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"TIN SOLDIERS AND NIXON COMING": MUSICAL FRAMING AND KENT STATE

Hayden Dingman

On May 4, 1970, National Guardsmen in Kent, Ohio killed four students and wounded nine others at an anti-war rally in what was later termed the Kent State "massacre." Kent State University was a hotbed of activity in the week prior to the shootings, with students upset by President Richard Nixon's April 30 announcement of the Vietnam War's expansion into Cambodia. The May 4 protest was the culmination of four days and nights of events, including riots in downtown Kent on May 1 and the burning of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) building on May 2. Kent's mayor, LeRoy Satrom, decided to appeal to Governor James Rhodes to call in the National Guard after the May 1 riot. On May 4, students decided to go forth with a planned rally at noon, though university officials distributed pamphlets warning of repercussions. The guard ordered the protesters to disperse, but students failed to heed this order. The guard marched on the students using bayonets and tear gas to clear the way. At approximately 12:24pm, for reasons still disputed, members of the guard wheeled around from their position at the top of Blanket Hill and began to fire into the crowd of students. While students originally believed the Guard was firing blanks, they quickly realized the shots were live ammunition. In thirteen seconds, the National Guardsmen fired 67 shots into the crowd, killing protesters Allison Krause and Jeffrey Miller, as well as hapless bystanders Sandra Scheuer and William Schroeder.

A curious thing happened, however, in the wake of this tragedy. While the usual journalistic pieces were published in the days and weeks after the shootings, musicians began writing and performing songs to chronicle the event nearly as quickly. Less than a week after the shootings a group of musicians, conducted by the famed Leopold Stokowski, held an instrumental concert at Carnegie Hall in memoriam to the May 4 victims. [1] Between songs, the performers gave speeches discussing how they felt about the event. One of the players said of the tragedy, "We're all dedicated musicians and we speak through our instruments." [2] This idea of speaking through music permeated the history of the Kent State shootings. Between 1970 and 1980, musicians released over fifteen songs with direct lyrical and
thematic references to Kent State. Through the tapestry woven by these songs, Kent State became an event remembered through music as well as prose. In fact, this paper will argue that the music released in the aftermath of the Kent State shootings was more important in "framing" this event in the minds of the American public than the many prose accounts that appeared over the same time period, and decisively impacted national memory of the tragedy.

There have been a number of written accounts about the Kent State shootings in the decades since, with James Michener publishing the first book-length account, *Kent State: What Happened and Why*, in 1971.[3] All of these accounts described and explained the immediate events of May 4 and the subsequent complex litigation through prose.[4] However, musicians also sought to capture the meaning of the event. Despite music's importance in modern American life, its role in the aftermath of the Kent State shootings remains heretofore unexplored.[5] In 1964, Jacques Barzun stated that, "music nowadays, whether we like it or not, is interwoven with the texture of our lives from morning till night. Music resounds for, with, and through everything."[6] His statement was never truer than at Kent State.

Musicians surrounding the Kent State event created alternative frameworks, or methods of analyzing the event. Frameworks serve as mental filters that aid in understanding new information and experiences, allowing for rapid processing of data.[7] Frameworks are typically utilized by those working in prose, such as journalists and professional scholars. However, events are occasionally more decisively framed through music than prose. Kent State is certainly one such event.

Before James Michener penned the first book on the Kent State shootings—before the reality of Kent State even set in for most of the country—Neil Young released arguably the most famous song about the event, titled simply "Ohio." Neil Young was already a familiar face on the music scene, though only twenty-four years old in 1970, having found initial success as part of Buffalo Springfield before moving on to play as a solo artist and member of the quartet Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.[8] Prior to the events at Kent State, Young wrote and played on a number of politically motivated songs. Buffalo Springfield's "For What It's Worth," a song that band mate Stephen Stills wrote about the Sunset Strip curfew riots in 1966, became famous as a general protest song after its release in 1967.[9] Additionally, Young wrote and recorded the political anthem "Southern Man," an indictment of Southern racism, in March—two months before the events at Kent State.[10] These early songs reflect the same leftist spirit Young imparted to "Ohio." When the Kent State shootings occurred, David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, and Neil
Young lived in the canyons North of Los Angeles. The four were riding the success of their latest album, Déjà vu, released earlier in the year. On break from touring, Crosby handed Young the May 15 edition of Life Magazine, which prominently featured photographs of the Kent State shootings and aftermath, hoping to spark a song. Young "looked at it, got out his guitar, and wrote the song right there...on the porch in the sunlight," Crosby recalled. Despite the fact that CSN&Y already had a single, "Teach Your Children," on the Top 40 charts at the time, the group entered Record Plant Studios in Hollywood on May 21—barely two weeks after the tragedy at Kent—and recorded the song live in only a few takes. As Bill Halverson, the engineer who presided over the session, later said, "They were bent on getting it right and were on a mission."

Lyrically, "Ohio" is sparse. The entire song is only ten lines long, but this conciseness and repetition enhances Young's message. From the first line, "Tin soldiers and Nixon coming," Young reframes the events at Kent State as a national issue instead of a local one. Ohio Governor James Rhodes mobilized the National Guard at Kent, but Young chose to speak out against then-President Richard Nixon. While Nixon undoubtedly disliked the student protesters, rumors of his involvement are tenuous at best. Even William Gordon, the author most predisposed to the idea of a conspiracy amongst the National Guardsmen, agrees that Nixon was probably not involved. Gordon believes the chain of command would have left too many loose ends, and that, "A president who could not spy on Democrats in the same city without getting caught probably was not capable of having choreographed a murderous confrontation between hundreds of soldiers and college students on a few days' notice." Nixon's phone archives also show he did not telephone anyone in Ohio until after the attack. However, Nixon was a bigger target and better emotional trigger than Rhodes. By attacking the president, Young implied that the events at Kent State could not only reoccur at any antiwar rally in America, but that Nixon was personally responsible for and condoned the attacks.

Young also manipulates point of view to affect perceptions of the song and add to its narrative fidelity, utilizing the first- and second-person to great effect. Through his use of the first-person in the line "We're finally on our own," Young presents himself as one of the myriad student protesters around the country. Young never stepped foot on the Kent State campus until many years after the shootings, but "Ohio" gives the impression that he too came under fire on May 4. By utilizing the first-person, Young
necessarily splits the country into those united with the protesters and those against, and he places himself firmly in the first group. 

A Gallup poll soon after the attacks showed that fifty-eight percent of respondents blamed the students, while only eleven percent blamed the guardsmen. Young reflected this anti-student sentiment in the line, "Should’ve been done long ago." Prior to the shootings, Nixon represented the protestors as "bums," and claimed a "silent majority" of Americans agreed with him. Judging by the Gallup poll, as well as the ensuing Hard Hat Riots and Jackson State College shootings, Nixon’s message appealed to a large number of people. There was an overwhelming feeling among Americans that the students, as J. Edgar Hoover put it, "got what they deserved," though two of those killed were not even taking part in the rally. One member of the so-called silent majority wrote to Sandra Scheuer’s mother sympathizing with her loss; however, the letter quickly turned nasty, arguing that Sandra was entirely to blame for her own death.

"Ohio" reached out to the silent majority, hoping to sway public opinion, or achieve "frame transformation," on a national scale. Young’s song already reflected the dominant interpretation found in the youth movement; he did not need to convince them of anything. Young liked the idea of "using music as a message and unifying generations and giving them a point of view." By asking the fifty-eight percent, "what if you knew her and found her dead on the ground?", Young challenges the perceived callousness of a society that indicts people for exercising their right to free speech. The song questions whether disapproval of the students’ ideals warrants "Four dead in Ohio"—the plaintive refrain with which David Crosby ends the song.

Atlantic Records rushed "Ohio" to release in June, 1970, taking advantage of the volatile national atmosphere and the social relevance of the song. Because of its politically charged lyrics and attack on Nixon, "Ohio" was banned or passed over by many of the then-dominant AM radio stations. The song still received heavy radio play on the underground FM radio stations located in many college towns and big cities, where the song quickly became a hit. However, the song in that context acted more as motivation for those who already agreed with Young’s message than as any sort of message or frame transformation for those who did not. The failure to secure AM radio play meant that those who might have had their existing framework challenged were largely denied access to the song from the beginning.

The song also met controversy among extreme leftists. There was a feeling that Young, as a semi-famous rock star, was too removed from the students' own frame of reference to see the truth of Kent State. Some leftist students thought, "rich hippies were making money off of something horrible and political that they didn't get."[35] The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) argued over whether or not Young was "a tool of the military industrial complex."[36] Young recognized the reason for their distaste, writing in the liner notes to Decade that, "It's still hard to believe I had to write this song. It's ironic that I capitalized on the death of these American students," and quoted in Shakeysaying, "I always felt funny making money off that ['Ohio']."[37] Young has said, looking back, he "would've used the money to give to the [victims'] families to cover expenses...but we didn't even think of that—it was in a completely different time, we weren't even thinking about the money we were gonna make from it."[38]

It is important not to blow scattered complaints out of proportion, however. Regardless of the song's loss of AM radio support and its occasionally negative reception on the left, many other students hailed the song as a generational anthem.[39] As Jerry Casale said, "We thought it was almost like what people promised digital reality and the internet afford today which is instant response... Nobody had ever done anything like that." "Ohio" became tied inextricably to popular framings of the Kent State event as the youth of the 1970s grew up. McDonough says, "In ten lines, Young captured the fear, frustration, and anger felt by youth across the country."[40] No matter how Young felt about making money off "Ohio" in retrospect, he still maintains that, "There's nothing I did before 'Ohio' that would be in the same category—and very little since."[41] The song reframed the events at Kent State, changing the controversy from whether the protestors were right or wrong to whether the government overstepped its authority.

While Neil Young began the process of framing the Kent State shootings musically, other musicians quickly elaborated on his work. Though unreleased until 1972 on the album Writer of Songs, Harvey Andrews wrote "Hey Sandy" in June, just a few weeks after Atlantic put out "Ohio."[42] Andrews claimed that at the time he was inspired by Phil Ochs and Tom Paxton, two folk revivalists who often wrote songs "dismissed by Bob Dylan as 'journalism.'"[43] Andrews was no stranger to the genre, nor to controversial topics. Another piece on Writer of Songs, "Soldier," chronicled the death of a soldier in Northern Ireland.[44] Though Andrews intended the song as an indictment of senseless violence in general, many interpreted its message as a support for their own particular aims. Fearing any potential
effects the song might have on both Irish and British patriots, the BBC banned it from the airwaves. After hearing about the Kent State shootings from the BBC, Andrews decided to take on a similarly contentious topic in "Hey Sandy." While Andrews' goal in "Hey Sandy" was essentially the same kind of frame transformation as Young had effected, the two musicians took very different approaches. "Ohio" is only ten lines long, and its simplicity aided Young's message. "Hey Sandy," on the other hand, concentrated on small details in order to place the listener more fully into the narrative. For instance, Andrews sings that "the sun was hot and the air was heavy as the marching men came by," and, "the smell of sweat was better yet than the awful stench of fear." This focused approach creates a song that is far more like a comprehensive narrative of the Kent State shootings, akin almost to a journalistic piece, than Young's loose collection of impressions in "Ohio." Much like Young, Andrews also makes reference to Nixon and the silent majority. "Hey Sandy" contains the line, "you stood and you stared but no one cared for another campus bum." As in Young's "Ohio," the implication is that Nixon is the ultimate villain of the story. However, by using not just Nixon's words but the attitude of the silent majority, Andrews' lyric is ultimately an indictment of the silent majority as a whole rather than Nixon alone. While Young attacked Nixon and hoped to thereby win over the silent majority, Andrews berates the entire silent majority in an effort to seemingly force them to recognize the shame in their position. Aiding in this attack, there is a clear division in "Hey Sandy" in terms of the language used to represent those that side with the National Guard and the students. The students are described most often in conjunction with phrases like "freedom" and "love and truth." Additionally, there is a patriotic element to the protests, as "In the college square they [the protesters] were standing there with the flag and with the drum." The National Guardsmen, on the other hand, are described often in terms of their equipment, such as, "The sound of the steel and the black boot's heel were pounding in your head" and "the men alone with their bayonets fixed for hire." This juxtaposition of the soldiers with steel and military elements dehumanizes them. The National Guard is also associated with ashes, death, fear, pain, and waste at various points throughout Andrews' lyrics.

Much like "Ohio," Andrews also gets a lot of mileage from his chosen point-of-view. "Hey Sandy" is written entirely in the second-person, which firmly embeds the listener into the narrative. Entire verses combine Andrews' attention to detail with the second-person to create a uniquely appealing musical
narrative. As the events at Kent State unfold, Andrews sings, "Your songs were dead and the hymns instead were to the burning pyre, and the words of youth, like love and truth, just ashes in the fire." While Sandy is ostensibly the person being addressed, couching the message in the second-person makes its relevance to the listener stronger. Much like Young's nationalization of the Kent State message and mobilization of the entire youth movement, Andrews worked to increase the worldwide relevance of the Kent State shootings. In "Hey Sandy" he argued that the "words of youth" were destroyed worldwide, not just at Kent State University or even just the United States. The second-person even continues through the shootings and Sandra Scheuer's death. In the chorus, Andrews sings, "Did you see them turn? Did you feel the burn of the bullets as they flew?" The same motif is expanded on in the last verse when Andrews opines:

"Did you throw the stone at the men alone with their bayonets fixed for hire? Did you doubt that they would, say no one could, did you scream when they opened fire? As the square ran red and your bloodstain spread and the darkness round you grew Through the fear and the pain did you call the name of the man you never knew?"

While Young asked, "What if you knew her and found her dead on the ground?," Andrews' question is closer to, "What if you lay dead on the ground?" While Young's song effectively utilizes visual imagery to question whether the deaths of the four students were warranted, Andrews forces the listener to contemplate their own death instead. Andrews recreates Young's message that the Kent State shootings might have occurred on any campus in America. Sandra Scheuer is still the focus; however, any unlucky person in similar circumstances could have been the target. By brilliantly utilizing the second person, Andrews ensures that the burden of Sandra Scheuer's death is felt by the listener.

In such emotive passages, the differences between Andrews' song and objective journalism are clear. Andrews is far from an impartial observer. When questioned about the song, he said, "having been a student myself, and identifying with the cause they were supporting, I used my emotions in the only way I knew, by writing a song." While Andrews' focus on small details creates a narrative flow akin to a piece of prose, the emotional weight given to the event divorces it from objectivity and strengthens the narrative fidelity of "Hey Sandy." The emotion of the piece is further enhanced by the song's underlying

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"Tin Soldiers and Nixon Coming"

melody and instrumentation. "Hey Sandy" starts out in a minimalistic way, with just Andrews' voice plaintively calling out to Sandy over a droning bass. More instruments are added as the song goes on, however, and the denser layers give a feeling of spreading consensus. Not only are more instruments added, but more vocal layers. At the start of the song, there is only Andrews singing the main melody. By the end, though, there are three layers of vocalization harmonizing together. The music's arrangement reflects Andrews' hope that giving a voice to the victims of Kent State might change public opinion and motivate the youth movement. "Hey Sandy" is an excellent demonstration of how music frames events in ways that prosaic accounts cannot. The song advances the discourse on the wrongdoing of the National Guardsmen, while otherwise remaining consistently within Young's framing of the Kent State shootings—that they are a national issue caused by the malevolence of government forces.

Finally, Andrews' song highlights the sometimes unintended consequences of musical framing. Musicians write songs at a particular time and place, but they become part of the public sphere from then on. Historians writing about the Kent State shootings later described Scheuer as an unlucky student on her way to class when she was shot. She did not take part in the May 4 protests, or any protests on the prior weekend. However, "Hey Sandy" depicts Sandra Scheuer as a revolutionary protester. Andrews asks, "Did you throw the stone at the men alone with their bayonets fixed for hire?" and also claims that, "Through the air the shout as you all ran out was, 'Why are these things done?'" Sandra Scheuer and the Sandy of the song are two different entities, despite the similarity of their names. The titular Sandy has more in common with Allison Krause—who did protest on May 4 and did reputedly throw rocks at the National Guardsmen—than with the real Sandra Scheuer. This misidentification was due in part to the fact that Andrews worked from the information available to him when he wrote the song. As he said, "When I took up my pen, Sandy Scheuer was just one of the innocent protesters who was gunned down, as far as we knew." Andrews' representation of "Sandy" fit the framework developed by Young, in which everyone was either a protestor or a villain.

Many young, up-and-coming artists wrote about Kent State in the months following the event. Steve Miller's *Number 5*, released in November of 1970, further expounded on the framework found in the songs of Young and Andrews. The album contained the song "Jackson-Kent Blues," which was the
first song to consider the Kent State and Jackson, Mississippi shootings as part of a whole. While the Steve Miller Band had already released four albums prior to 1970, they had yet to attain the notoriety their music achieved later on in the seventies. Like Young, Miller relied on mood to tell the Kent State story rather than narrative detail. He also utilizes the same tactic as Young by referencing the Federal government instead of the Ohio or Mississippi State governments in order to give the song national credibility. However, Miller played up the national divisions even more than either Young or Andrews. For instance, Miller sang that protestors were "headed to D.C. two by twos," to make their views clear.[63] While Young and Andrews certainly did not agree with the actions of the National Guard, Miller's song directly advocated further protests against the government. Miller assigns blame to a whole host of people, including the President, Congress, the CIA, and the FBI, in the course of singing "Jackson-Kent Blues." Miller's themes often match Young's, but greatly amplified. Next to "Jackson-Kent Blues," "Ohio" looks positively conciliatory. Miller even implied that the United States government was waging war on the general population, with lyrics like, "Just like Uncle Sam, I put on my fighting shoes," and, "The streets are all empty and the crying's died down. You can be President if there's no one around."[64] This divisive rhetoric reiterated the motivational framing found in Young and Andrews, but at an even more strident level. While Young warned that the events at Kent State could be repeated at any antiwar protest nationwide, "Jackson-Kent Blues" makes it seem as if the nation was either about to erupt into war on the home front or that the war had already started when the government fired on the Kent State students. To some extent, as seen in the Hard Hat Riots, Miller wasn’t far wrong. However, it is difficult to claim Miller even attempted to unify different sects of the population, as the language used is so harsh. Instead, "Jackson-Kent Blues" is an attack on his opponents. Though Miller asks listeners to "Give peace a chance," the derisive reference to the "silent majority still glued to the tube," and the numerous attacks on the government display his bias towards motivating the student protesters and blaming everyone arrayed against them.[65]

This level of anger continued to escalate in the Beach Boys' polarizing "Student Demonstration Time."[66] While the Beach Boys weren't much older than many of the other bands writing about Kent State, they had certainly been around longer. The first Beach Boys album was released in 1961, and "Student Demonstration Time" was featured on Surf's Up, the band's seventeenth album.[67] The album also marked a new direction for the band, which had been struggling for a number of years. Their new
manager, Jack Rieley, convinced the Beach Boys to focus on writing socially aware songs in order to recapture the good graces the band once held. Surf's Up ultimately achieved Rieley's goal, selling much better than the band's previous album. "Student Demonstration Time," the last track on the record's first side, marked Mike Love's attempt at a politically charged song.

Love appropriated the song's melody from an earlier R&B classic, "Riot in Cell Block Nine," which the Beach Boys had often performed live as early as 1970. "Riot in Cell Block Nine," written in 1954, chronicled a fictional prison riot at a federal prison. Love took the melody of the song as well as the chanted and repetitive chorus, "There's a riot going on." Outside of those two aspects, however, Love's song has little in common with the R&B original. An argument could be made that thematically the two are related because the students and the prisoners were both being oppressed, but the prisoners of "Riot in Cell Block Nine" are not sympathetic characters and on that note the argument falls apart. Love presumably wants people to identify with the student protesters, not be frightened of them. Love rewrote the verses of "Riot in Cell Block Nine" to fit his perception of the youth movement, making reference to events from the mid-1960s all the way through 1970. Love, like Miller, included the Jackson State shootings alongside the Kent State shootings, representing the way that the two events came to be intertwined in the American consciousness. Love devoted the most amount of time to the Kent State shootings out of all the events mentioned. When referencing Kent, Love's lyrics are somewhere in between the mood-based lyrics of Young and Miller and the journalistic lyrics of Andrews. However, the lyrics to "Student Demonstration Time" are much more absurd than many of the other songs about Kent State. This is perhaps a reflection of Love's commercial focus. Love was often criticized for inhibiting the Beach Boys' more artistic or niche endeavors, instead focusing on commercially-friendly songs. Love reputedly once called "Good Vibrations," a song by the band's main songwriter Brian Wilson, "avant-garde shit," and said of his own writing, "See, I'm into success...if you're going to make a single, why not make it a hit?"

"Student Demonstration Time" is no big change for Love. His propensity for commercialization seems a strange fit for someone writing about a countercultural movement, and naturally introduced the same suspicions Young confronted upon releasing "Ohio." Unlike Young, however, Love escaped such criticisms less effectively. While Love tries to connect to the Kent State shootings with the same
intensity as his predecessors, his song contains such ridiculous phrases as, "Four martyrs earned a new degree, the Bachelor of Bullets." This over-the-top attempt at social relevance is underscored by the constant presence of sirens as a backing instrument, as if there was literally a riot going on in the background of the studio when Love recorded his song. "Student Demonstration Time" attempts to further elaborate on the ideas found in Young's framework and the anger displayed in Miller's "Jackson-Kent Blues." However, Love's song never really gets going. It is not even clear whether Love sides with the student protesters or with the authorities. While a number of the lyrics suggest that Love's sympathies lie with the youth movement, such as when he sings, "The pen is mightier than the sword, but no match for the gun," and, "The winds of change fanned into flames, student demonstrations spark," he undercuts the message by repeatedly comparing the youth movement to a riot. While other songwriters attempted to motivate listeners and presented the youth movement as a beacon of hope, Love's song cannot decide which side it wants to take. By singing, "I know we're all fed up with useless wars and racial strife, but next time there's a riot, well, you best stay out of sight," Love seemingly argues that student protest is too dangerous and needs to end. Whatever framework Love was aiming for with "Student Demonstration Time," it all ends up a muddled mess, as parts of the song seemingly contradict each other and introduce elements that undercut any high points the piece may have had. This is unfortunate, seeing as Surf's Up was a highly successful album commercially and the Beach Boys a pillar of the music establishment. Thus, Love's misguided anthem was probably the most-available song about the Kent State shootings aside from "Ohio." Because of the strong position the Beach Boys had in the musical vernacular, Love had a chance to strongly influence the national dialogue on par with Neil Young. However, "Student Demonstration Time" comes nowhere close to the emotional resonance of "Ohio" and ultimately falls short of many of the songs written about Kent State both in terms of the effectiveness of its framing and its overall narrative of the event.

The next major development in the musical framing of Kent State manifested itself in more niche framings with the involvement of the older generation. Dave Brubeck's cantata, "Truth is Fallen," was first performed in May of 1971—one year after the shootings. Brubeck, nearly fifty when the tragedy at Kent occurred, framed the event differently from those who wrote earlier. He avoided the blame-ridden, divisive framing found in "Ohio" and "Hey Sandy." Instead, "Truth is Fallen" opted for a prognostic framing, attempting to provide a solution that both sides could appreciate. Though he
sympathized with the students, Brubeck also sought common ground with those who sided with the National Guardsmen. He saw the shootings at Kent State as a warning to the entire nation—a break from Young, who saw the event as a warning to the protesters alone.[76] From the Book of Isaiah came the title: "Truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot rise." [77] As Brubeck said, "It is a brutal indictment of our time, and is the pivotal point of the composition."[78] "I see signs that our conscience has been stirred and our benumbed consciousness awakened" by the shootings, said Brubeck.[79] The piece centers around a soloist who often returns to the piece to offer up the words of Isaiah to both the protesters and those in authority. Brubeck appeals to more conservative listeners with his use of religious themes, while also sympathizing with the victims. Brubeck disputes the idea that violence against the students was warranted, but in a way that embraces understanding, not hostile condemnation.

Brubeck's complex musicianship is crucial to sustaining this motif. In "Truth is Fallen," he utilizes both orchestral and rock music, with the orchestra signifying the authorities and a rock group representing the students.[80] However, Brubeck never pits the two against one another. Rather, "The piece opens with the rock group and the orchestra, while maintaining their own identities, making music together."[81] Brubeck hoped to show that there was disillusionment on both sides of the conflict and that the roots of the conflict lay in machinations greater than either side, especially those involving the Vietnam War, rather than fundamental generational differences.

Though "Truth is Fallen" is musically gorgeous and complex, and Brubeck is the only musician to attempt this kind of prognostic framing, his views never gained much traction. For one, Brubeck's message of conciliation and unity was wildly idealistic in a nation so harshly split over the Kent State shootings; even the legal battle concerning Kent State stretched on for a decade after the event.[82] Young's framing—later extended by Andrews, Steve Miller, and a number of other artists—remained consistent with the national mood, with student sympathizers and National Guard defenders arrayed against each other. This portrayal ignored the complexity of the event, instead framing everything in black and white, but it was much easier to understand and thus a much better motivator. Brubeck attempted to unite people, which was unpopular at the time. Consequently, Brubeck needed to convince both the youth and the older generation of his song's merits rather than just one group. Songs that furthered Young's framing
had a built-in base of supporters, as students already blamed adults for the attack. Brubeck needed to convince everyone that reconciliation was more important than division. Thus, Brubeck’s task was doubly difficult, and he ultimately failed to please either group. Just as important, however, is that Brubeck’s jazz, rock, and orchestra fusion was far less radio- or youth-friendly than Young’s straightforward and lyrically succinct “Ohio.” “Truth is Fallen” is a multi-part song that clocks in at nearly an hour, and takes a few listens to fully appreciate. It is also densely packed with religious ideas that are perhaps rewarding to the Biblically literate, but would be easily lost on the casual listener. “Ohio,” though banned from AM radio, was nonetheless rapidly and easily disseminated over the FM airwaves to eager listeners who, in many cases, were already Neil Young fans. Young’s music and ideas, if not necessarily healthier for the nation, certainly attracted a wider audience.

The power of Young’s framework only increased when those present at the Kent State shootings began making music based on their experiences. First came Halim El-Dabh with ”Opera Flies,” first performed in May of 1971. El-Dabh was a music professor at Kent State in 1970 and was walking to lunch on the day of the shootings when he saw one of his students running towards him yelling, ”They're shooting everybody!” El-Dabh was struck by the injustice and cruelty of the event, but did not immediately move to write about it. When asked what made him change his mind, El-Dabh replied, ”The Hawthorne School.” The Hawthorne School, then a small, forward-thinking high school in Washington, D.C., had worked with El-Dabh before the Kent State shootings. Soon after the May 4 event, students from the Hawthorne School reached out to El-Dabh and entreated him to compose a piece addressing the tragedy. ”I was skeptical at first,” said El-Dabh, ”but the students convinced me that something had to be done.” El-Dabh is quick to downplay his own part in the matter. ”As far as I'm concerned, all the credit goes to those kids. They were the ones that got this started.”

When the show debuted in 1971, Kent State officials covered expenses to bus and house the opera’s participants to Ohio, despite the fact that in most other respects the administration tried to downplay the shootings. Opera Flies, approximately an hour long, is long enough to explore multiple themes and characters in some depth. Consequently, El-Dabh's framing is considerably more complex than many of the shorter works produced about the Kent State shootings, and in this way closely resembles Brubeck’s piece. El-Dabh presents the narrative of Kent State through the eyes of Vekeero. Vekeero is
based on Mary Ann Vecchio, the fourteen-year-old runaway immortalized in John Filo’s Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph at Kent State as she knelt over Jeffrey Miller’s corpse in the parking lot.\textsuperscript{100} El-Dabh also extensively examines the viewpoint of the National Guardsmen, though he condemns their actions. Indeed, the title of the work comes from such an instance—according to the authorities, the campus is "infested with flies" that must be swatted. This metaphor plays back into the outcome of the shootings. Every time one of the students/flies is swatted, a voice drones out the manner of their death from the background, such as in the chilling line, "One fly is dead, hit at the back of the neck, laid in a vast puddle of its own blood." Eventually, four flies are killed, and El-Dabh’s graphic descriptions of the wounds largely match those of the actual victims at Kent State. El-Dabh conveys through this thinly-veiled allegory the dismissive attitude with which the National Guard viewed the students, while simultaneously framing the students as helpless and weak. El-Dabh also depicts the original user of the flyswatter as Vekeero’s mother, tying the National Guard to the adult community as a whole. The implication is that the adults all see the students in the same way—as a nuisance, deserving to be destroyed.\textsuperscript{91} This ties in to the attacks on the “silent majority” ideal present in many of the other songs about Kent State. El-Dabh even uses call-and-response techniques to increase the sense of tension between the two sides. After the killings the adults chant, "An accident! An accident, indeed!" while the students yell, "Dishonesty! That is a trick," and, "I plead for mercy! I plead for justice!"\textsuperscript{92} As a member of the generation that caused the killings, but a teacher of the generation killed, El-Dabh had a foot in both camps. El-Dabh should also be commended for at least representing the National Guard in the piece and giving their tale a voice, even if it is a rather negative one. Like Young, it is clear that El-Dabh ultimately blamed the National Guard for the student deaths.

Music referencing the Kent State shootings continued to emerge throughout the 1970s, further elaborating on the framing of the event and maintaining its place in the cultural backdrop of American life. In late 1971, famed lyricist Clive James teamed up with Pete Atkin to release their second album together, \textit{Driving Through Mythical America}.\textsuperscript{93} The album’s title track centers around the Kent State shootings both thematically and narratively. James’ lyrics are neither journalistic like Andrews, nor as concise and accessible as Young’s. Highly literary and even esoteric, the lyrics in "Driving Through Mythical America" actually have more in common with those found in Brubeck and El-Dabh. While Brubeck made allegorical comparisons to the Book of Isaiah and El-Dabh compared the students with...
flies, James contrasted the deaths of the four students at Kent State with a "Mythical America." To demonstrate this, James presents the icons of American literature, film, industry, and social movements. The lyrics alternate between verses dedicated to American legends and verses focused on the shootings. As Dave Gelly said in his 1972 Creem review of this album, the song "manages to cram just about every American myth into its five and a half minutes."[54] It touches on topics from Jay Gatsby to Henry Ford to Citizen Kane. Much like Brubeck, James and Atkin are more concerned with crafting a specific feeling in the listener than developing a narrative. The song is a montage in the Eisenstein sense, "an idea that arises from the collision of independent thoughts."[55] The juxtaposition of American myth with the tragedy of the Kent State shootings ultimately recontextualizes both. The historical importance of the Kent State deaths is reinforced by their association with iconic Americana. By placing the students side by side with legends, the implication is that the students are themselves legendary. On the other hand, placing these icons alongside such a tragedy sullies them. James acknowledges America's achievements, but "Driving Through Mythical America" also trivializes those achievements by demonstrating that the same society also callously killed four students at Kent. As Atkin sings, "Four students never guessed that they were through. Their history had them covered like a gun." The soaring ideals America claimed to stand for--freedom of speech and the right to lawful protest--seemed to be belied by the Kent State shootings. For James and Atkin, the Kent State shootings shattered the Mythical America that had been inculcated into previous generations. James contended that America, to the Kent State generation, was no longer the same land that produced the great figures of the past.

The song is aided by Atkin's soaring vocal line, which drives home the refrain, "They were driving through mythical America." While James' lyrics are clear and convincing, but it is Atkin who brings emotion to the song. As the song progresses, Atkin gets progressively more intense until he peaks on the line, "They crashed and died together in the sun," at the piece's end. Much like Young, Atkin's voice lends itself greatly to motivating listeners, adding a much-needed inspirational touch to the songs' more abstract moments. "Driving Through Mythical America" reiterates the same general framing as "Ohio," only in a much more cerebral fashion.

Finally, the students who were present at the Kent State shootings began composing music based on their experiences that fateful day. In the latter half of the 1970s, the band Devo became a musical sensation. Known primarily for its hit "Whip It," founder Jerry Casale was present at the Kent State shootings and friends with two of those killed, Jeffrey Miller and Allison Krause.[96] Another founding member, Mark Mothersbaugh, also lived in Kent at the time of the shootings. With Devo, the musical framing of Kent State came full circle. The students who initially needed Young, Andrews, and the other
musicians to represent their views and give them a voice on the national scene, now spoke, or rather sang, for themselves. Casale says of the attack that it "changed my world view and solidified my...social consciousness." Casale never wrote a song directly referencing the Kent State shootings by name, for reasons even Casale is unclear about. However, Casale does claim that Devo's irreverent take on authority figures and social conventions, displayed in songs like "Smart Patrol/Mr. DNA" and "Freedom of Choice" (with its lines "Freedom of choice is what you got. Freedom from choice is what you want."), grew directly out of his experience on May 4, 1970. As Casale said, it "all came from being forced out of your comfort zone by having to deal with the implications of what you saw: people being murdered, and the state getting away with murder sanctioned by the legal system."

Devo's music, though generally light-hearted in tone, embodied the distrust and horror spawned by the shootings and once again reframed the events at Kent State. The framing came full circle in 2002 when Devo recorded a darkly emotional version of Young's "Ohio," thus returning the debate back to its origins. Devo's cover of "Ohio," which opens with the iconic 60s antiwar chant, "1-2-3-4, we don't want your fucking war," features much harsher instrumentation than in Young's original, with pounding drums and a screaming synthesizer taking center stage. Devo even adds lyrics reflecting their own feelings about the Kent State shootings, in the only direct lyrical reference to the event ever penned by the group. Devo's addition is a harsh and angry indictment of the federal government, in keeping with Young's original attack on Nixon. The group sings, "Redneck bigots down in the Capitol, 'Send those hippies straight to hell.'" While perhaps just as unfair as Young's original attack on Nixon, it is also in line with both the framing attempted in the original song and Devo's own feelings about the shootings. It is fascinating to hear a song originally written to give a voice to otherwise voiceless students now sung by those very same individuals.

Perhaps more than any other event in recent American history, music defined the Kent State shootings. While the journalism of the time and the books written after Kent State are a great resource, the music of the Kent State shootings resonated with the populace and greatly broadened the impression the event had on American society. Given the impact of music on culture in modern times, other events have undoubtedly been similarly framed. Neil Young would say that musical framing occurs anytime a significantly important event happens and a musician is at a stage in his or her life where they are open to embracing that event. Surely with the quantity of artists in the public sphere this confluence of events cannot be as rare as historical writing thus far implies. While musical framings of an event are not inherently more valid than other mediums, they can provide important context on popular movements, more niche positions, and microcosms of dissent in communities. As historians increasingly chronicle the sixties and seventies, where music progressively entered everyday life, the influence of music on historical writing must also increase. Further research would certainly discover other events where musicians played a significant role in the construction of national memory, perhaps greatly furthering understanding of said occurrences. It would also be interesting, moving forward, to delve into why some events attract such large cultural outpourings, not just in music but in all the arts, and why other significant events are left with little to nothing. Perhaps it is a response to the success of the initial artist, in this case Neil Young, or perhaps it just demonstrates the widespread relevance of an event on the
magnitude of Kent State. Whatever the case, studies of music's effect on history must increase just as the prevalence of music did in the 1960s and 70s.

[2] Ibid.
[10] The song wasn't publicly released until after Kent State, on Young's solo album *After the Gold Rush*.
[11] Ibid., 338
[12] Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *Déjà Vu*, Atlantic Records SD-7200. McDonough, *Shakey*, 324-325. Though the album sold well, *Déjà Vu* also catalyzed the tensions within the band. At one tour stop, Stills was left to perform on his own—Young, Crosby, and Nash all left for Los Angeles to get away from the band. The group's large personalities led to a volatile working relationship that threatened to derail the entire venture at any moment.
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[13] Ralph Graves, "I assumed they were shooting in the air," *Life Magazine*, May 15, 1970, page 3. The photographers included John Filo, John Darnell, and Howard Ruffner. Filo and Darnell were both senior journalism majors at Kent State University who intended to document the student rally on May 4. Ruffner covered the event by request of *Life Magazine* specifically; as told in the May 15 issue, the magazine's Chicago bureau "telephoned the school newspaper and asked if anyone could cover the day's demonstrations." Ruffner later said, "I knew pictures were the only way to tell this story." John Filo later won the 1971 Pulitzer Prize for his photograph of 14-year-old runaway Mary-Ann Vecchio kneeling over the dead body of Jeffrey Miller.


[15] Bill Halverson, interview by Tony Bittick. Taken from his website, http://www.billhalverson.com/bittick_interview.html. Accessed September 08, 2011. According to the same interview, the B-Side to "Ohio," "Find the Cost of Freedom," was recorded in less than fifteen minutes during the same session. David Crosby, in *Shakey*, claims that the band went into the studio less than twenty-four hours after Young wrote the track. The May 21 date comes from the liner notes to Neil Young, *Greatest Hits*, released November 16, 2004.

[16] Ibid.


[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Soon after the song’s release, David Crosby reputedly called Young’s indictment of Nixon, "the bravest thing I ever heard."


[24] The Hard Hat Riot was a clash between student protestors, angry about Kent State, and blue collar workers in New York City on May 8, 1970. The workers, on lunch break, set upon the students; more than seventy people were injured in the conflict, but Nixon praised the workers as representing the silent majority. The Jackson State College killings occurred on the night of May 14 in Mississippi. In a protest similar to the one at Kent, two students were killed and twelve more injured by Jackson’s police force.


[30] In the liner notes of his album *Decade*, Young claims that Crosby cried at the end of the take the band used.

[31] Halverson, interview by Tony Bittick.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," 197-217.


[36] Ibid.


[41] Ibid.


[43] Harvey Andrews, interviewed by the author, 10/27/2011. Ironically, Dylan would later write a number of songs in the same genre, such as his 1975 hit single "Hurricane."


[46] Ibid.


[48] Ibid. Nixon's comment was, "You see these bums, you know, blowing up the campuses," on May 1, 1970 (only three days before the shootings).

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.
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[55] Ibid.
[57] See Gordon, *Four Dead in Ohio*.
[59] See Gordon, *Four Dead in Ohio* for more information.

[61] This included Steve Miller's "Jackson-Kent Blues," Genesis' "The Knife," The Beach Boys' "Student Demonstration Time," Joe Walsh's "Turn to Stone," and a potentially unreleased song by the then-unknown Bruce Springsteen.

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.


[69] Ibid., 167.


[71] Carlin, *Catch a Wave*, 156.


[73] Oddly enough, however, Love transposed the chronology of the two events, implying that the Jackson State killings took place prior to the Kent State massacre.


[76] Ibid.
Brubeck also stated that, "The multiple tragedies that have occurred in those awful years between the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the slayings at Kent State and Jackson, Mississippi are so overwhelming that only the words of an Isaiah or Jeremiah could define my feeling." Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

See Joseph Kelner, *The Kent State Coverup*, for a full account of the victim's legal proceedings.


Halim El-Dabh, interview with the author, September 29, 2011.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Halim El-Dabh, *Opera Flies*, Performance at Kent State University.

Ibid.

Pete Atkins, *Driving Through Mythical America*, Philips 6308070.


Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," *Film Form* (New York, 1949).

Casale actually witnessed Krause's death, later recalling that, "Jeffrey Miller was almost right down behind me on the roadway; I didn't see him. I saw to my right what turned out to be Allison. When you see someone shot in the noonday sun and you see real blood coming out of them and you're like, nineteen years old, it's not like a movie."

Jerry Casale, interview with the author, October 23, 2011.

Ibid.
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