz, the overprotective mother, the adulterous wife, and the drug overdoses are all destructive forces in Pink's life, but does not enter into the same discussion of traumatic impact that I do in this chapter. A fan site that comments on trauma as a theme in *The Wall* is Bret Urick's online analysis of *The Wall*, which provides a track-by-track discussion of the work, parsing out lyrical meaning and contextualizing the songs with snippets of interviews from Pink Floyd band members. Urick, Bret. *Pink Floyd—The Wall: A Complete Analysis*. Last modified January 2016, www.thewallanalysis.com.

music and trauma.[7] Although it does not address trauma, one compelling article that provides a

critical study of *The Wall* is by literature scholars Jorge Sacido Romero and Luis Miguel Varela

Cabo, who view *The Wall* as "a work whose intimate, individualistic and autobiographical aspect

stands for the identiary, trans-individual predicament of postwar British society as a whole."[8]

Romero and Cabo place the work within British postwar political culture, where the death of

Pink's father represents "betrayal and the eventual destruction of the 'national ideal.'"[9] The

authors present *The Wall* as a study of Anglo-American culture, and their reading of the album

and film adopts more of a literary perspective than a musical one, but their description of the

album as a postwar cultural product that is haunted by "the loss of Empire" underlines the

importance of World War II and its aftereffects in *The Wall*, which I highlight in my musical

investigation.[10] My chapter adds to this scholarly discussion of Pink Floyd's music by providing

a sustained critical analysis of the subject of trauma and how it is represented musically in *The

Wall*.

By viewing *The Wall* through the lens of trauma studies, one gains a better understanding

of the ways in which Waters uses the narrative capabilities of song to retell trauma and to

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[7]For example, some of the larger published works on the discography of Pink Floyd include Vernon
Fitch's *The Pink Floyd Encyclopedia* (1998), Cliff Jones' *Another Brick in the Wall: The Stories Behind
Every Pink Floyd Song* (1997), Toby Manning's *The Rough Guide to Pink Floyd* (2006), Glenn Povey
and Ian Russell's *In the Flesh: The Complete Performance History* (1997), Nicholas Schaffner's
Saucerful of Secrets: The Pink Floyd Odyssey (1991), and Stuart Shea's *Pink Floyd FAQ: Everything Left
to Know—and More!* (2009). Two music publications that have released valuable special issues on the
works of Pink Floyd are *Guitar World Presents Pink Floyd* (June 1, 2002) and *Uncut: The Ultimate
Music Guide: Pink Floyd* Issue 6 (Summer 2011).

[8] Romero, Jorge Sacido and Luis Miguel Varela Cabo. "Roger Waters' Poetry of the Absent Father:
British Identity in Pink Floyd's 'The Wall'" *Atlantis*. Vol. 28, no. 2 (December 2006): 45.

[9] Ibid., 51.

[10] Ibid., 47. Recently, the music of Pink Floyd has garnered more attention in the field of music theory.
Two works that provide important insight into the band's musical depth are Gilhad Cohen's dissertation,
which examines musical form in their songs "Echoes," "Shine On You Crazy Diamonds" and "Dogs,"
and Chad Johnson's book, which notates and examines selected performances by guitarist David Gilmour
throughout Pink Floyd's discography. Cohen, Gilhad. *Expansive Rock: Large-scale Structure in the
Music of Pink Floyd*. Dissertation, Princeton University, 2015; Johnson, Chad. *Pink Floyd: A Step-by-
Step Breakdown of David Gilmour's Guitar Styles and Techniques*. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2015.

encourage the audience to act as witnesses to the retelling. In contrast to the Who's *Tommy*, *The Wall* grapples directly with the narrative capabilities of the rock song, particularly through descriptive, though oftentimes compromised, depictions present in the lyrics and through specific sound effects that recreate the soundscape of the trauma. Comparative literature scholar Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena."[11] She focuses on the idea of narrative as a means to explore the site of trauma, a tool which is also used in the clinical sense of healing trauma, as described by Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* and by Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery*. In my examination of *The Wall*, I will return to the importance of the relationship between trauma and narrative, and how both its lyrical narrative and musical narrative model a traumatic narrative.

In the past few decades, musicologists have addressed the connection between music and trauma, focusing in particular on the physicality of a musical performance as it relates to a physical reaction to a traumatic event. As musicologist Maria Cizmic elucidates in her dissertation on trauma and the music of 1970s and 1980s Eastern European composers, music has the capability to reflectively interact with trauma in a way that language cannot, particularly in terms of the connective mind/body experience inherent in both music and traumatic experiences:

> . . . music has access to embodied representations of structures of feeling related to trauma that language may more firmly resist. Music has tropological, embodied access to physical experiences tied to both trauma and pain . . . Because music engages both body

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[11] Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996: 91.

and mind, it can begin to dismantle the mind/body divide that marks much of trauma theory.[12]

The songs in *The Wall* similarly stretch beyond the bounds of language through the nuances available through music, sound, and performance, but unlike the pieces Cizmic examines in her dissertation, Waters also employs the narrative capabilities of lyrics to explore trauma. *The Wall*, then, incorporates both the ability of language, as well as the musical nuances beyond the reach of language, to artistically engage with trauma. Even with this added nuance of language through the lyrics, however, the process of creating a cohesive traumatic is challenging.

As a concept album, *The Wall* provides a prime example of a musical narrative, and this narrative is steeped in traumatic memory. It is especially productive to hear *The Wall* as a traumatic retelling because it presents the listener with three characteristics I have found common across multiple disciplines addressing traumatic narrative: disrupted narrative, disruptive narrative, and the act of witnessing. Whether through the clinical works of Judith Herman, the comparative literature analyses of Cathy Caruth, or the sociological and historical writings of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, these three features of constructing a traumatic narrative are present. I am using these three concepts as a framework for inquiry because not only do they populate trauma studies in general, but also because they are particularly applicable to a musical setting and transfer so well to musical analysis.[13] As far as I have been able to

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[12] Cizmic, Maria. *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in 1970s and 80s Eastern Europe.* Dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2004: 21.

[13] Disrupted narrative, disruptive narrative, and witnessing are not the only three routes of connection between trauma and music. Other potential areas of inquiry regarding music and trauma are the physical connections between trauma and musical performance (which Maria Cizmic explores in *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe* [2012]), placing particular artists and even genres in the historical context of growing out of traumatic culture (such as John Stratton's article on punk music in the journal *Popular Music*, "Jews, Punk and the Holocaust: From the Velvet Underground to the Ramones: The Jewish-American Story" or Richard Middleton's article on the blues and traumatic loss, ""O Brother, Let's Go Down Home: Loss, Nostalgia, and the Blues."), and music as a means of therapy for trauma survivors (which Julie P. Sutton examines in her book *Music, Music Therapy and Trauma*). Cizmic,

determine, applying these aspects of traumatic narrative theory to music has not been explored

by other scholars. My application of ideas from traumatic narrative theory to a musical analysis

of *The Wall* shows that even with the nuance present in the combination of lyrics and music, a

musical traumatic narrative follows similar characteristics to spoken or written traumatic

narratives, where the narrative is disrupted, disruptive, and reliant upon witnesses.

In a retelling of a traumatic event, a trauma survivor often disrupts his own narrative

because of the struggle with trying to understand the initially unknowable nature of the traumatic

event. *The Wall* presents a disrupted narrative in "Goodbye Blue Sky," a track addressing the

national trauma Waters experienced of the German V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks on Britain. The

song's traumatic narrative is disrupted in multiple ways, juxtaposing a sonic "creation of safety"

with the sonic disruption of it. This mirrors the intrusive and disruptive qualities of trauma that

are followed by repetitive disruptions of memories of the trauma in the victim's attempt to

comprehend the traumatic occurrence. A second facet of traumatic narrative is that of the

disruptive narrative, where the trauma survivor uncontrollably remembers and relives the

traumatic event in day-to-day life. In *The Wall,* the songs "Vera," "Bring the Boys Back Home,"

and "When the Tigers Broke Free" demonstrate when a narrative can be disruptive.[14] These

tracks find Waters struggling with the interruption of remembrances of his father's death during

World War II, a trauma that he did not witness but nonetheless felt the pangs of throughout his

life.

Maria. *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012; Middleton, Richard. ""O Brother, Let's Go Down Home: Loss, Nostalgia, and the Blues." *Popular Music.* Vol 26, no.1 (2007): 47-64; Stratton, John. "Jews, Punk and the Holocaust: From the Velvet Underground to the Ramones: The Jewish-American Story" *Popular Music*. Vol. 24, no. 1 (January 2005): 79-105; Sutton, Julie P., ed. *Music, Music Therapy and Trauma: International Perspectives.* London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002.
[14] "When the Tigers Broke Free" was included on the 1982 film but not the original 1979 album.

The final way in which *The Wall* addresses traumatic narrative involves the act of

witnessing, which is an integral feature of retelling trauma: for trauma survivors to reintegrate

their daily life within a community—a bond that was broken by experiencing trauma—they

typically must have the sense that their narrative has been heard and understood by witnesses.

Songs on *The Wall* including "In the Flesh?" "Waiting for the Worms," and "In the Flesh"

highlight the dynamic between the audience and the performer, accentuating the importance of

the role of the witness in Waters' retelling. By emphasizing the metaphor behind *The Wall* of a

mental wall built up between the performer and his audience, Waters calls attention to the role of

the audience and highlights their importance in a remarkable, albeit ironic, way.   In both "In the

Flesh" and "Waiting for the Worms," Waters sonically immerses his audience in the traumatic

narrative, employing the lyrics and musical capabilities of song and the mimetic quality of sound

effects and performance not only to retell the trauma but also to bring himself and his audience

into a space for experiencing a reliving of the trauma. Although Waters brings the audience with

him on this painful journey, the end result culminates in the ultimate triumph of witnessing to

break down the constricting mental block (and the literal wall in the theatrical set). The act of

witnessing and the involvement of the audience is why this musical work functions so

powerfully as a transformative act, albeit one steeped in trauma, uncommon for both live rock

shows and rock albums.

Building *The Wall:* Biographical and Historical Background

Pink Floyd's impact on popular music history is undeniable: their ground-breaking work

in the studio with experimental sound techniques and their creation of aesthetically coherent

concept albums helped define the new style of progressive rock, where rock music was treated as

a serious art form. During the mid-1960s, the members of Pink Floyd had established themselves on the London club scene with their multimedia performances, which included extensive instrumental solos against the backdrop of colorful light shows and projected images for full psychedelic effect. After the band gained fame in the underground music scene and garnered attention from record companies, they eventually signed with EMI in 1967 and moved their skills into the studio and into the arena, creating some of the most influential concept albums and live performances in rock history, including their work with *The Wall*. Pink Floyd's sales records speak to the band's enduring popularity, as two of their albums—*Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) and *The Wall*—have each sold over 30 million copies, placing Pink Floyd as one of the most commercially successful bands worldwide. Much like the Beatles, the Kinks, and the Who, this international success belied their humble postwar British roots.

The members of Pink Floyd—David Gilmour, Roger Waters, Nick Mason, and Richard Wright—who were responsible for the production of *The Wall* were all born toward the end or immediately after World War II. Gilmour, a songwriter, vocalist, and guitarist, was born March 6, 1946, in Cambridge, England.[15] Mason, the band's drummer, was born on January 27, 1944, in Birmingham, England, and was raised in Hampstead, an area in northwest London.[16] Wright, the group's keyboardist, was born on July 28, 1943, in Hatch End, also an area in northwest London, but closer to the city center.[17] Mason and Wright, therefore, both spent their childhoods in London, which witnessed the worst devastation from the Blitz (1940-1941), and the terror of home front attacks continued beyond the Blitz through the V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks from Germany in 1944 until the end of the war. Gilmour and Waters both grew up in Cambridge,

[15] Manning, Toby. *The Rough Guide to Pink Floyd.* London: Rough Guides, 2006: 10.
[16] Ibid., 12-13.
[17] Ibid., 13.

which saw far fewer attacks, although the fear of a German bomb or rocket attack still strongly resonated Cambridge residents, as we shall see from Waters' biography and interviews.

Roger Waters was born on September 6, 1943, in Surrey (approximately thirty miles southwest of London) to Mary and Eric Waters, both schoolteachers. When Eric Waters left for the war, Mary Waters moved the family to Cambridge in an attempt to protect her family from bombing raids and rocket hits from Germany.[18] Eric Waters was a conscientious objector at the beginning of World War II, and he chose to serve on the home front by volunteering to drive an ambulance during the Blitz. According to Pink Floyd biographer Mark Blake, Eric Waters changed his stance about halfway through the war, and became a second lieutenant in the City of London Regiment, 8th Battalion Royal Fusiliers.[19] It was during his time with the Royal Fusiliers, Company C that Eric Waters went missing, presumed dead, during the Battle of Anzio, Italy, when German forces surrounded and decimated the Allied troops. The precise date and circumstances of Eric Waters' death are unknown: The official statement on the form letter from King George, thanking the family for Eric Waters' service, dates February 18, 1944, but this date does not reflect the exact date of death. In interviews and writings, Roger Waters usually refers generally to the month of February to mark this loss.[20] Not knowing the details of his father's death, combined with Waters' own experience with the V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks, made an indelible impression on Waters and distinctively marked his artistic endeavors (including lyrical references in Pink Floyd's *A Saucerful of Secrets* [1968], *Obscured by Clouds* [1972] *The Wall* [1979]*, The Final Cut* [1983]*, and Waters' solo album *Amused to Death* [1992]). Since so many

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[18] Blake, Mark. *Pigs Might Fly: The Inside Story of Pink Floyd.* London: Aurum Press Limited, 2007: 13.
[19] Waters attended the Cambridge County School for Boys, where he was a member of the school's Combined Cadet Force. Waters eventually quit attending the training, telling fellow classmates that he left "on the grounds that he was a conscientious objector," an attitude that mirrored the choices of his dead father. Blake, *Pigs*, 13, 15.
[20] Blake *Pigs*, 13; Scarfe, *Making*, 144.

of Waters' musical works involved tributes to his lost father, published versions of his biography most often begin with the impact of World War II, situating him in the midst of the fear of German attack, much like the slightly older musicians from the other bands we have examined.

Analyses of *The Wall* to this point have often connected Waters' biography to the lyrical themes present in the concept album, but they do not place his biography within the larger historical context of a nation processing a traumatic memory. Although Pink Floyd began creating *The Wall* over three decades after World War II had ended, contemporary events brought memories of the war to the surface of their creative minds. On May 3, 1979 (while the members of Pink Floyd were five months into the recording of the album), the United Kingdom held general elections, where Conservative Party candidate Margaret Thatcher unseated the Labour Party's James Callaghan as Prime Minister. Her conservative views and nationalist rhetoric filled the airwaves. At the same time, and as part of this cultural scene, rock was undergoing a schism between the grandiosity of progressive rock and the minimalism of punk rock. Where the newly burgeoning style of punk rock lauded anarchy as a viable option over what they saw as the current government's destruction of the working class that seemed to foster British civil wars, the progressive rock of Pink Floyd recruited the lessons of history, finding parallels between Britain of late 1970s and Germany of the late 1930s (particularly during Pink's fascist fantasy in *The Wall*). Amidst the rampant nationalism of Thatcherism that drew upon the mythologized British experience in World War II, Pink Floyd reopened the decades-old, traumatic wounds of the nation to show how nationalism had marred generations of citizens. Indeed, the impact of World War II was still being processed on a national level. A few examples include institutional memorialization of the war in November of 1971 through the opening of the National Army Museum in London, as well as the popularity of the television

series about the British home front during World War II, *Dad's Army,* which aired on the BBC

from 1968 to 1977. Shoshana Felman points to World War II as a shared, international trauma

that is still in the process of becoming known:

> The historic trauma of the Second World War, a trauma we consider as the watershed of
> our times and which the book will come to view not as an event encapsulated in the past,
> but as a history which is essentially *not over*, a history whose repercussions are not
> simply omnipresent (whether consciously or not) in all our cultural activities, but whose
> traumatic consequences are still actively *evolving* (Eastern Europe and the Gulf War are
> two obvious examples) in today's political, historical, cultural and artistic scene, the
> scene in which we read and psychoanalyze, and from within whose tumult and whose
> fluctuations we strive both to educate and write.[21]

With traumatic events, there is often a delay in when the processing of the event begins to occur.

Both for individual survivors and for large communities of survivors of a traumatic event, it can

take decades to start forming a traumatic narrative. The appearance of different cultural

recognitions of World War II in the 1970s, then, makes sense in terms of the nation coming to

terms with its traumatic past and developing a traumatic narrative. The aftershock of World War

II continued to resound over the decades, and the cultural product of British rock was no

exception. As well as stemming from Waters' personal history, *The Wall* is an artifact of

national historical memory.

Waters' personal narrative connecting him to World War II became a part of his artistic

identity that developed throughout his career. Sociologist Deena Weinstein observes: "Waters'

allusions to war pervade all periods of his work. For Waters, war is both a concrete reference

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[21] Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History.* New York: Routledge, 1992: xiv. Pink's relationship with trauma throughout *The Wall* has resulted in a crisis of self for his character, as is often the case with trauma survivors: "In effect, the psychological and physiological responses to traumatic events adds up to feelings of helplessness and a crisis of meaning in the personal lives of individuals. Restructuring a self-identity and reestablishing one's place in the broader scheme of human affairs becomes necessary." Unfortunately, Pink's solution to his new place in the scheme of humanity is a megalomaniacal one.

and a metonym for human relations in a more general sense."[22] That war became not only a

frequent theme in his songwriting, but also a lens through which he viewed human relationships,

points to how much an impact the violence of military conflicts had on him. Indeed, for Waters,

The Wall emerged out of a combative atmosphere of extreme tension between himself and the

other band members. This tension was partially due to the fact that the future of the band was

tenuous: Gilmour had left the stage after Waters' expectorating assault on the audience, and he

was not alone in his desire for time and space away from Pink Floyd. Gilmour and Wright both

released solo albums in the time between the end of the *Animals* tour (July 6, 1977) and the

beginning of the recording process for *The Wall* (December 1978). The band had always

struggled with toxic internal arguments, and they were only getting worse as the months passed.

Producer Bob Ezrin said of the process of recording the album: "The atmosphere in the studio

was war . . . But, you know, a very gentlemanly war, because they're British."[23] Along with

hostility amongst the band members, there was also the threat of severe financial collapse for

Pink Floyd.[24] This culminated in a career-changing ultimatum for the band: Pink Floyd had a

year to earn as much money as they possibly could to avoid financial disaster. It was under these

dire circumstances in which Waters was able to seize a large amount of control on the band's

next endeavor and open up the door to exploring the traumas of his own past in *The Wall*.

    In the summer of 1978, Waters returned to the London studio, Britannia Row, with two

different projects to share with the band: a ninety-minute demo tape of *The Wall*, and preliminary

recordings that would later populate Waters' solo album released in 1984, *The Pros and Cons of*

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[22] Weinstein, Deena. "Progressive Rock as Text: The Lyrics of Roger Waters." *Progressive Rock Reconsidered.* Kevin Holm-Hudson, editor. New York: Routledge, 2002: 101.
[23] Bob Ezrin in Lewis, "Wall," 103. Nick Mason confirmed the antagonistic atmosphere in the recording studio during the creation of *The Wall*: "It's just that it was such an awful time . . . I've tried to put it out of my mind." Blake, *Pigs*, 256.
[24] Blake, *Pigs*, 259.

Hitchhiking. The band collectively decided to pursue the material Waters presented that focused

on the wall concept and Waters' personal history.[25] An autobiographical wall seemed to present

more artistic material to develop for a large endeavor that could result in much-needed financial

gain, even if the narrative had previously been touched upon in earlier Pink Floyd works. Due to

his personal connection to the material, Waters began to assume more creative control than he

had in previous albums, making this work more about Waters' own experience than about the

band as a whole. He assumed the bulk of artistic control for most of the album, tour, and film—

much to the chagrin of his fellow band members—to the extent that he claimed copyright of the

work after leaving the group in 1985. He later performed a live concert for charity in 1990

without the other members of Pink Floyd, and he went on a world tour in 2010-2013 with a solo

version of the show "Roger Waters Presents: Pink Floyd's *The Wall*." Although the album is a

joint effort by the members of Pink Floyd, the circumstances of its creation reflect Waters' desire

to give voice to his own artistic ideas.

By 1979, the band had established themselves firmly as a group that produced artistic

concept albums that were meant to be listened to as an entire work, such as *Dark Side of the

Moon* (1973) and *Animals* (1977). Fans of Pink Floyd by this point were self-selected consumers

who were interested in immersing themselves in album-length, musical-conceptual journeys.

Although *The Wall* continued the band's penchant for concept albums, the layout of this album

diverges from their earlier works for two notable reasons. Firstly, *The Wall* contains far fewer of

the band's trademark extended solo instrumental breaks, which resulted in Gilmour, Wright, and

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[25] Mason explains, "Although it later underwent an enormous transformation, and in fact Roger ended up
rewriting the whole piece in France, the *Wall* demo contained sufficient clarity and enough concepts—
some only in outline form, others relatively well fleshed out—for us all to understand that this had much
more potential than just an album . . . it was also a huge relief for us to be presented with such a complete
concept so early in the process." Mason, Nick. *Inside Out: A Personal History of Pink Floyd.* San
Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004: 240-241.

Mason mostly relegated to playing the role of studio musicians. This created artistic space for

Waters, at the expense of the other band members, to inject much of his own traumatic narrative

into this project. Secondly, the album features shorter tracks than on previous albums; most of

the songs on the 1979 album are under four minutes, and the longest song, "Mother," lasts five

minutes and thirty-five seconds.[26] In contrast, *Wish You Were Here* (1975) and *Animals* (1977)

both contain multiple songs over seven minutes in length and extend to the seventeen-minute-

long "Dogs" track on *Animals*. Since many of the songs are much shorter in length, the narrative

flow of the rock opera moves quickly from one theme to the next, and different elements of the

storyline begin, develop, and return in a fragmented manner throughout the album instead of one

longer, continuous elaboration of a single idea. This structure provides ample opportunity for the

disruptive aspects of traumatic narrative to develop, as I discuss in further detail below.

Retelling Trauma: Narrative Disruption in "Goodbye Blue Sky"

A white dove flies through a serenely blue sky, but soon the sky turns to gray, and the

dove expands and bursts into bloody bits as a large eagle, fashioned after the German War Eagle,

emerges from the inside of the dove. The eagle flies over the London skyline, ripping out

chunks of ground that turn into pools of blood, and then continues flying, dripping blood over

hills dotted with searchlights and cringing humanoid creatures with gasmasks for faces. The

same skies are then filled with a mass of propeller-driven, twin-engine aircraft (an air attack

formation common during World War II) that morph into crosses. A skeleton wearing a

soldier's uniform falls to the ground, and then a British flag appears, which turns into a bleeding

cross. Suddenly there appears an army of skeletons wearing army uniforms, and they all turn

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[26] In addition to the unprecedented amount of control assumed by Waters, *The Wall* stands apart from other Pink Floyd albums because it spawned a number one hit single for the band, "Another Brick in the Wall, Part 2," a lone accomplishment in their discography.

into bleeding crosses as well. This horrific imagery is what artist Gerald Scarfe delivered for the animated sequence that accompanied the song "Goodbye Blue Sky" in the film version of *The Wall*.[27] The animated sequence deftly reflects the grim tone of a song that functions as a decades-removed remembrance of the *Blitz*. The music and lyrics of "Goodbye Blue Sky" also demonstrate the complex act of claiming citizenship to a national trauma and the difficulty of communicating a traumatic narrative.

In "Goodbye Blue Sky," Waters directly engages with the traumatic impact the German air attacks on the British home front had on the nation. The song haltingly narrates the protagonist Pink's fear of attack by enemy aircraft, which was modeled after Waters' own experience. Waters was born during the war, and even though he was only two years old by the time the war ended, Waters later recalled sleeping in a Morrison air raid shelter during the V1 and V2 attacks on Britain in 1943-1945 during his earliest years:

> [Gerald Scarfe]: I used to be in air raid shelters myself so I remember this well.
> [Roger Waters]: We all do. I used to sleep in a Morrison shelter.
> GS: But you were after the war . . .
> RW: No I wasn't. I was born in 1943—the V1s, well the V2s were happening by then but the V1s were still going over Surrey where I was living every day. So we slept in a Morrison Shelter which was just like a table made out of angle iron—if you Google it there are some beautiful drawings of them. They show people sitting in them having a cup of tea—they are not very high. The one in the garden was different— an Anderson Shelter which was made of corrugated iron and you were supposed to bank earth all around it.[28]

What is intriguing about this interview is the importance of *claiming* the experience, and how Scarfe questions Waters' authority on the matter, to which Waters replies to the challenge with a

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[27] Waters found camaraderie in animator and fellow war baby Gerald Scarfe, In his memoir, the animator recalled one particular instance of descending into the concrete air raid shelter with his father, who was in uniform, and everyone else in the shelter immediately broke into the 1940 George Formby song, "Bless 'Em All." Scarfe used the Mickey Mouse gas masks provided to British children during the war as inspiration for the creatures the animators referred to as "the Frightened Ones" in *The Wall* (1982). Scarfe, *Making*, 170-177.

[28] Scarfe, *Making*, 170.

very detailed answer, describing two different types of air raid shelters and the types of bombs. It is unclear how much of the German attacks Waters remembers, as he stated in a BBC interview a year later that his first memory is of VJ-Day celebrations, which would have been in August 1945, months after the last V-2 rocket landed in Britain (March 1945).[29] What is clear, however, is the continual impact the fear of German attack had on Waters throughout his life. The Blitz is an integral part of Waters' personal narrative, and through professing his involvement with that trauma, he is enacting what literary scholar Marianna Torgovnick defines as traumatic citizenship. In *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time*, Torgovnick discusses the question of traumatic citizenship, asking if one can be a citizen of a trauma, and if so, can one pass down this citizenship, this sense of belonging, to the next generation. This idea is mirrored in scientific literature and clinical psychology, where victims of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) effectively pass on their experience of trauma indirectly to their immediate family (secondary post-traumatic stress disorder or secondary traumatization) as the family experiences the victim's symptoms.[30] Torgovnick uses Holocaust survivors as her example, citing the Holocaust Memorial Museum's conference in 2000 about "'the second generation' in which 'passing the torch' was a frequent image" in featured panels on "'the second generation,' a term that assumes that the Holocaust is a legacy, a heritage, and inheritance."[31] In answer to her questions of how the Holocaust can be considered a type of citizenship and who can be (or become) citizens of this trauma, Torgovnick has two responses, the first being that the Holocaust belongs to groups of victims (she lists Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and dissenters), and the

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[29] Young, Kristy. Interview with Roger Waters. *Desert Island Discs*, BBC Radio 4, June 3, 2011.
[30] Galovski, Tara and Judith A. Lyons. "Psychological sequelae of combat violence: A review of the impact of PTSD on the veteran's family and possible interventions." *Aggression and Violent Behavior*. Vol. 9 (2004): 477-501.
[31] Torgovnick, Marianna. *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005: 77-78.

second being that "the Holocaust belongs to everyone in the near or middle distance, anyone who

feels an emotional response, and not just those who have a biographical or genealogical

connection—an idea that carries with it the belief that the Holocaust belongs to all of us as a test-

case of modernity."[32] She elaborates that both of these options center on identity: how, why, and

with what one identifies one's self. When applied to the anecdote in the aforementioned

interview with Waters, one sees that he derives authority from the British claim at having

survived the V-1 and V-2 rocket bombardments and fully embraces his role as a citizen of British

trauma. No matter the extent to which Waters directly experienced the German attacks, he

claims citizenship to that trauma, identifies himself with that group of survivors, and thus joins in

a traumatic discourse in which he becomes a citizen of the traumatic event.

Cathy Caruth also addresses the question of identity and a sense of belonging to a trauma

in her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History.* In her close reading of

Sigmund Freud's *Moses and Monotheism,* by using as an example the history of Jewish people

and their identity, particularly in terms of being God's chosen ones, Caruth makes clear that by

placing one's identity in terms of survival of trauma (e.g., "I survived this," "My family survived

this," "My people survived this,"), the individual is also constantly placing himself or herself in

dialogue with the trauma: "The history of chosenness, as the history of survival, thus takes the

form of an unending confrontation with the returning violence of the past."[33] When the

individual situates his or her identity in terms of a larger group of people, one takes on that

history, a concept similar to Torgovnick's citizenship approach. Caruth elaborates, "Chosenness

is thus not simply a fact of the past but the experience of being shot into a future that is not

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[32] Ibid., 90.
[33] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 69.

entirely one's own."[34] By claiming a group trauma as one's own, one takes on the ghosts of

many. Over the decades, Waters has asserted his sense of belonging to the community of the

trauma of World War II, whether it be through the camaraderie in the 1980s with Scarfe over

both being war babies, through his collaboration with philanthropist and World War II RAF

Captain Leonard Cheshire in 1990 as they worked together to stage *The Wall Live in Berlin,* or

through the invitation in the 2010s to veterans to incorporate their stories in the projected images

onstage for *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall*. Waters places his identity in the

context of others who lived through war or whose families lived through war. Although both

Torgovnick and Caruth focus on trauma in Jewish history as their examples of "passing the

torch" of traumatic remembrance between generations, these ideas can also apply to other groups

across generations, such as British citizens during and after the *Blitzkrieg* and subsequent V-1

and V-2 rocket attacks from Germany.[35] Waters actively claimed this trauma as part of his

identity, and used *The Wall* as a means of voicing his citizenship to this trauma.

     The World War II narrative of the album was not unique to the fictional Pink's life, nor to

Waters' life. Many in Waters' generation bore the inherited weight of World War II on their

shoulders. Pink Floyd's producer Bob Ezrin wanted the band to make a concerted effort to

generate a story that was as widely relatable to their audience as possible, and actively worked to

make the album less about Waters and more about a general character with whom the listeners

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[34] Ibid., 71.

[35] The experience of British civilians during World War II was unlike any war they had experienced before. Although there were far fewer military casualties during World War II than in World War I (270,687 versus a staggering 743,702), the civilian casualties were on a level not seen since the mid-seventeenth century with the First English Civil War. In World War I, there were 8,389 civilian casualties; in World War II there were 63,655. As Angus Calder notes in his critical history of the Blitz*:* "In this war, from Dunkirk through to the end of Blitz, horror could not be concealed from the public." Hicks, Joe and Grahame Allen. "A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900." *House of Commons Library Research Paper 99/111*. December 22, 1999, http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/RP99-111: 17; Calder, Angus. *The Myth of the Blitz*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1991: 18.

could identify.[36] Interestingly, the terror of enemy attack by air and the death of the father

character during World War II remained part of the story. Although the references to World War

II in *The Wall* are highly biographical for Waters, they also engage with a large-scale, national

trauma Waters' generation had inherited and was grappling with as their own.[37] Sociologist

Arthur Neal further explicates cross-generational citizenship to a trauma, discussing how

Americans created national narratives for the major traumas of the twentieth century. For a

trauma to be a national trauma, it must be an event in which there are lasting, disruptive effects

"on the institutional underpinnings of the social order."[38] These disruptive effects last for long

periods of time, being used by following generations to find grounding in their present society:

> As historical circumstances change, the stories must be told and retold by each
> succeeding generation. The retelling of stories is in part based upon the excavation of
> new data about them with the passing of time. But, more important, the stories take on
> new meanings for subsequent generations as they rework their social heritage and
> confront new sets of challenges. Further, the accounts of our past are being selectively
> retold by those who see themselves as disadvantaged by the social heritage from the past.
> The uncertainty surrounding national traumas permit drawing upon them as raw materials
> for forging new identities, for setting the record straight, and for shaping new sets of
> opportunities.[39]

The Blitz and subsequent V-1 and V-2 rocket attacks certainly left lasting, disruptive effects.

Indeed, the consequences of the Blitz remained with British civilians long after their encounters

during war, not only through individual loss of friends and family members, but also through the

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[36] Ezrin wished to expand the work beyond Waters' life story: "We went out of our way to take it away
from being a completely autobiographical work. Roger was thirty-six at the time, and it *was* 'The Roger
Waters Story'. My sense, though, was that our audience probably wasn't that interested in a 36-year old
rocker complaining! But that they *might* be interested in a *Gestalt* character, Pink, that was a composite of
all the dissipated rockers we have known and loved." Ezrin quoted in Blake, *Pigs*, 260.

[37] Other artists Pink Floyd collaborated with were similarly confronting their generation's connection to
World War II. Scarfe said of the "Goodbye Blue Sky" sequence in the film version of *The Wall*: "I do
think this is one of the best pieces of animation I've done. Partly because I did live through this period
and it comes from my memories—I remember bombers flying over London and having to wear my gas
mask." Scarfe, *Making*, 177.

[38] Neal, Arthur G. *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Major Events in the American Century*.
Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1998: xi.

[39] Neal, *National Trauma*, ix-x.

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visual reminders of rubble left behind for decades after the war, and this would not have been lost on the following generation.

Waters' recollections regarding World War II resonate with the idea of his generation inheriting a disadvantage through their social heritage. In an interview with the BBC in 1979, Waters asserted that the war was the provenance of his own emotional wall: "It's been being built up in my case since the end of the Second World War."[40] Although there were certainly many other factors that contributed to Waters' emotional state, the war did play a large role in his personal history. In a 1980 interview with radio personality Jim Ladd, Waters returned to the idea of World War II as a starting point for his personal narrative, and even went so far as to theorize about intergenerational trauma:

> RW: Yes, [the war is] a personal thing for me, but also I think for a lot of my generation because I was born during the war. In fact my father was killed in the war, and I come from a generation that grew up out of the ashes of the second World War. . . . our parents start inducing, almost inject their own fears and worries into their children from a very early age, really, particularly in my case because they'd just been through a world war, something like that. We all go through devastating experiences and we tend to pass them onto our children when they're very young, I suspect.[41]

"Mother," the song that precedes "Goodbye Blue Sky," candidly demonstrates the construction of this emotional wall and the transference of citizenship to a trauma from one generation to the next. In this song, Waters presents three verses with a series of paranoid questions addressed to "mother" ("Mother, should I trust the government?/Mother, will they put me in the firing line?"), imbuing each question with the childlike, naïve hope that mother will make these fears go away. It becomes clear in the prechorus that follows the first two verses, however, that instead of being the solution to the fears, "mother" is actually the root cause of all of these fears: "Mother's gonna make all of your nightmares come true/ Mother's gonna put all of her fears into you." It is here

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[40] Vance, Tommy. Interview with Roger Waters. "The Friday Rock Show." BBC Radio 1, Nov. 20, 1979.
[41] Ladd, Jim. Interview with Roger Waters. "Pink Floyd and The Wall." *Innerview*. 94.7 KMET, Feb. 19, 1980.

that we get a direct glimpse of the generational communication of trauma, of passing the torch of

traumatic memory from one generation to the next, establishing a new body of citizenship to the

original trauma in the younger generation.[42] This injury of the past inflicting itself on the future

is also evident in the lyrics of "Goodbye Blue Sky": "the flames are all gone/ But the pain lingers

on." Waters, then, through his reworking of the traumatic past, became the torch-bearer for a

generational dialogue with a trauma. In "Goodbye Blue Sky," Waters calls upon national,

generational, and inherited memories of fear as he presents the listener with a series of questions

about both his and the listener's own experience of war.

By exploring both his and his audience's traumatic memories of war, Waters is taking

part in the creation of a traumatic narrative. Both trauma therapy in clinical practice and trauma

theory in literary and cultural analysis focus on the attempt to understand trauma through the

production of a narrative. The act of producing a narrative of the traumatic event is an important

part of the recovery process because it reintegrates the disconnected memory of the traumatic

event back into the personal narrative of the survivor, changing an unfathomable moment into a

memory that has context and is slightly more comprehensible than the initially unknowable

moment of the trauma.[43] Traumatic narration is a difficult process, however, and a cohesive

narrative is often difficult to achieve *because* of the initial unknowable nature of the trauma,

where the disruptive act evades understanding by the survivor, both at the time of the trauma and

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[42] Three of the questions display a distrust of national security: "Mother do you think they'll drop the bomb?" "Mother should I trust the government?" and "Mother will they put me in the firing line?" The fear of dropping the bomb was a pervasive part of postwar mentality, due to the invention and development of the atom bomb during World War II. There was no conscription after 1957 that would have actually *forced* Pink into being part of a firing line, so this fear also stems from a post-World War II mentality. These fears, then, are instigated by the realities of the past and the fear mongering of the present rather than from an actual contemporary threat. The fears of his forefathers (and particularly foremothers) are now Pink's to bear.

[43] Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books, 1992: 175.

afterward.[44] The desire to understand and narrate the trauma contends with the inability to do so

as a result of the disruptive nature of trauma, and this becomes a repetitive cycle. Furthermore,

reconstructing a traumatic memory runs the risk of the survivor experiencing the narrative as

reliving the trauma.[45] The process of creating a traumatic narrative, then, is an inherently

difficult and risky endeavor, and narrative disintegration is not uncommon in the attempt of

retelling. What is fascinating about "Goodbye Blue Sky" is that it encapsulates the problem of

traumatic narrative by attempting a retelling of the trauma through both the narrative capability

of the lyric and sonic recreations of the traumatic event, while at the same time disrupting the

narration, mimicking the original disruption of the trauma through interruptions in the lyrical and

musical structure, which I illustrate further in my following analysis.

     The lyrics of "Goodbye Blue Sky"—the track that opens the second side of four—

indicate how the narration of Pink's (and to a large extent, Waters') air raid trauma is stunted

before it even begins. The lyrics, instead of being a declarative statement of what happened, are

a series of linked interrogative statements: "D-d-d-did you see the frightened ones?/ D-d-d-did

you hear the falling bombs?/ D-d-did you ever wonder why we had to run for shelter/ When the

promise of a brave new world/ Unfurled beneath a clear blue sky?" These questions begin to tell

a fearful story, but the narrative presented in the lyrics is interrupted by Gilmour's softly cooing

"Ooooo" in a B minor scalar descent, and we are only left with questions about the traumatic

scene. In her groundbreaking study on victims of trauma, *Trauma and Recovery,* psychiatrist

Judith Herman describes that at the heart of psychological trauma are the conflicting wills to

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[44] Cizmic refers to the work of neurobiologist Bessel A. van der Kolk to show how traumatic experiences impact the trauma survivor's memory recall, impeding the ability to create a cohesive narration of the traumatic event. She connects this to literary studies, writing, "the epistemological gap that manifests itself as a dysfunction of memory and a resistance to narration—is of central concern in literary and cultural studies." Cizmic, *Performing Pain* (2004), 11-13.
[45] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 176.

both deny and proclaim the traumatic event, and further states, "People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy."[46] Waters' lyrics present Pink's story in a similarly opaque manner, where it begins to tell the truth of the story, but at the same time lacks specificity and assuredness to be a straightforward narrative.

The lyrics paint a vague scene of remembrances of falling bombs and frightened people, but do not reference when or where these events occurred, why it happened, what resulted from the falling bombs (other than general fear and nonspecific pain) and who exactly experienced these events. This resonates with findings in trauma studies: the lack of detail denies the opportunity for full understanding and also demonstrates the unknowable nature of the trauma in the first place. Waters never returns to his recounting of the *Blitz*, so the story is never fully fleshed out to complete a synthesized retelling for Waters or to provide a sense of true understanding to his listener. The lyrics are constructed mostly in a second-person narrative, projecting the experiences onto "you" instead of the "I," "me," "mine" one expects of a personal traumatic narrative. This type of displacement of self and denial of self recognition is common among trauma survivors; Herman writes that the traumatic moment "destroys the belief that one can *be oneself* in relation to others" and results in "the inability to maintain one's own separate point of view while remaining in connection to others."[47] The only moment the lyrics slip into first person narrative is at the end of the first verse—"Did you ever wonder/ why *we* had to run for shelter"—while the rest of the lyrics avoid claiming the experience, disrupting the act of

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[46] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1.
[47] Ibid., 53 (Herman's italics).

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narrative.[48] Furthermore, the "we" of Waters' lyrics simultaneously requests and denies a sense of community, accenting the metaphor of the wall that continues throughout the album. The interrogative format begs listeners to identify with the half-told story, bringing them into the act of testimony, community, and remembrance for those listeners who did experience the scene the lyrics portray, but this also puts up a barrier for those listeners who did not "see the frightened ones" or "hear the falling bombs."

The sense of ownership of and belonging within the narrative is further complicated by the vocals in "Goodbye Blue Sky." Clearly a story of trauma is being told here, despite the various methods of disruption, but whose story is it? Presumably it belongs to the fictional character of Pink, heavily based on Waters' experience, but it is Gilmour who sings Waters' lyrics in "Goodbye Blue Sky," generating additional obfuscation in the retelling of this narrative. Whether this choice was made for aesthetic purposes or to solve inner tensions within the band, Waters relinquished control over the retelling, undermining his own narrative voice, which had already been distanced through the introduction of a fictional character. Herman points out that initial attempts "to develop a narrative language may be partially dissociated," where the survivor tries to displace the narrative from himself.[49] By supplanting his own narrative voice with Gilmour's, Waters detaches himself from the troublesome traumatic retelling. It is because the ownership of the narrative is so slippery, however, that this song also functions so well as a portrayal of an individual identifying with a national trauma. This is not just Pink's or Waters' or even Gilmour's difficult, disrupted narrative; it is the complicated traumatic narrative that belongs to the community of British survivors.

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[48] My italics.
[49] Ibid., 177.

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In "Goodbye Blue Sky," Gilmour delivers Waters' lyrics in a soft, breathy voice that furthers the effect of reticence in telling the story, and his lullaby-like vocal timbre comes off as ironic when juxtaposed with lyrical depictions of the terrors of looking toward the sky in Waters' fear-drenched ode to the memories of the German air raid. Gilmour's vocals stand in stark contrast to Waters' more abrasive and commanding vocals that inundate most of the album, and his distinctive vocal timbre brings an acute sense of vulnerability to the song. As Gilmour softly vocalizes each question, he stutters the first syllable: "D-d-d-did you see the frightened ones?/ D-d-d-did you hear the falling bombs." The stuttering at the beginning of each question not only sonically reenacts the stammering fear of a trauma victim, but also reflects the trauma narrative's resistance to linguistic representation. The narrator's irresolution to even begin a vocalization of the question communicates the impossibility of unconstrained retelling.

The formal structure and lyrical pattern of "Goodbye Blue Sky" also demonstrate the complexity of the act of retelling and the ultimate inability of the disrupted narrative to communicate the pain of the trauma. The song consists of an introduction, two verses, a chorus, and a coda. The song is two minutes and forty-five seconds long, and the instrumental introduction comprises almost half the song: it is not until 1:17 that the initial lyrics enter. This long introduction might typically prepare the listener for a much longer vocal narrative, but the two verses and single, brief chorus last only one minute and sixteen seconds, creating a truncated narrative that falls short of the setup of the long introduction. In the chorus, there are no answers to be found to the questions raised in the verses, and Gilmour's final lyric of the chorus, "goodbye," is sung as part of a D^7sus2 chord, where the suspended E in the accompanying synthesizer literally leaves the listener in a state of suspense, heightening the unsettling sense of the narrative being unfinished. The vocals are left on this suspended seventh chord, and the

guitar delays the suspension for two more measures until the bass takes over with a scalar

descent from C down to D. Along with the fact that the lyrics of "Goodbye Blue Sky" only

provide glimpses and questions about the traumatic scene, the musical setting of these lyrics—a

setting that spends more time on the contemplative introduction and coda than on the story

present in the lyrics, as well as leaves the lyrics on an unresolved harmony—furthers the sense

that the traumatic narrative is not complete.

The impression of the narrative being unfinished is compounded by the imbalance of the

poetic meter in the lyrics of the verses. The first and second lines of the first verse are both ten

syllables each over eight beats, followed by a third line that squeezes thirty-four syllables into

the space of twenty beats. The third line has an uncanny sound of trying to rush through an

uncomfortable story, as the vocal rhythm shifts from non-syncopated to syncopated and back,

force-fitting the syllables into the four bars. The second verse begins with the same pattern,

where the first and second lines are both ten syllables laid over eight beats, but then the

following third line consists of twelve syllables sung over eight beats, sounding very different

from the strained imbalance of the first verse (See Table 4.1). Whether the first verse was too

long or the second too short, the narrative presented in the verses strikes the listener with an

unsatisfactory asymmetry.

Verse 1	Syllables	Beats	Verse 2	Syllables	Beats
Line 1	10	8	Line 1	10	8
Line 2	10	8	Line 2	10	8
Line 3	34	20	Line 3	12	8

Table 4.1 Lyrical Meter in "Goodbye Blue Sky"

The melodic construction of the instrumentation, however, adds the most convincing sense of challenge and disruption to the traumatic narrative. The song begins as an innocent idyll as the first ten seconds are filled with the recreated sound of birdcalls, sonically painting the scene of the title's blue skies.[50] This pastoral soundscape changes to one of dread, however, as the sounds of nature are overrun by the man-made as a menacing airplane propeller-like sound emitting a low D eventually drowns out the birdcalls and maps a dark foreshadowing onto the otherwise innocuous D-major opening of the piece (0:11-0:27).[51] Shortly thereafter, Gilmour enters on a nylon-stringed acoustic guitar with a fingerpicking melody of three notes in a cyclical pattern of quickly and continuously returning to the first scale degree, which establishes a sense of safety and predictability in D major in a matter of seconds. This acoustic stability, however, is overwhelmed as the low tones of the Prophet 5 synthesizer ominously moving down a half-step from C to B, as the finger-picked melody stalls in a repetitive, thudding low A. Gilmour then sings a soothing, lullaby-like line (0:50-1:17), but this is followed by the return of the sinisterly descending half-step in the synthesizer. In the first minute of the song, the members of Pink Floyd present the listener with three different sonic zones of comfort (the bird calls, the acoustic guitar pattern, and Gilmour's lullaby), and these are all disrupted suddenly by man-made, electric sounds (the propeller and the half-step motive of the synthesizer). Additionally, the harmonies in

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[50] Although the birdcall is created by the EMS VCS 3 synthesizer, the sound is meant to reference nature, unlike the following propeller noise, which references the manufactured, industrialized domain.

[51] The sound of the propeller evokes a very specialized reference to time and place. By the early 1960s, most aircraft were powered by jet engines, and propeller-powered planes were phased out of the military and commercial airlines. If Waters had wanted to sonically depict a generic plane in the sky, he probably would have used the sound of a jet engine, like the Beatles did at the beginning of "Back in the U.S.S.R." (1968). The sound of the propeller-powered plane at the beginning of "Goodbye Blue Sky," in combination with a child (Roger Waters' son, Harry Waters) stating with a distinctly British accent, "Look Mummy, there's an airplane up in the sky" invokes childhood memories of the Blitz. World War II was the last war in which propeller-driven aircraft were used en masse, and as Angus Calder points out, the Blitzkrieg on the U.K. was the first and last time such a method of attack was historically possible: "The subsequent development of nuclear bombs makes it very unlikely that such sustained bombardment could happen again." Calder, *Myth*, 1.

the song's introduction continuously oscillate between D major and its relative minor, b minor, making the harmonic goal unclear: will the song ultimately resolve in D major or b minor? This continual shift between two moods in "Goodbye Blue Sky" results in a musical reenactment of the disruption of the trauma on the course of everyday life.

Curiously, although the sound of the acoustic finger picking remains throughout the song, the melody does not retain its original shape. Each time the fingerpicking pattern is disrupted, it returns changed, modeling the mental state of a trauma survivor whose thoughts and reactions are changed by the traumatic event. The first iteration is a pattern in D major (0:24-0:33), featuring a leap up to the fourth scale degree from the first, as the pattern stretches its melodic wings over the entire measure (see Example 4.1).

Example 4.1: Guitar Pattern 1

This guitar pattern suddenly rushes into a scalar descent down to the repeated low A on the fifth string with half-step descents on third and fourth string (C to B and G to F#, respectively) to support the synthesizer line until the ominous synthesizer half-step descent is complete (0:34-0:46). It then returns to the surface of the song, still in D major, but this time without the leap of the fourth, truncating the melodic shape and turning the pattern into a more nervous version of what it had been before by becoming an obsessive pattern of four notes per beat (0:46-0:50, see Example 4.2).

Example 4.2: Guitar Pattern 2

At 0:50, the acoustic guitar line once again descends into a low repeated D on the fourth string while the melodic descent of Gilmour's cooing lullaby is mirrored in the second and third strings (0:50-0:55). Although this disruption is not as jarring as the earlier descending synthesizer disruption, it is from this lullaby that the finger-picking pattern emerges in its most distant form from Pattern 1, this time modulating to B minor (0:55-0:59, see Example 4.3):

0:55'-0:59'

Example 4.3 Guitar Pattern 3

In "Goodbye Blue Sky," the acoustic guitar acts as a musical line that frames the song with the introduction and fade-out conclusion, and it establishes a place of stability throughout by returning to the acoustic patterns, but these are then continually disrupted, which resembles a traumatic narration (See Table 4.2). Table 4.2 illustrates that each iteration of the sonic safety of the acoustic patterns is followed either by the threat of the menacing synthesizer motive or the vaguely soothing lullaby motive. The original melody of the acoustic pattern (Guitar Pattern 1) reacts to these disruptions through the truncation of the melodic motive (Guitar Pattern 2) and shifting from D major to b minor (Guitar Pattern 3). By always returning to the safety zone of the acoustic pattern as the song continues, however, the traumatic narration is suspended and the sonic world of the trauma never has a chance to fully develop.

Track Time:	Musical Section:
0:00-0:10	Birdsong
0:10-0:24	Propeller noises and child's voice
0:24-0:33	Pattern 1
0:34-0:46	Menacing Synthesizers
0:46-0:50	Pattern 2
0:50-0:55	Lullaby
0:55-0:59	Pattern 3
0:59-1:03	Lullaby
1:03-1:08	Pattern 3
1:08-1:12	Lullaby
1:12-1:17	Pattern 3
1:17-1:33	Menacing Synthesizers (Verse 1)
1:34-1:40	Pattern 3
1:40-1:44	Pattern 1
1:44-1:48	Lullaby
1:48-1:52	Pattern 3
1:52-1:57	Lullaby
1:57-2:01	Pattern 3
2:01-2:14	Menacing Synthesizers (Verse 2)
2:14-2:18	Pattern 2
2:28-2:35	Goodbye Blue Sky chorus
2:36-2:45	Pattern 1

Table 4.2: "Goodbye Blue Sky" sections

The attempt at retelling, therefore, takes place not only in the vocals, but also in the acoustic guitar. Much like the lyrical narration, the instrumental narration is stunted and ultimately fails to develop the traumatic narration any further than relating that the memory is stuck in a loop of vague fear as "the pain lingers on."[52] Waters also employs a similar technique in "Your Possible Pasts" and "The Hero's Return" on Pink Floyd's *The Final Cut* (1983)*,* another album that explores the decades-long impact of World War II. Both of these songs address traumatic

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[52] Remarkably in "Goodbye Blue Sky," despite the fact that the two repeating disruptions to the acoustic guitar line—the menacing synthesizer and the cooing lullaby—are very different in character, the guitar line responds to both disruptions by shifting to Pattern 3, resembling a trauma survivor's resorting to fear when faced with the inability to distinguish between dangerous and safe spaces. Neal describes this experience of uncertainty for a citizen after a national trauma: "Previous feelings of safety and security are replaced by perceptions of danger, chaos, and a crisis of meaning." The song's depiction of fearful wonder at what is looming above in the "clear blue sky," of not knowing whether or not it is a threat, musically reflects one of the ways in which trauma presents itself in a survivor. Neal, *National Trauma*, 3.

memories of war, and the narration is disrupted in the lyrical retelling and through the disjointed instrumental accompaniment.[53] For "Goodbye Blue Sky" and the two tracks on *The Final Cut*, even with the advantage of having the expressive nuances of both lyrics and musical accompaniment available, the traumatic narrative still gets disrupted. This demonstrates the fundamental difficulty of producing a traumatic narrative: The act of transforming a traumatic memory into contextualized, incorporated personal history is fraught with the obstacle of the intrinsically disruptive and unfathomable nature of the moment of trauma.[54]

Disruptive Trauma: Musical Traumatic Flashbacks in *The Wall*

Keyboardist Richard Wright recalled his first thoughts upon hearing Waters' demo tapes for *The Wall:* "'Oh, here we go again—it's all about the war, about his mother, about his father being lost . . .'"[55] Wright's frustration with Waters' return to the theme of his father dying during the war—a traumatic event for which Waters was not present but still impacted his life —hints at how often Waters turned to this subject in his artistic career, as well as how often it came up in his interactions with the band members. Waters' depiction of trauma in *The Wall* has many facets, and by turning the focus to the trauma of losing his father in World War II, one can see how this particular trauma appears throughout *The Wall* as a disruptive narrative. Traumatic

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[53] Waters began working on "Your Possible Pasts" for *The Wall*, but discarded it from that earlier album and came back to it for *The Final Cut*.

[54] Curiously, when Waters speaks in interviews about the traumas he experienced, he communicates a fairly detailed traumatic narrative. A recent example is in the 2015 performance documentary *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall*, in which Waters travels to a memorial in Monte Casino, Italy, where his father's name is included amongst other fallen World War II soldiers. In one scene, Waters describes in very precise detail to a bartender the mission in Anzio where his father died: the historical context, the battle plans, and the German Army's offensive strike, and how that affected his father's troop and led to his father's death. When setting these memories to music, however, the song includes disruptive pauses of the narrative process to stop the storytelling experience from becoming a reliving of the actual event through the fuller sensory experience available through the combination of story-telling in the lyrics and mimetic sound effects in the music.

[55] Blake, *Pigs*, 261.

narrative can be both disrupted and *disruptive*. This chapter has thus far approached traumatic

narrative as a curative mechanism, explaining how the process can be difficult, often resulting in

disjointed, interrupted, or half-told retellings of the trauma. Another manifestation of traumatic

narrative is that of involuntary retelling and the unsettling nature of past trauma reinserting itself

into daily life unbidden. Throughout both the album and film versions of *The Wall,* references to

the trauma of father's death burst forth, disturbing other narratives, and this is yet another way in

which this work reflects the lived experience of traumatic memory.

Trauma survivors often experience irrepressible, vivid memories of the initial traumatic

event: Some of the clinical symptoms for survivors are uncontrollable flashbacks, hallucinations,

or nightmares of the trauma.[56] As Herman describes in her study on trauma,

> traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present. They cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts . . . The traumatic moments becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep.[57]

In these situations, the narrative becomes an impediment: The persistence of the traumatic

memory injecting itself into everyday thought processes creates a breach in experiencing time in

its normally perceived chronological form. Herman describes the disjointed, often paralyzed

sense of time that trauma patients experience, stating, "It is as if time stops at the moment of

trauma . . . Trauma arrests the course of normal development by its repetitive intrusion into the

survivor's life."[58] Caruth also describes the phenomenon of unknowing at the moment of

trauma that remains with the victim throughout their experience: " . . . trauma is not locatable in

the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very

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[56] Caruth describes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena." Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 57-58.
[57] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 37.
[58] Ibid.

unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on."[59] Here, Caruth speaks of someone who directly experienced a trauma, but the connection between trauma and unknowablity also extends to those who missed the trauma but claim citizenship to it, such as Waters missing the moment of his father's death and then revisiting it in *The Wall*.

The concept of not knowing, of missing a big traumatic event that still shakes the foundations of one's life to the point that the missing in and of itself becomes a trauma due to one's claiming of the event, is an aspect of trauma studies Cathy Caruth details in *Unclaimed Experiences*. In her analysis of *Hiroshima mon amour*—a 1959 film detailing a conversation between a Japanese man and a French woman about their individual traumatic memories of World War II—Caruth enlightens the reader to the trauma of missing, of unknowing: "The Japanese man has, himself, missed the catastrophe at Hiroshima . . . Through its very missing, his story, like hers [the French woman], bears the impact of a trauma."[60] Caruth describes the central problem of the Japanese man in *Hiroshima mon amour* as "the impossibility of confrontation with his own past."[61] In *The Wall*, Waters similarly explores the unknowable nature of a traumatic event that he did not witness but is strongly connected to nonetheless. The death of a loved one during war is a loss that many of Waters' generation had to face. As Waters

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[59] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 4. Caruth returns to the concept of the unknowable face of trauma, writing: "Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness. The repetitions of the traumatic event—which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing." Ibid., 91-92.

[60] Ibid., 40.

[61] Ibid., 40. Moreover, the Japanese man and his love interest are able to connect with one another *because* of their incomprehension of a traumatic event: "It is indeed the enigmatic language of untold stories—of experiences not yet completely grasped—that resonates, throughout the film . . . Their ability to speak and to listen in their passionate encounter does not rely, that is, on what they simply know of one another, but on what they do not fully know in their own traumatic pasts." Ibid., 56.

often attests, his father's death was particularly haunting to him because the exact circumstances

of Eric Waters' death were never discovered. Roger Waters was only five months old when his

father died, and he did not experience the palpability of his father's death: there was no body

found or returned to his family for burial, only a piece of paper informing his family of the fact

that Eric Waters was reported missing and presumed dead in February 1944. The sense of

missing the moment of his father's death looms large in Waters' public interviews: "I was very

angry. It took me years to come to terms with it. Because he was missing in action, presumed

killed, until quite recently I expected him to come home. The sacrifice of his life has been a great

gift and a great burden to me."[62] Whatever Waters' personal feelings may be regarding how this

loss impacted his life, what this interview sheds light on are the concepts behind Pink as a

character, since the interview occurred in conjunction with Waters' performance of *The Wall* in

2010. Pink lives with loss. He missed the moment of his father's death, and this viscerally

torments him throughout his adulthood as it is presented on the album and (more explicitly so) in

the film. He faces that same impossibility of confronting his own past that Caruth emphasizes

for the protagonist of *Hiroshima mon amour*.

Even when the traumatic event is missed, the sense of loss can be experienced as a

trauma, which includes the manifestation of interruptive memories. Caruth discusses belated

response to an unknowable trauma in her reading of Lacan's seminar on a father's recurring

nightmare of his child's death: "The force of the trauma is not the death alone, that is, but the

fact that, in his very attachment to the child, the father was unable to witness the child's dying as

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[62] Moreton, Cole. "Backstage with Roger Waters as he prepares for *The Wall* spectacular $60 million live show." *Daily Mail Online*. Nov. 7, 2010. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/moslive/article-1327045/Roger-Waters-Backstage-prepares-The-Wall-live-show.html.

it occurred."[63] Through his nightmares, the father in Lacan's analysis continually relives the

death of his child and his inability to respond to that death in order to save the child's life. The

father's nightmares are comparable to the unpredictable and irrepressible memories a trauma

survivor can experience after a traumatic event. Likewise, in *The Wall,* the father's death returns

to Pink as a continual intrusion of a specific memory, where Pink is repeatedly faced with his

own inability to respond to his father's death. In an interview about the making of the film *The

Wall*, Waters referred to the moment of Pink's father's death as the beginning of the story, while

also strongly tying it to his own biography:

> And so the start of the story. This is the front line of the Anzio bridgehead in February
> 1944 which is where my dad was killed. The film is, to a large extent, autobiographical.
> My father was a second lieutenant in the 'C' company of the 8th Battalion of the Royal
> Fusiliers. And they were just unlucky that they were on the front line when the Germans
> launched a big counter-attack which pushed the allies back into the sea, and they were all
> killed. I wrote the song 'When the Tigers Broke Free' specifically for the movie before
> there was a place to use it. The scene in the movie was written for the song. In the film
> we had the Royal Fusiliers and . . . recently I was reading a report, an army report, a
> Royal Fusilier's version of the battle of Anzio and the part that the played in it has just
> come to light. My mother had it all those years. As you know she died a few months ago
> and I'm starting to get all these papers and bits and pieces, and I'd never seen it. I
> haven't had time to read the whole thing in great detail but it's amazing that she kept it all
> those years. It's very moving to read.[64]

Although his father's story may be the beginning of the story in Waters' mind, the film does not

immediately begin with the father's death, but rather it is interspersed and retold throughout the

film, disrupting narrative time with this traumatic memory that consumes Pink (and, to the extent

that the work is autobiographical, the memory that consumes Waters). The references to World

War II in *The Wall* are not just nods to the father; they are an integral part of Pink's self-identity.

Pink experiences the absence of his father not just as a loss, but also as an actual traumatic

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[63] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 100. She goes on to explain: "*Awakening*, in Lacan's reading of the
dream, *is itself the site of a trauma,* the trauma of the necessity and impossibility of responding to
another's death."
[64] Scarfe, *Making*, 144.

encounter with his own death, and this trauma is relived multiple times in the album and film through the disruptive references to World War II.

Pink's citizenship to the trauma of his father's death is visually cemented in the film version of *The Wall* through the opening scenes. The film begins with the camera panning through an almost empty hotel hallway, save for the maid vacuuming outside the doorways. There is very soft music playing, almost inaudible: Vera Lynn's "The Little Boy That Santa Claus Forgot" (0:00:00-0:01:39).[65] Vera Lynn, as the voice of World War II, hauntingly begins the story. Soon, the screen is filled with scenes of screaming fans running into the concert venue are interspersed with shots of World War II soldiers running through the trenches, complete with the sound effects of gunfire, explosions, planes flying overhead, and the final scream of a British soldier before he is shown bleeding on the ground. In a *Rolling Stone* interview, Waters affirmed the conceptual connection he was pursuing in *The Wall*: "I wanted to make comparisons between rock & roll concerts and war. People at those big things seem to like being treated very badly, to have it so loud and distorted that it really hurts."[66] This is followed in the film by the song "The Thin Ice," which moves back and forth between scenes of Pink having a thrashing fit while swimming in a pool filled with blood and scenes of a wounded, bleeding World War II British

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[65] In the film, the song plays through the entire first verse before being overwhelmed by the noise of the vacuum cleaner: "Christmas comes but once a year for every girl and boy/ The laughter and the joy they find in each new toy/ I'll tell you of a little boy who lives across the way/ This little fella's Christmas is just another day." After a brief hiatus from the song as the opening credits roll during the first verse of "When The Tigers Broke Free," Lynn's song returns as the camera zooms in on Pink in his hotel room chair, and fades out in the middle of the third verse, right before the line "I'm so sorry for that laddie/ He hasn't got a daddy" (0:04:17-0:05:01). Although this lyric is not audible in the film, this is obviously the line that would resonate the most with Pink's character, and of course with Waters himself, who grew up in a single-parent household after his father died in the war. The theme of missing fathers is given agency only through the words of Waters. Lynn, voice of the British home front in World War II, is denied the chance to tell the tale of missing fathers; in comparison to Pink Floyd's heavy-handed musical treatment of the theme, Lynn's saccharine presentation falls short of communicating the gravity of the loss, and thus her voice is cut off before she can finish the narrative, and Waters takes musical command of the narrative.

[66] Waters in Brown, Mick and Kurt Loder. "Behind Pink Floyd's Wall*." Rolling Stone.* Sept. 16, 1982: 16.

soldier. This opening sets the stage for the continual mixture of past and present throughout the

rest of the film, and also establish the blending of identities between Pink (a fictional

representation of Waters) and the dead British soldier (representing Eric Waters). Continuously

switching between Pink's present and his father's past visually suggest that Pink is not just

thinking about his father's death, but he is trying to recreate a memory of it so that it becomes his

own memory: his father's death belongs to him, and it is his trauma to live over and over again

as a disruptive memory. Pink's terror at the sound of the interruptive cleaning lady and the

screaming fans resembles his father's terror at the loud noises of planes firing bullets into the line

of soldiers; His pain of bleeding out in the pool mirrors his father's pain at bleeding out in the

trenches. This equating of the father's experience to the son's culminates in the scene

accompanying the song "When the Tigers Broke Free": As the young Pink dresses in his father's

uniform in the film during the final two verses of "When the Tigers Broke Free," Pink is trying

to bridge the gap between understanding and the ultimate unknowable nature of his father's

death. Here, we actually *see* Pink claiming citizenship of his father's trauma.

In the film, World War II subtext appears in album songs that did not already have overt

references to the war to further highlight the traumatic death story, such as the scenes of soldiers

described above that occur during "In the Flesh?" and "The Thin Ice," as well as the scenes

during "Nobody Home," during which Pink imagines a younger version of himself wandering

through a World War II battlefield and hospital. When the two album songs that *are* full of overt

references to World War II—"Vera" and "Bring the Boys Back Home"—appear in the film, they

continue the pattern of reintroducing the tragedy of the father's death as a disruptive plot element

that models the repetitive nature of traumatic flashbacks. These two songs occur in the film

during the midst of adult Pink's mental breakdown and drug overdose after learning of his wife's

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infidelity. The accompanying scene moves from Pink staring blankly at a television to a young

Pink wandering around a train station as soldiers return home to the welcoming arms of family

members. Young Pink appears to be looking for someone, presumably his father, but does not

find him ("Vera"). Everyone gathered at the train station then joins together to sing "Bring the

Boys Back Home" as young Pink looks around at the crowd in disbelief. This then moves to

scenes of World War II soldiers idling around a battlefield, standing together in formation

singing, and walking across a field into a sunset, and then ends with young Pink walking alone at

the now deserted train station. These scenes make the impact of loss quite obvious for the

viewer: in the midst of a myriad of other personal tragedies, the father's death in World War II

takes center stage for Pink.

Even without all of these World War II visual cues that the filmed version of *The Wall*

provides, the father's death still commands a strong presence on the 1979 album. Pink is

haunted by the musical presence of the ungraspable traumatic event through the highly

recognizable "Brick in the Wall" motive, which occurs each time a new trauma introduces itself

to the story. The motive appears when Pink learns during his childhood about his father's death

in "Another Brick in the Wall, Part 1"; when Pink is subjected to harassment at school during

"Another Brick in the Wall, Part 2"; when he discovers his wife is cheating on him, driving him

to contemplate suicide in "Another Brick in the Wall, Part 3"; when he overdoses on drugs in

"Hey You"; when he is in the midst of sending people to their deaths as he imagines himself as a

cruel dictator in "Waiting for the Worms"; and when his fascist fantasy culminates in his

horrifying trial of self-condemnation during "The Trial." While the most memorable occurrence

of the Brick in the Wall motive is the up-tempo, drum set-driven "Another Brick in the Wall,

Part 2," the contemplative ambience of "Part 1" establishes the foundation of Pink's wall on the

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death of his father: "Daddy's flown across the ocean/ leaving just a memory"(See Example 4.4).

As music writer Philip Rose points out in his book *Which One's Pink?*, this loss provides

material for not just one, but multiple bricks for Pink's mental wall: "Daddy what'd you leave

behind for me?/ All in all it was just a brick in the wall/ All in all it was all just *bricks* in the

wall."[67] Each time the repetitive theme inserts itself into the framework of the album, it acts as a

reminder of the traumas Pink has endured, beginning with his father's death.

Example 4.4.: First iteration of "Brick in the Wall" theme in "Another Brick in the Wall (Part 1)"

Never being one to be silent about this part of his autobiography, Waters revisits the

personal trauma of his father's death in other ways so that this aspect of the story is not confined

to the ever-morphing "Brick in the Wall" motive. The reiterations of this death story are

accomplished by the inclusion of two tracks on the original album that opaquely allude to his

father's death through cultural references to World War II, "Vera" and "Bring the Boys Back

Home." The placement of the tracks "Vera" and "Bring the Boys Back Home" is interesting in

terms of the plot's progression. These two songs are in the middle of the first side of the second

record, after the songs "Hey You," "Is There Anybody Out There?" "Nobody Home," and before

"Comfortably Numb" (See Table 4.3). In the storyline, this places the two World War II

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[67] Rose, Phil. *Which One's Pink?: An Analysis of the Concept Albums of Roger Waters and Pink Floyd.* Burlington, Ontario: Collector's Guide Publishing, 1998: 91-92.

flashbacks in the midst of his drug overdose, self-mutilation, and suicide attempt. Instead of telling the tale of his father's death during his childhood, instead of placing these songs on the first record where they chronologically belong in terms of the storyline, they pop up in the middle of his adult life crisis.[68] By placing "Vera" and "Bring the Boys Back Home" in the same time frame as Pink's own life-threatening circumstances, his father's death is conflated with his own attempts at achieving death. This hurt escapes the bounds of sequential order, and this begins the deluge of memories that present themselves concomitantly in "The Trial."

Side One	Side Three
"In the Flesh?"	"Hey You"
"The Thin Ice"	"Is There Anybody Out There?"
"Another Brick in the Wall (Part I)"	"Nobody Home"
"The Happiest Days of Our Lives"	**"Vera"**
"Another Brick in the Wall (Part II)"	**"Bring the Boys Back Home"**
"Mother"	"Comfortably Numb"

Side Two	Side Four
"Goodbye Blue Sky"	"The Show Must Go On"
"Empty Spaces"	"In the Flesh"
"Young Lust"	"Run Like Hell"
"One of My Turns"	"Waiting for the Worms"
"Don't Leave Me Now"	"Stop"
"Another Brick in the Wall (Part III)"	"The Trial"
"Goodbye Cruel World"	"Outside the Wall"

Table 4.3: Track Listing for *The Wall* (1979)

The juxtaposition of present and past is striking on this album between the tracks "Nobody Home" and "Vera": "Nobody Home" lyrically establishes strong markers of the present, but then "Vera" quickly drags the listener into the past. "Nobody Home" is firmly grounded in a postwar setting through lyrical mention of specific trends, including a "Hendrix perm" hairstyle, a "satin

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[68] This stands in contrast to Waters' retelling of the Blitz experience through "Goodbye Blue Sky," which demonstrates some amount of chronological control, despite the disrupted nature of the account. Since "Goodbye Blue Sky" is toward the beginning of the album, a part during which Pink's childhood is recounted, the placement of "Goodbye Blue Sky" makes chronological sense.

shirt," and "Gohills boots." In the final two lines ("I've got a pair of Gohills boots/ And I got

fading roots"), the sound devolves into television noises again as the album moves to the next

track, "Vera." To the listener's ear, it is as if Pink has trailed off in his thoughts, his checklist

interrupted by the jarring television noises of machine guns, a crashing plane, and an

authoritatively boasting, yet matter-of-fact male voice stating "Over forty-seven German planes

were destroyed with the loss of only fifteen of our own aircraft," working as a lynchpin to subtly

bring inherited memories of World War II to life.

In conjunction with their sequentially disconnected appearance on the album, "Vera" and

"Bring the Boys Back Home" invoke the trauma of the loss of Pink's father through musical

means that further the sense of a disruptive, interruptive memory. In "Vera," Waters directly

confronts the myth of World War II by casting doubt upon the promises of Vera Lynn, whose

performance of the song, "We'll Meet Again," became the anthem of the British home front

during the war.[69] Christina Baade, who has written much on this British chanteuse, states that

Vera Lynn "embodies nostalgic constructions of World War II as a good war."[70] Waters directly

challenges this nostalgia in "Vera," and strongly links the failure of this nostalgic construction to

his father's death. Waters' loud, yet weak and wavering voice opens the song through pleading,

"Does anybody here remember Vera Lynn?" Waters sings a rising octave of D4 to D5 over a G

in the bass, creating an open fifth that could easily be mistaken for major, until the

accompanying acoustic guitar seals the minor key with E minor chords as Waters sings the name,

"Vera Lynn." The introduction of the E minor as Waters' melody falls pulls the affect of the

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[69] In a recorded interview following the 2015 performance documentary *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall*, Waters responds with "Vera" when answering what his favorite song on *The Wall* is. This bit of fan trivia serves to once again highlight the personal importance of the World War II references in *The Wall* for Waters.

[70] Baade, Christina. "'Sincerely Yours, Vera Lynn:' Performing Class, Sentiment, and Femininity in 'The People's War.'" *Atlantis*. Vol. 30, no. 2 (2006): 36.

song downward from the rising hope of the octave, implying that these memories are not fond ones, and at best they are bittersweet.

Pink Floyd and their production team further chip away at the nostalgic veneer of the idea of Vera Lynn by invoking aspects of her vocal trademark. Baade emphasizes the importance of Lynn's proximity to the microphone as a key part of her signature sound, so that even when listened to through the radio, she seemed to be intimately crooning directly into the listener's ear.[71] In "Vera," where Roger Waters' lyrics heavily criticize the deceitfully saccharine message of "We'll Meet Again," there is an added microphone feedback sound effect in between the lyrics "Remember how she said that" and "We'd meet again some sunny day" (ca. 0:40). These lyrics are a direct quote from Lynn's iconic "We'll Meet Again." The screech of the audio feedback destroys the illusion of proximity, calling attention to the microphone and amplifier system required to create audio feedback noise. Meeting again "some sunny day" is not a personal message from a cherished friend, but a mass-produced sound reaching wide audiences through amplification. The screech acts as a rude interruption to the memory of the singer who rallied so many together through her microphone during World War II, creating a sonic imperfection in her message. It is a very brief moment, but this fascinating detail adds another sonic level of nuance to Waters' criticism. The song is overtly about Vera Lynn, but by emphasizing an affect of hopelessness in the song, Waters is pointing to Pink's (and his own) loss, and how his father did not return to him "some sunny day." Furthermore, this ode to the loss of innocence seemingly comes out of nowhere following the banality of the listing in "Nobody Home," mimicking the persistent recurrence of traumatic memories in survivors. Pink, as a character, is still trying to find answers to why his father never came home.

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[71] Baade, Christina. "The Forgotten World War II Backlash Against Vera Lynn." In The Conversation: US Pilot. June 3, 2014. http://theconversation.com/the-forgotten-world-war-ii-backlash-against-vera-lynn-27305.

The song also invites the listener into the traumatic exploration of the personal impact of World War II: By asking if anybody remembers Vera Lynn, Waters engages the listener with a cultural reference of their collective memory.[72] Many listeners at the time would have been familiar with the song since it had become a signifier of the war itself and referenced in popular culture (such as in the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb,* an ode to postwar anxieties). The question itself is an act of disruption upon the listener: would the listener be thinking of Vera Lynn, were it not for Waters' recollection? Probably not, but Waters brings this to the forefront of the listener's mind, and the tragic way in which Waters intones her name subverts her iconic image as the British military sweetheart, and instead generates a sense of loss. The memory of World War II inserts itself into the listener's cognizance, pulling the listener out of the present and back into the traumatic past of World War II that Vera Lynn symbolizes, and when listening through the album or watching the film, the listener experiences the disruption of this memory in Pink's stream of consciousness.[73]

As "Vera" closes, the album and film move directly into "Bring the Boys Back Home."[74] In "Bring the Boys Back Home," much as in "Vera," Waters takes an idea that would typically

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[72] Waters pointed to the ubiquitousness of Vera Lynn in a 1980 interview, stating, "if you were English, you would know who Vera Lynn was. Well, she's still alive. She still works, in fact, but in the war she was the force's sweetheart in England. All her songs are about the soldiers going away." Ladd, "Pink Floyd."

[73] The film's depiction of "Vera" strengthens the connection between "Vera" and the loss of a father figure in World War II. In the scene before "Vera," young Pink walks through a hospital until he happens upon contemporary Pink, and then it cuts to a scene of younger Pink meandering in World War II trenches, looking at piles of dead bodies. In his mental breakdown, adult Pink has become his younger self, seeking out answers to one of his big questions from childhood: where is his father? A brief moment of dialogue—one of the very few in the film—comes from Pink's television, which is playing *The Dam Busters,* a 1955 film about RAF operations to destroy German dams during World War II. This is followed by a scene of young Pink walking around a train station, where everyone else at the station greets soldiers coming off the train, but Pink cannot find the person he is seeking.

[74] In 1979, Waters once declared "Bring the Boys Back Home" was "the central song on the whole album" because it was about "not letting people go off and be killed in wars" and not getting so involved in the "jolly boys' game" that it overshadows family and friends. In other interviews, however, Waters has also pointed to emotional walls and the woes of fame as central, significant points in *The Wall.* The

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reinforce the glory and hope during wartime and turns it into sobering sounds of failure and despair. The song begins with a crescendoing, militaristic snare drum pattern, followed by a large mixed chorus belting out, "Bring the boys back home." The introduction of a full chorus is jarring, and almost sonically violent in its textural departure from the rest of the album.[75] The sheer volume of the choir is an interrupting jolt to the continuity of the album, which provides the listener with an imitation of the disruptive nature of the traumatic memory. Pink's contemplations have been forcefully overtaken by memories of the soldiers who died in the war. The adult chorus of "Bring the Boys Back Home" makes full use of every vocal range and harmonic power, with classically-trained sopranos overpowering the rest of the choir. A string orchestra and a group of woodwinds (including a particularly persistent piccolo) backs the choir, adding comically over-ornamented, swirling, ascending melodic support that ends in a high trill (e.g., 0:19-0:26). The brass are also overly bombastic, playing harmonically supportive long tones at full *fortissimo*. Both the volume of the track and the sheer number of musicians involved set this song apart from the surrounding songs on the album, making it sonically embody a disruptive interruption (particularly coming after the subdued nature of Waters' vocals in "Vera"). The song is on the threshold of sounding heroic, but the combination of orchestral and choral bombast with Waters' cutting vocals undermines the valor of the lyrics.

The chorus sings proudly, powerfully roaring out the lyrics, but in the album, this is juxtaposed with Waters' abrasive, almost sarcastic, voice tracked loudly over the chorus, adding desperation, a sound of futility that is the undoing the pride inherent in the large chorus'

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work, then, presents the listener with multiple overarching messages, among which is putting an end to the violence of war. Vance, "Friday Rock."

[75] Although a children's choir was used for "Another Brick in the Wall, Pt. 2," the children sang a fairly unaffected, mostly stepwise chant.

message.[76] Waters is also singing at the top of his tenor range (highest note C5, sustains B4), and in contrast to the choir, the timbre of his non-classically trained voice approximates screaming more than singing. Where the lyrics of "Bring the Boys Back Home" by themselves fail to communicate Waters' meaning, his hysterical, distraught vocal performance communicates pain. His last iteration of "bring the boys back home" ends with him singing a wavering B that turns into a descending, painful scream that exceeds the bounds of what Cizmic calls "linguistic narrativization" and moves into purely emotive, physical communication of pain.[77] The pain communicated in Waters' scream breaks down a wall between the mental unknowingness of traumatic experience and the bodily expression that communicates understanding of the physical impact of trauma. Waters (as Pink) begs for soldiers to be brought home from war, but the pain of knowing from life experience that many soldiers do not come home (e.g., Pink's and Waters' fathers) overwhelms the sung plea, and the ending scream turns the command of "bring the boys back home" into a moment of horrific recognition of loss.

"Bring the Boys Back Home" almost verges on comedic, with its ever-insistent IV-V-I harmonic structure repeated for every line. The levity is lost, however, when the overly obvious musical symbolism of the modulation from G major to the relative E minor on the final iteration of "Bring the boys back home," implies that the certainty of the command will only be answered

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[76] In the 1982 film, young Pink remains at the train station as all the families, happily reunited with their returning soldiers, join together in this triumphant song. Here, the actor who plays Pink as a young boy, Kevin McKeon, accomplishes the same work of casting doubt on the scene as Waters' tracked vocals do on the 1979 album. Young Pink looks around at everyone with an alarmed and incredulous look on his face, miming his utter disbelief at the world he is inhabiting.

[77] Cizmic writes, "[Author of *The Limits of Autobiography:Trauma and Testimony* Leigh] Gilmore herself suggests that the burden specifically on language can be lifted: she claims that what many people and artists alike seek is not strictly a linguistic narrativization of traumatic experience, but some form of public expression. Music can push the physical aspects of trauma and pain into a public forum on representation and performance without directly referencing the particular days, people, places, events that for some could be understood as a betrayal of the traumatic experience." Cizmic, *Performing Pain* (2004), 22.

by the wrong cadence: with that E minor, the song will not cadence in an affirmative G major,

just as we know from history that many of the boys sent off to war will not, in fact, be brought

home. Furthermore, although the chorus singing these harmonies feels humorously overblown,

the choral texture also strangely draws the listener into the community. As the song progresses,

the shattering weight of the voices of the choir surround the listener with a community of voices

articulating a traumatic memory of the deaths of thousands of soldiers. The choral texture acts as

a sonic embodiment of the concept of citizenship to a trauma: this hurt belongs not just to a solo

Pink (or to Waters), but also to a much larger group.

In the album, "Vera" and "Bring the Boys Back Home" interrupt the narrative of Pink's

adult life, dragging him back to a sense of loss during his childhood. It is in "When the Tigers

Broke Free," however, where Waters provides the most descriptive narrative of the personal

trauma of his father's death ("It was just before dawn/ One miserable morning in black'44/ . . .

And the Anzio bridgehead was held for the price of a few hundred ordinary lives."). Waters

wrote "When the Tigers Broke Free" for *The Wall* 1979 LP*,* but it was cut after the producers

deemed it to be too autobiographical. Waters, however, was adamant about the release of this

song and its connection to *The Wall,* and so the song was included in the 1982 film, issued as a

single prior to the film's debut, released as part of a promotion of Waters' performance of *The

Wall* live in Berlin in 1990, included on the 2001 compilation album of Pink Floyd's greatest

hits, and added as a remastered edition on the 2004 rerelease of Waters' *The Final Cut.* Despite

its deletion from the original album, "When the Tigers Broke Free" plays a large role in the film

and provides further instances for memories of the father's death to be disruptive to the

progression of Pink's story.

"When the Tigers Broke Free" becomes a structural element of the film: The unknowable nature of the father's death acts as a disruptive element in Pink's narrative as the song's verses are scattered throughout the recreation of his childhood memories. The first verse comes after the opening credits (there is a short scene outside Pink's hotel room before these credits) and the second and third verses return after fifteen minutes of other film material have passed. After the opening credits, the film cuts to a scene where a World War II soldier cleans and loads his standard issue Webley Revolver while a male chorus hums and a French horn plays what will eventually become the melody of "When the Tigers Broke Free." Then Waters' voice enters, and he sings the first verse of the three-verse song, setting the scene of his father's death ("just before dawn" in "black forty-four" holding back "enemy tanks" at the "Anzio bridgehead."). In the recording for the film, Waters performed the vocals very close to the microphone so the listener can hear every aspect of his enunciation, adding a very intimate effect to this personal narrative. The second and third verses of "When the Tigers Broke Free" are displaced from the first verse, and occur after "In the Flesh?" "The Thin Ice," and "Another Brick in the Wall." These verses are accompanied by scenes of a young boy going through his mother's dresser drawers, finding his father's military uniform, and a notice of death from King George, "signed with his own rubber stamp." Waters once again uses vocal cracks and near-screams to communicate the traumatic pain of trying to understand his father's death.

As the narrative progresses through the second and third verses, Waters lays out the rest of the father-son story, with the son finding the death notice in the second verse, and then detailing the death of his father, left abandoned in a field after a failed military operation in the third verse. Over the course of these two verses, Waters' voice becomes less controlled and more frantic, until it finally breaks giving a vocal rendering of the trauma in the last line of the

song, "And that's how the high command took my daddy from me," where "me" is more of a sobbing shout than a sung note. The song is accompanied by sonic markers of British military glory, including a bass drum thumping out a slow march tempo and a brass band and men's choir, all droning to arpeggiate a C major triad. Once again, however, Waters takes sonic signifiers of the supposed majesty of war, and then overlays that with his own contrasting voice, oozing with acrimony and breaking with sorrow. As Waters sings "When the Tigers Broke Free," he is telling Pink's father's (and his own father's) story, giving voice to the father's traumatic narrative while also making it Pink's own traumatic narrative ("and that's how the high command took my Daddy from me"), vocalizing both his father's pain and Pink's own pain. The intertwining of his father's pain with Pink's pain sonically embodies Pink claiming this trauma as his own, despite having missed it.

"Vera," "Bring the Boys Back Home," and "When the Tigers Broke Free" all work to combine Pink's narrative with his father's, where the act of missing the traumatic event of his father's death becomes an important feature of Pink's character. The references to his father's death inhabit and disrupt Pink's narrative to such a degree that his identity melds with that of his father through voicing pain. These narrative disruptions culminate with Pink overdosing and entering into his fascist fantasy, leaving behind both his own identity and his father's. As a way of responding to missing the moment of his father's death, Pink *becomes* the figure of destruction responsible for his father's death through this transformation into a Hitler-esque character.[78] In the following section, I explore this fascist fantasy further, but as a closing note on narrative disruption, let me return to Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*. In her

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[78] Once again shedding light on the autobiographical influences for the character Pink, Waters professed in the 2015 documentary *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall* that he experienced a recurring dream that he had murdered a man and felt incredibly guilty about it, and then one day he realized that the man he thought he had murdered was his father.

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discussion of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, she explains that the repetition of intrusive memories is extremely distressing for trauma survivors, and poses that the attempt to avoid these disruptions "too often results in a narrowing of consciousness, a withdrawal from engagement with others, and an impoverished life."[79] This is a particularly apt observation of trauma survivors to compare to the experience Pink Floyd depicts in their creation, since one of the key points of *The Wall* involves Pink's desire to withdraw from others (the lines "I don't need no arms around me/ . . . No don't think I'll need anything at all" from "Another Brick in the Wall, Part 3" deftly summarize that aspect). His own wall, the symbol of his own withdrawal, is built from the "bricks" of remembering and reliving his father's death.

Witnessing (in) *The Wall*

Traumatic narrative is not a one-way process: *The Wall* underlines the role of the listener as a witness to Pink's retelling, particularly through Pink's awareness of having an audience and through the incorporation of sonic references to the international trauma of the Holocaust during Pink's retelling, which draw upon the listener's shared sense of being a witness in a community addressing trauma. Psychiatrist Dori Laub argues that listening is an integral part of the transaction of the traumatic narrative, where the role of witness to the trauma survivor's story is key to the survivor's need to be heard.[80] Laub further describes this therapeutic exchange: "The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time."[81] Caruth refers to this need for traumatic narrative as "the imperative of speaking," where it is only through communication that the

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[79] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 42.
[80] Felman and Laub, *Testimony* 57.
[81] Ibid.

survivor can transform the nightmare of the trauma into an awakening for others.[82] Herman also

underscores the importance of the communicative process in her groundbreaking work in clinical

psychology, *Trauma and Recovery*. Being heard aids in re-establishing the trauma survivor's

connection to reality, which had been severed by the trauma:

> Sharing the traumatic experience with others is a precondition for the restitution of a
> sense of a meaningful world. In this process, the survivor seeks assistance not only from
> those closest to her but also from the wider community. The response of the community
> has a powerful influence on the ultimate resolution of the trauma.[83]

Although the drive of the traumatic retelling is deciphering its initial unknowable nature, the

imperative to understand it requires a communicative space in which that can happen.[84] *The*

Wall, as an album, film, and live performance, creates and functions within that communicative

space.

Caruth describes literature as means of traumatic narration, where literature provides an

outlet for the witness to mentally meet the trauma survivor at the moment of the traumatic

event's inception. She emphasizes the importance of the attempt at understanding trauma,

stating that in "a seeing and a listening from the site of trauma," although it resonates beyond

what can be known or understood, it is only "in the event of this incomprehension and in our

departure from sense and understanding that our own witnessing may indeed begin to take

place."[85] Similarly, music can act as a medium for communication to link the survivor's

retelling to the listener. Cizmic establishes that recordings and public performances provide a

forum for witnessing, for they "engage some of the redemptive, dialogic qualities that language

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[82] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience,* 108.
[83] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 70.
[84] Additionally, Laub reveals that if the retelling is not heard, it can result in the trauma survivor
experiencing the retelling as a disruptive *reliving* of the original trauma: "Moreover: if one talks about
the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return of the
trauma—a reexperiencing of the event itself." Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 67.
[85] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 56.

is said to possess: public communication that necessitates a listener."[86] As an attempt at understanding, a musical traumatic retelling can open up the possibility of a link between the survivor and the community, who otherwise would be separated from one another because of the break from the community that a trauma survivor experiences.

Whether communication takes place through talking or writing or musical performance, it is essential that there is a perceived audience for the narrator to re-form the break with community that he encountered because of the traumatic event. As troubled as Waters relationship to his audience was, his traumatic retelling necessitated a witness. By verifying the presence of the audience as listeners to Pink's testimony throughout the rock opera, Waters formed a community with the audience and validated *The Wall* as an expression of a traumatic retelling. In *The Wall,* the process of witnessing begins as a hostile challenge. The album opens with "In the Flesh?," and later, the song reprises as "In the Flesh," inaugurating Pink's fascist fantasy. Both tracks directly address the listener playing witness to Pink's narrative. The tracks both begin with the lyrics, "So *you* thought *you* might like to go to the show/ to feel the warm thrill of confusion and that space cadet glow." With these lyrics, Waters as Pink is calling attention to the listeners themselves, pointing out that he does indeed have an audience.[87] "In the Flesh?," as Pink's opening song, confronts the listener and challenges her expectations of him as a performer: "Is this not what you expected to see? If you want to find out what's behind these

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[86] Cizmic, *Performing Pain* (2004), 21-22. Cizmic also exposes the capability of music to extend beyond language into the realm of embodiment: "Because many of the experiences associated with trauma and pain have deeply embodied qualities, music is able to represent those aspects of suffering outside the bounds of language. Music essentially attempts to stretch across that epistemological, representational gap through its metaphorical ability to communicate about trauma and pain through an extraordinarily embodied medium." Ibid.

[87] The titles of the tracks "In the Flesh?" and "In the Flesh" reference Waters' historically troubled relationship with his audience. *In the Flesh* was Pink Floyd's 1977 North American tour to advertise their *Animals* album, during which Waters spat on the face of one of the audience members after becoming increasingly incensed throughout the tour by the relationship between the performers and the audience.

cold eyes, you'll just have to claw your way through this disguise." The inclusion of a question

mark in the song's title the first time it occurs is asking the same question as the lyrics: do you,

as a listener, really want to continue this journey to see who Pink really is? Pink's hostile

feelings toward the expectant audience of witnesses are mirrored in an act of sonic disruption in

a jarring shift of timbres and keys: The album opens with a very faint, simple melody played by

a clarinet and concertina (0:00-0:16), and this melody almost reaches its final cadence on C

Major, but is suddenly drowned out by a booming A in the lead guitar, the rest of the A major

chord filled out by the Hammond organ. After the struggle for the audience of keying into the

clarinet and concertina, the explosive A major comes off as an aggressive attack on the listener.

This initial enmity toward the listener mimics a trauma survivor's initial mistrust of a witness's

ability to listen and really understand what the survivor has to say.[88]

Part of the impetus for *The Wall* was for Waters to explore his broken relationship with

the audience, which he had experienced most markedly during the 1977 *In the Flesh* tour.

Waters used the communal process of traumatic testimony in *The Wall* as a way to reconnect

with his audience. Waters detailed his perception of his separation from the audience in a 1982

Rolling Stone interview: "They were no longer people; they had become *it*—a beast. I felt this

enormous barrier between them and what I was trying to do. And it had become almost

impossible to clamber over it . . . To actually wall yourself off from people is a very belligerent,

aggressive idea. But I liked doing *The Wall* live; I felt I was making more contact, because I was

expressing all these ideas about what I feel about."[89] Since its release in 1979, Waters has

continued to make *The Wall* a site for exploring loss and trauma, both for himself and for his

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[88] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 138. This mistrust stems from the isolation of the traumatic event itself, during which the survivor is detached from any sense of community or aide. Since there was no one there to help the survivor during the traumatic event, a trauma survivor will typically harbor deep-set feelings of doubt as to a listener's ability to be present during the retelling of the trauma.
[89] Waters in Brown and Loder. "Behind Pink," 14.

audience.[90] Music journalist John Lewis wrote about *The Wall'*s resilience with listeners over

the decades in his 2011 review, pointing out that Waters "starts with a single personal truth and

then universalizes it."[91] Part of its success stems from the ability of the audience to become a

part of a community united by loss. As a performer, Waters has expressed hopes that the

audience members map their own stories onto his story in *The Wall* as a shared experience of

different traumas:

> *The Wall* is part of my narrative, my story, but I think the basic themes resonate in other
> people. The idea that we, as individuals, generally find it necessary to avoid or deny the
> painful aspects of our experience, and in fact often use them as bricks in a wall behind
> which we may sometimes find shelter, but behind which we may just as easily become
> emotionally immured, is relatively simply stated and easy to grasp. It's one a lot of
> people grapple with themselves. They recognize it in their own lives.[92]

During the 2010-2013 tour, he provided a long list on his website of what the metaphorical

bricks in the wall can be for listeners, and he ended this lengthy litany by writing "Perhaps I

should stop now, before I alienate anybody."[93] The resultant affect of experiencing *The Wall*,

however, is not one of alienation, but one of community created out of an act of traumatic

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[90] During the 2010-2013 tour of *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall,* he extended the courtesy of space on his own wall—in a very literal sense—for audience members to provide their own small acts of connecting to *The Wall*'s story. Waters requested that audience members submit photos and stories of loved ones lost to acts of war, either as members of the military or as civilian casualties. He placed an open call on his website: "Fallen Loved Ones' is a request, from me, reaching out to ask you to provide a photograph and personal details of a 'Loved One' lost in war. Your 'Loved One's' pictures and details would be included, along with those of my father Eric, in my up coming show THE WALL, as an act of remembrance. The 'Fallen Loved One' does not have to have been a soldier. Civilian deaths are equally, if not more, harrowing. I make this request to you in light of my belief that many of these tragic losses of life are avoidable. I feel empathy with the families of all the victims and anger at 'THE POWERS THAT BE', who are responsible, in equal measure. Please join me in honouring our dead and protesting their loss." He then used these pictures and their epithets as projections onto the prop wall built on stage and as part of a gallery on his web site. "Fallen Loved Ones." Roger Waters. Accessed July 21, 2013, http://rogerwaters.com/fallen.php; "Fallen Loved Ones Gallery." Roger Waters. Accessed July 21, 2013, http://www.rogerwaters.com/gallery.
[91] Lewis, "Wall," 103.
[92] Waters in *The Wall Live*.
[93] "Fallen Loved Ones Gallery."

retelling and witnessing.[94]   Waters sought to create a work in which his audience developed a

sense of community out of the listening process by identifying with Pink's story.

   Waters' audience is the witness, a witness who, for the narrative to become testimony,

must identify with Pink's story. In a review of Pink Floyd's live performance of *The Wall* in

London during June 1981, music journalist Mark Cooper observed that audience members

"willingly enjoy" the presented narrative, specifically because "it is their own."[95] As Herman

points out, the role of the listener to a traumatic retelling is not a passive one, but one that solicits

identifying with the speaker:

> . . . the listener to trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic
> event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself. The
> relation of the victim to the event of the trauma, therefore, impacts on the relation of the
> listener to it, and the latter comes to feel the bewilderment, injury, confusion, dread and
> conflicts that the trauma victim feels. . . . The listener has to feel the victim's victories,
> defeats, silences, know them from within, so that they can assume the form of
> testimony.[96]

To make a community of witnesses out of the listeners who experience the album, the concert, or

the film, Waters continually straddles the line between collective and individual identity in *The*

Wall, where his personal trauma collides with national and international trauma. His experience

is meshed into the experiences of the community of listeners, turning the listening process into

an act of witnessing.

   It is this appeal to collective identity through individual testimony that, in part, accounts

for the commercial success of *The Wall*. Although the album was denounced by some music

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[94] Discussing the break between survivor and community, Herman also writes: "Traumatic events destroy
the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense
of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of a group
provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic
experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes;
the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the group exalts her. Trauma
dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity." Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 214
[95] Cooper, Mark. "Pink Floyd: Earls Court London." Concert review. *Record Mirror*. June 20, 1981.
[96] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 57-58.

critics as being too overbearing with its storyline (with one journalist maligning that "Its 'point' is

. . . unavoidably understandable"), *The Wall* spent several weeks in the top spot of sales charts

globally, and over the decades it has been certified platinum several times.[97] As one reviewer

pointed out, "*The Wall*'s universality of theme is exactly what's keeping it on top of the

charts."[98] Many critics initially missed the appeal of this theme, baffled by the strange

relationship between the band and the audience during performances: one writer for the British

magazine *New Musical Express* observed, "A MORE bemusing exercise in rock theatre could

never be conceived. . . . Waters himself appeared to wallow gleefully in his open contempt for

the audience that the group have gathered over the years. The audience, in turn, roared their

approval at all the stock nonsense . . ."[99] As *The Wall* remained in the popular imagination over

the years, audience identification with Waters' story became increasingly apparent to him.

Waters boasted of fans' reactions in 1990: "I get letters about *The Wall* too — I'm not saying the

mailbag's bursting with them — but from people it's meant a lot to, helped them free their

feelings. It's given comfort. So the pay-off from having expressed myself before my peers and

torn down my wall, if only to a limited extent, the pay-off is… good."[100] Thirty years after the

album's initial release, Waters continued to point to his understanding of the audience's

relationship to *The Wall* as an integral part of the work:

> . . . a lot of the other songs [from *The Wall*], I have realized, have a much wider political
> meaning than I understood at the time. . . . Since then I've realized that somehow the
> piece is not about little Roger losing his father in the Second World War; it's more
> universal than that. It's about all the children that lose their fathers and continue to lose
> their fathers because those of us who have the power are still almost entirely devoted to
> the idea that our only responsibility is to maximize the bottom line and make profits.[101]

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[97] Penman, Ian. "Pink Floyd: *The Wall*." Album review. *New Musical Express*. December 1, 1979.
[98] DiMartino, Dave. "Pink Floyd: Live and All Pink on the Inside." Concert review. *Creem*. June, 1980.
[99] Kent, Nick. "Pink Floyd: *The Wall*, Earls Court, London." Concert review. *New Musical Express*.
August 16, 1980.
[100] Sutcliffe, Pete. "Roger Waters: *The Wall* in Berlin." *Q.* September, 1990.
[101] McKinley Jr., James C. "The Wall Goes On, and Grows Even Longer." *New York Times*. July 5, 2012.

With this realization about audience members relating to some of the larger themes of his work, Waters began directly appealing to his audience to share their stories as part of his own narrative for his performances of Pink Floyd's *The Wall* in 2010 through 2013. As a *New York Times* concert reviewer noted, "During intermission the screen showed the faces and stories of men and women killed in wars and terrorist acts, sent by request to Mr. Waters's Web site. Over the decades Mr. Waters has realized that his own miserable moments were utterly dwarfed by the sorrows of countless victims of violence."[102]

Sociologist Arthur Neal describes the community surrounding a retelling of a collective trauma, writing that a traumatic retelling "shared collectively and frequently has a cohesive effect as individuals gather in small and intimate groups to reflect on the tragedy and its consequences. Personal feelings of sadness, fear, and anger are confirmed as appropriate when similar emotions are expressed by others."[103] Neal further writes of national traumas that they become parts of the social heritage that multiple groups of people look to as a site of reflection on the human condition in general.[104] Through connecting the story he developed in *The Wall* to the stories audience members submitted, Waters was gathering reflections on all manner of tragedies for his audience to ponder. On a more focused level, *The Wall* itself—without the addition of the audience stories in the 2010-2013 performances—gathers a group to focus on the tragedy of the Holocaust. Enveloping Pink's (and Waters') personal trauma of the death of his

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[102] Pareles, John. "Same Words, Different 'Wall.'" Concert review. *New York Times*. October 6, 2010.
[103] Neal, *National Trauma*, 4.
[104] Neal explains, "The traumas of the past become ingrained in collective memories and provide reference points to draw upon when the need arises. Hearing or reading about an event does not have the same implications as experiencing an event directly. However, as parts of the social heritage, events from the past become selectively embedded in collective memories. For example, following the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., an extraordinary number of people came. . . . The people came because of the importance of drawing upon the traumas of the past for reflections on the human condition. . . . In reflections on the [H]olocaust it becomes clear that the range of worlds that humans are capable of creating is very vast indeed." Ibid., 6-7.

father in warfare and his experiences of the national trauma of the Blitz is another horrifying event of the twentieth century, the international trauma of World War II itself, and very specifically, the Holocaust. It is in Waters' exploration of the Holocaust as a site for reflection on the human condition in *The Wall* that he draws on the idea of citizenship to an international trauma and of a community of witnesses to a shared loss to highlight the act of witnessing to a traumatic retelling.

Through the appropriation of the imagery, language, and sounds of the Holocaust in Pink's fascist fantasy throughout the last quarter of *The Wall,* Pink Floyd sonically recreate some of the terrors of World War II, particularly the international trauma of the eugenic cleansing of the Holocaust, adding another sensory element to their act of witnessing, furthering the listener's engagement with the narrative process. By doing so, the band draws upon the collective memories many members of the audience have as citizens to an international trauma. Pink Floyd's references to the Holocaust and World War II Germany through Pink's fascist fantasy are ones that many listeners, both in 1979 and today, would recognize and associate with collective memories that they inherited as stories of World War II and the horrors of the Holocaust continued to be passed down from generation to generation. The listeners, then, play the role of witness to Pink's personal trauma, as well as the role of a collective group of witnesses to a shared trauma. Pink's fantasy becomes a site for an act of remembrance and meditation upon Pink's personal condition, the modern British condition, as well as the global postwar human condition. Pink Floyd build the sensory experience that inhabits World War II through multiple sound effects throughout the album and visual cues in the film and live performance. The first instance of this is during "In the Flesh?," which ends with the recreation of sounds of a single-engine, propeller-driven aircraft zooming by, sounding as if it is diving

right over the listener's head (3:02-3:14), once again referencing the dated sounds of older technology to place the listener in a sonically specific World War II setting. Waters purported to have "fantasized about dropping bombs on his crowd," and he nearly achieved this in the live shows with the prop plane crash, pyrotechnics, and sounds of gunfire.[105]

It is during Pink's fascist fantasy, however, where the World War II soundscape comes to full fruition. During "In the Flesh" and "Waiting for the Worms," Pink assumes the form of the enemy who destroyed his father, and re-imagines himself as a Hitler-esque commander, and in the film completes the look with a Neo-Nazi buzz cut, marching followers, and a crossed-arm hand signal that imitates the style of the Heil-Hitler salute, which audience members of the live show are encouraged to copy. The film introduces Pink's new symbol, a pair of crossed hammers, the angular geometric visuals of which mimic the German military's use of the swastika during WWII. In "Waiting for the Worms," Waters begins by counting off in German over a megaphone "*Eins, zwei, drei*" over a steady sound of marching feet. This combination of German language and the sound of marching feet immediately brings to most listeners' minds images of marching Nazi soldiers, drawing his audience into the sonic world of World War II. This world suddenly becomes seductive as the song moves into a sweet-sounding harmony of a fourth (D/G) with the lower voice ascending by step into a third (E/G), while Gilmour adds a doo-wop inspired melody. Gilmour gently sings "sitting in a bunker here behind my wall," and this line once again points to militaristic imagery, as the Wall, the mentally secluded space Pink has created in his mind, also becomes a bunker, a military structure built, usually below ground, for defense against attacks from above. The song is backed by Mason's steady, thumping bass drum on every beat in duple meter, imitating the rhythm of marching feet from the beginning of the song.

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[105] Lewis, "Wall," 100.

At 1:19, the listener hears the screech of a megaphone turning on, followed by Waters'

voice over the megaphone: "We're waiting to convene at 1:16 outside Brixton Town Hall where

we will be going to . . ." His commands trail off as Gilmour and the back-up vocalists chant

"waiting" on a desolate A minor chord, followed by Waters' nasally, megaphone-enhanced voice

taking over with a litany of events for which he is waiting. The lyrics turn from generalized

violence to specific references to the Holocaust and Heinrich Himmler's 1942 "final solution to

the Jewish question" through the use of gas chambers to annihilate large groups of people the

Nazi party deemed undesirable: "Waiting for the final solution/ To strengthen the strain/ Waiting

to turn on the showers/ And fire up the ovens/ Waiting for the queens and the coons/ and the reds

and the Jews." The marching and the megaphone sounds create a sonic reenactment of Nazi

Germany. The sound of the megaphone is particularly iconic in the twentieth-century Western

European history, for, as music theorist Raymond Murray Schaffer points out: "The loudspeaker

was also invented by an imperialist, for it responded to the desire to dominate others with one's

own sound. . . . 'We should not have conquered Germany without . . . the loudspeaker,' wrote

Hitler in 1938."[106] As Waters barks out orders over the megaphone, he is purposefully imitating

an iconic sound of Nazi Germany, and in a totalitarian fashion, assuming even more sonic

control over the listener and creating a specific sonic world that immerses the listener in a

fantasy built on the memory of a traumatic moment in world history. Waters uses the history of

World War II to draw a comparison to Britain's own traumatic colonial history. After Gilmour's

soothing voice (2:11-2:47) asks "would you like to see Britannia rule again" and "would you like

to send our colored cousins home again," furthering the Final Solution allusions, but this time

with Great Britain as the instigator, alluding to the power Britain once wielded over the globe

during the Victorian Era. Waters returns with his megaphone voice, shouting out orders for over

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[106] Schaffer, Raymond Murray. *The Tuning of Our World.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977: 91.

a minute (2:52-3:54). Meanwhile, the accompanying guitar solo grows in a slow crescendo of

the Brick in the Wall theme as a crowd chants, "Hammer," repeatedly in the background, getting

louder and louder until the song finally cuts out. In the live performances, the audience plays the

role of the crowd shouting "Hammer" repeatedly while making the hammer signal with their

arms, as Pink's audience does in the film. This is another nod to the presence of the audience,

the presence of the witness, to Pink's narrative as he plays out his dictator fantasy.

Although *The Wall* ostensibly explores the division between the performer and the

audience, the audience is in the position of acting as witness to a traumatic retelling, a sonic and

musical retelling that demands the listeners place themselves within a community that can

identify with Pink's (and Waters') story. Literary researcher Zeno Ackermann decried *The Wall*

as embodying the death of rock music stating, "Pink Floyd invoked and ritualistically destroyed

the myth of the socially transformative power of rock. Ten years after it had precariously

climaxed in the United States with the 1969 Woodstock festival, the conception of the rock

performance as a transformative ritual could not be sustained any longer."[107] He makes an

excellent argument for how *The Wall* differs in character from other large rock concert

experiences. I contend, however, that this rock opera *is* a socially transformative musical

experience, but one that is atypical of traditional rock shows as a result of its focus on trauma by

claiming trauma, retelling trauma, and playing witness to trauma through the act of narrative.

Ackermann asserts that the transformation inherent in a rock music performance relies on a set of

social and political assumptions—mainly placed in opposition to capitalism, stemming from folk

music, a key part of rock music's many roots—that bring the performer and audience together in

an act of transcendence, verging on salvation. He observes that *The Wall* does not achieve this

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[107] Ackermann, Zeno. "Rocking the Culture Industry/Performing Breakdown: Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and
the Termination of the Postwar Era." *Popular Music and Society*. Vol. 35, no. 1 (2012): 1-2.

social transcendence because the show itself highlights the distance between performer and audience, glaringly emphasizing the intrinsic capitalistic nature of a rock performance, where the show is a product to be consumed by the audience.[108] Although these points are true, this focus on being unable to transcend capitalism does not preclude all acts of social and political transformation in *The Wall*. Ackermann is correct in noting that the remaining affect for the audience after *The Wall* is different from other rock concerts: Listeners are not left with an easy take-away message about the power of music or peace and love. This does not mean, however, it was not transformative and that it did not create a community. Instead of enjoining the audience to come together under the auspices of peace and love—a trope of major 1960's musical events that Ackermann places in ideological contrast to the capitalism of the music business—Pink Floyd highlights emotional isolation and fear in *The Wall*, which reveals a very different universality of the human condition. By modeling the emotions of a trauma survivor, the work presents the audience with a performative space that allows listeners to bear witness to a traumatic narrative, a process that can be very transformative.

Conclusion: "Outside the Wall" and Memorial History

The Wall stands as one of the bastions of rock history (to the literal extent that part of the live show stage set of *The Wall* makes up a massive display at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio). From a business perspective, *The Wall* has been an enormously financially successful work for Waters: It is a cash cow he continues to revisit for revenue from fans, including myself, who persist in buying the album, purchasing tickets to his live performances, and procuring movie theater tickets to view the 2015 documentary performance. There is, however, more to this work than pure spectacle or mass entertainment that accounts for its

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[108] Ibid., 3-7.

successful revivals over the decades. Part of its continued popularity can be attributed to the fact that *The Wall* is not a static work. It has developed over the years, and Waters continues to revisit the narrative, much as trauma survivors continue to revisit their own stories of a traumatic event in an effort to integrate an unknowable moment into their life.

With trauma, there is no clean resolution, no catharsis in which the event no longer has a place in a survivor's personal narrative. Instead, survivors continually revisit the story of the trauma as a way to reconcile the event with a break in memory. In their joint article for *The Arts and Psychotherapy*, music therapists Julie Sutton and Jos De Backer highlight the repetitive nature of traumatic memories: "Something compels the person to tell his or her story and to repeat it, creating a tension in the repetition that is in itself a compulsion to heal. Traumatic events always repeat in order to try to form a story and a coherent narrative with which to shape what cannot be assimilated or understood."[109] With the repetitions of *The Wall*—through consumers listening to the album or watching the film, or through Roger Waters' continued performance of the work in his live tours in 2010-2013, his creation of the 2015 performance documentary, and his upcoming collaboration with the Opéra de Montréal for an operatic version of *The Wall* in March 2017—the rock opera is an embodiment of repetitive traumatic memories presented as performance.

Herman explains in *Trauma and Recovery* that the narrative act, along with having a private dimension, has a public dimension as a testimony, and therefore becomes a political act.[110] The members of Pink Floyd, and Waters in particular, move the process of traumatic narrative into the public sphere through *The Wall* as an album, concert experience, and film. In the public sphere, this work takes on the dimension of what Shoshanna Felman calls "the

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[109] Sutton, Julie P. and Jos de Backer. "Music, Trauma and Silence: The State of the Art." *The Arts and Psychotherapy.* Vol. 36, no. 2 (April 2009): 76.
[110] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 181.

listening community."[111] This community gives significance to Waters' narration and also imposes its own significance onto the performance, whether that be in the context of postwar Britain like the accompanying tour in 1980 for original album's release, the context of Germany during the fall of the Berlin Wall for the 1990 Pink Floyd live performance, the context of Occupy Wall Street for the 2010-2013 Roger Waters live performances, or the context of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict (a connection Waters has been pushing in more recent interviews).[112]

In these contexts—as a testimony, as a political act, as a performance given to the public sphere—*The Wall* takes on a dimension beyond the traumatic events it imparts. In her 2014 article "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence, and Survival," Caruth asks, "in what way is the experience of trauma also the experience of an imperative to live? What is the nature of a life that continues beyond trauma?"[113] She also raises the question "What kind of witness is a creative act?"[114] When applied to Pink Floyd's work with *The Wall,* the questions go hand in hand. *The Wall* in itself is an artifact of "the nature of a life that continues beyond trauma," and it is also a creative act, a witness and act of remembrance. This is particularly apparent with "Outside the Wall," which Waters turned into a musical memento in the 2015 performance documentary *Roger Waters Presents Pink Floyd's The Wall*.

The 2015 film opens and closes with Waters converting the melody of the final song of the album, "Outside the Wall," into a "Taps"-like bugle call. At the beginning of the film, Waters places his trumpet in a leather carrying bag and then drives his Rolls Royce to a cemetery

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[111] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 41.

[112] Gallagher, Paul. "Roger Waters: Pink Floyd star on why his fellow musicians are terrified to speak out against Israel." *Independent.* February 19, 2016. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/roger-waters-pink-floyd-israel-boycott-ban-palestine-a6884971.html.

[113] Caruth, Cathy. "Parting Words: Trauma, Silence, and Survival." *intervalla: platform for intellectual exchange*. Vol. 2 (2014): 23.

[114] Ibid., 22.

where there is a headstone marking Eric Waters' bodiless grave. Roger Waters plays the melody of "Outside the Wall" on his trumpet as a personal funereal dirge. He later repeats this process at the film's close when he visits a memorial in Anzio, Italy—the site of the battle where his father was killed—for soldiers who died in World War II. Waters' musical elegy is a memento. Caruth writes of memorials and mementos in terms of "the possibility of witnessing and making history in creative acts of life."[115] In describing "creative acts of life," she relates an encounter she had with a teenager in Atlanta, Greg, whose best friend had been killed. The friend was buried in a shirt he had borrowed from Greg, which in hindsight, Greg turns into a gift to his friend, a memento: "[Greg] departs from his former self and turns the memento—and the language of the memento—into an act, not of a symbolic return or wish for possession, but of an ability to give the dead something that can never, now, be returned."[116] A melody can act in a similar way as a memento. In the documentary, Waters presents the tune of "Outside the Wall" to the dead (his father and the fellow soldiers who died at the Battle of Anzio). It is a one-way communication: the song cannot be returned, much like the teenager's t-shirt in Caruth's story. Waters—a musician who lives a life that has continued beyond the trauma of World War II— bestows the melody as an offering; it is twice imparted as a moment of memorial, and thus "Outside the Wall" becomes a "creative act of life." That this music from *The Wall* is shown in the context of a memorial service further points to the testimonial nature of this work as a whole.

"Outside the Wall," serves as a surprisingly gentle denouement after the explosive condemnations of "The Trial," but it also operates as a reflection upon the entirety of *The Wall*. The lyrics describe a gathering of people as the performers give their final act: "The bleeding hearts and the artists make their stand/ And when they've given you their all/ Some stagger and

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[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 27.

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fall/ After all it's not easy/ Banging your head against some bugger's wall." Indeed, *The Wall* is not an easy work, and the final song's depiction of people joining together with artists to metaphorically bang their heads against a wall is a nod toward the difficulty of the exercise of bearing witness to a traumatic retelling. Judith Herman relates that in the clinical history of trauma therapy, "The goal of recounting the trauma story is integration, not exorcism. In the process of reconstruction, the trauma story does undergo a transformation, but only in the sense of becoming more present and more real. The fundamental premise of the psychotherapeutic work is a belief in the restorative power of truth-telling."[117] The traumatic retelling in *The Wall* does not make the impact of trauma go away, but it does show a break in the silence through a sonic reconstruction of the traumatic narrative, making the past "more present and more real." It attempts to break the barrier between the incommunicable, unknowable aspects of trauma and understanding through narrative.

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[117] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 172-4, 181.

EPILOGUE

In the second track of Pink Floyd's *The Final Cut* (1983), Roger Waters sings, "They

flutter behind you, your possible pasts/ Some brightened and crazy, some frightened and lost."

These lyrics resonate with a conceptual arc in this dissertation: the selected works of these

British rock musicians demonstrate differing engagements with postwar pasts, some being

brightened by nostalgia and others being frightened by recollecting traumatic events. Taken

together, the preceding chapters begin to answer the question raised in the Introduction by Roger

Waters' haunting inquiry, "What happened to the post-war dream?" The postwar dream was

nebulous and chimerical—it was a dream, after all—so it served different purposes for those

whose lives were shaped by it. For the Beatles, experiences of the postwar dream manifested as

the basis of a nostalgic fantasy world in *Magical Mystery Tour*. In *Arthur (Or the Decline and

Fall of the British Empire)* the Kinks revealed the postwar dream to be a nostalgic veil over

twentieth-century British history, behind which lay starker realities. The Who demonstrated that

the optimism of the postwar dream belied a traumatized community denying the violent impact

of World War II. Finally, for Pink Floyd, the postwar dream dissipated in the light of developing

a traumatic narrative. Engaging with the past was no simple matter, but rather filled with

contradictions and ambivalences, leaving, as Waters elegantly observes in his lyrics, many

possibilities for how to remember the past.

On many counts, their generation was incredibly lucky. The musicians discussed in this

dissertation were born between 1940 and 1947, so for the most part they were spared from the

daily horrors of war. As children, they greatly benefited from the nation's newly-instituted

education and healthcare reforms. As young adults, the laser-focus on technological advances

benefited their careers and manifested within their recording studios as cutting-edge musical

experimentalism. They represented a generation of Britons who, as Prime Minister Harold

Macmillan exclaimed in 1957, "never had it so good."[1] Their improved standard of living was a

testament to the ability of the postwar dream to positively shape lived reality. While these

musicians were vibrant voices of their contemporary worlds, however, their lives and art remain

indelibly shaped by the cultural weight of the past. Being told they were lucky did not stop this

generation of Britons from experiencing the challenges of a crumbling economy or the

frustrations of a communal reaction to (or, in many cases, a denial of) a massively traumatic

event. As comparative literature scholar Marianna Torgovnick observes, "Wartime

consciousness … permeated the twentieth century."[2] The traumas of wartime informed the

possibilities of their futures.

This dissertation is distinctive for examining these musicians and their works through the

lens of the psychological legacy of World War II that they inherited as postwar British citizens.

Appraising the impact of World War II on the lives of these British rock musicians reveals the

persistent resonance of large-scale societal events. Indeed, these musicians were part of a

widespread cultural dialogue in the 1960s and 1970s across many art forms concerning the

continuing impact of World War II, including, among many other works, Benjamin Britten's

War Requiem (1962) in classical music; *Battle of Britain* (1969) and *A Bridge Too Far* (1977) in

film; and *Dad's Army* (1968-1977) and Monty Python's "RAF Banter" sketch (1974) in

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[1] MacMillan continued the optimistic speech, "You will see a state of prosperity such as we have never
had in my lifetime—nor indeed in the history of this country." "July 20, 1957: Britons 'have never had it
so good'," BBC, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/20/newsid_3728000/3728225.stm
[2] Marianna Torgovnick, *The War Complex: World War II in Our Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 2005), xi.

television. The contributions of popular musicians to this conversation have been previously overlooked due in part to the efficacy of the media treatment of these musicians as symbols of a new and modern Britain and in part to an American-centric reception of the works. Many U.S. critics and listeners in this era understood discourse on war as a commentary on the Vietnam War, which consumed the national consciousness in the United States. Although British involvement in Vietnam was a source of much debate at the time, the British military did not officially engage in combat. These British musicians were certainly concerned about the Vietnam War—for example, John Lennon led anti-war protests in the early 1970s—but the unique experience of World War II in Britain and its continued significance in the lives of these musicians should not be underestimated. While these World War II narratives are apparent in their works from the 1960s and 1970s, sensitivity to these narratives has further emerged through observations by these musicians. As they have grown older, artists like Paul McCartney, Ray Davies, Pete Townshend, and Roger Waters have remarked on the influence of World War II on their lives and music with increasing frequency in interviews over the last decade.

The connection these British rock musicians had to the past was intricate, perplexing, and, at times, troubling, and the affective responses to World War II these musicians communicated in their works are complicated, which is why the present study seeks to demonstrate various ways in which nostalgic and traumatic memory can be engaged to understand popular music. The chapter on the Beatles presented a new narrative for *Magical Mystery Tour*, showing how nostalgia may convey multiple expressions of identity. In contrast, the Kinks' *Arthur (Or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* revealed how the band uses the multivalent emotional nature of nostalgia to create critique. The chapter on the Who's *Tommy* is, to my knowledge, the first study in music on an initially denied trauma in the

narrative that, expressed through a process in which artists revisit the work and begin to confront the trauma, resembles the experience of survivors of traumatic events and their communities. Finally, the chapter on Pink Floyd's *The Wall* demonstrated how the combination of text and music can depict the mental process of trauma survivors coping with the event, particularly how traumatic narratives are constructed, disrupted, and shared. These musical works reveal that there are multiple ways of grappling with the complex human emotions involved with nostalgic or traumatic memories in their works.

Recognizing that there is no single way to invoke nostalgia in music will be important to bear in mind for musicological inquiry going forward, especially as the understanding of nostalgia continues to develop across different fields of study, including psychology, sociology, art history, and comparative literature. Indeed, the most recent studies in psychology demonstrate that nostalgia is still not entirely understood, both in terms of how individuals and collective social groups engage with nostalgia, and in terms of its precise definition. The states of these fields makes studying nostalgia more challenging and exciting, as advances in sociology and psychology may lead to revised understandings across disciplines that explore creativity and artistic expression. For that reason, it will be wise for music scholars to approach this subject from multiple perspectives, and with an exploratory attitude, to discover best how nostalgia is rendered in music.

Trauma, on the other hand, has come to be much more clearly understood in the past few decades, mostly due to advances in clinical studies of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Approaching traumatic narrative as something that can be denied or that is difficult to fully portray—as in *Tommy* and *The Wall*—should prove useful to scholars examining works that bear the impact of trauma as an affect. Future work will benefit as well by recognizing

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transgenerational trauma, where a traumatic event can influence the lives of those who experienced it and their descendants. Viewing the cultural output of a community through this broader historical lens of trauma remains an important project for the future. Perhaps, for instance, later studies will examine intergenerational reactions in the popular music of American millennials to the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Much work has already been done on the immediate impact of 9/11 on popular music (e.g., *Music in the Post-9/11 World* and *The Politics of Post-9/11 Music: Sound, Trauma, and the Music Industry in the Time of Terror*), but its broader impact across generations remains to be evaluated.[3] Similarly, it would be productive to examine the impact of the Vietnam War across several generations, or the impact of World War II on Japanese popular music from the 1940s to the present. A rich model for such research exists in African American studies, where works such as Ron Eyerman's *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and Formation of African American Identity* show how the trauma of slavery occupies collective memory across generations.[4]

The emotional approach to the past that the British musicians of the 1960s and 1970s undertook also deserves further study, especially since many of them have revisited these themes throughout their careers. McCartney's exploration of nostalgia spans the length of his solo output, and likely reveals much about expressions of identity. Ray Davies' shift from focusing on postwar British life in the first few decades of his career and then turning to the fantasy of postwar America in the last decade is intriguing in terms of the relationship between nation and nostalgia. Townshend has spent much of his later career revisiting issues of violence and trauma

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[3] Jonathan Ritter and J. Michael Daughtry, eds., *Music in the Post-9/11 World* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Joseph P. Fisher and Brian Flota, eds., *The Politics of Post-9/11 Music: Sound, Trauma, and the Music Industry in the Time of Terror* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
[4] Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). See also Richard Middleton, ""O Brother, Let's Go Down Home: Loss, Nostalgia, and the Blues," *Popular Music* 26, no.1 (2007): 47-64.

through two rock operas—*Tommy* and *Quadrophenia*—across multiple mediums (album, film, musical, and live performance). Roger Waters has mapped the story of *The Wall* onto multiple political movements over the years, and its recent premiere as a classical opera by Canadian composer Julien Bilodeau for the Opera de Montreal in March 2017 begs comparison about the ritual of witnessing a traumatic narrative in different genres.[5]

Examining these British rock musicians as members of a community dealing with the repercussions of World War II allows us to comprehend their works in a deeper context. Some of these artists turned away from addressing nostalgia and trauma in their works, while others continued to revisit these themes, but recognizing the presence of these past-centric affectual themes reveals new facets in understanding their music and its development. Although much about their work during this era has been interpreted as representing a break from their recent past—as evidenced by everything from their musical experimentalism in the studio to the then shockingly long length of their hair—the societal magnitude of the wartime past they rose out of proved impossible to escape. The works of these musicians show us that the space between the aggressive optimism of the postwar dream and their lived experience of postwar realities was an important site of artistic inspiration.

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[5] "Another Brick in the Wall-The Opera," Opera de Montreal (accessed January 4, 2017), http://www.operademontreal.com/en/shows/another-brick-in-the-wall.

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