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# War Songs

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**“Analysis and reflections on the composition of *War Songs*.”**  
**Evan Michael Williams**

**Introduction**

*War Songs* is a song cycle of poetry by Walt Whitman, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Iraq War veterans Andrew Borene, and Brian Turner, written in the summer of 2010. It also includes an arrangement of the popular wartime song “Over There” by George M. Cohan. In writing this cycle, I researched the Iraq War, especially the justifications for invading the country. I also researched previous musical works about war. This research informed the composition of the cycle. While I wanted to illustrate the issues of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I also wanted the cycle to be universal and to have its relevance to endure, therefore I selected texts for this cycle that transcend their original time and place and is universal to the subject of war, resonating with today’s readers, and those for generations to come.

Therefore, I see three objectives of the *War Songs* cycle. First, it commemorates the service of American veterans from these current wars, and previous wars. Second, while it does not present a pacifist message, it is a plea that every possible peaceful solution be sought before we ask our young men and women to sacrifice their lives. Finally, it is a plea that we as citizens remember and honor the sacrifices of veterans by electing leaders who do the same, not just in their words, but in their actions, policies, and work toward peace.

**The Lead Up to the Invasion of Iraq**

In order to use the example of the Iraq War to accomplish the previously stated goals through this song cycle, I found it necessary to research the history and justifications of the conflict, and to construct, as best as I could, an accurate and unbiased narrative of the lead up to

the war. My research was primarily concerned with the conditions that led to the war, and the Bush administration's reasons for entering Iraq.

It started to become clear in 2004, that two of the Bush administration's important rationales for invading Iraq – its supposed stockpile of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the harboring of Al Qaeda terrorists, were suspect at best. Toward the end of the Bush administration and extending to recent months, we are learning more and more about the meetings, discussions, and public relations campaign that went into convincing Congress and the public that there was an immediate need to invade Iraq.

The history of our current war in Iraq begins with the end of the Persian Gulf War. President George H.W. Bush sent troops to the region in January of 1991 to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait and to prevent them from entering Saudi Arabia. By February 26, the US and coalition forces had pushed Iraqi troops out of Kuwait and back across the border into Iraq. On February 28, Bush declared a cease-fire, ending the conflict.

Although the US and its allies did not actively seek to end Saddam Hussein's rule during the Gulf War, air strikes were ordered in locations where President Hussein was expected to be. US air strikes were also aimed at Hussein's military and Baath Party strongholds throughout Iraq.<sup>1</sup> After Iraqi troops were pushed out of Kuwait, the decision was made to end the war and not seek regime change in Iraq. Among other reasons, the Bush administration saw Iraq as a barrier to greater Iranian power. Therefore the policy toward Iraq for the rest of the George H.W. Bush presidency was one of containment through economic sanctions, no fly zones, and UN weapons inspections.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

This containment policy was continued by the Clinton administration. Hussein's capability to build WMDs was an important concern to the Clinton administration. In his January 27, 1998 State of the Union Address, Clinton warned:

Saddam Hussein has spent the better part of this decade and much of his nation's wealth not on providing for the Iraqi people but on developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them. The United Nations weapons inspectors have done a truly remarkable job, finding and destroying more of Iraq's arsenal than was destroyed during the entire Gulf War. Now, Saddam Hussein wants to stop them from completing their mission. I know I speak for everyone in this chamber, Republicans and Democrats, when I say to Saddam Hussein: You cannot defy the will of the world. And when I say to him: You have used weapons of mass destruction before. We are determined to deny you the capacity to use them again.<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of his infamous sexual misconduct scandal, it was clear that President Clinton was feeling pressure from the political Right to take more decisive action in Iraq. The day before his January, 1998 State of the Union Address, he received a letter from the Project for the New American Century arguing:

We are writing you because we are convinced that current American policy toward Iraq is not succeeding, and that we may soon face a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the Cold War. In your upcoming State of the Union Address, you have an opportunity to chart a clear and determined course for meeting this threat.

It goes on to say:

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<sup>3</sup> Bill Clinton, "Text of President Clinton's 1998 State of the Union Address," *The Washington Post*, January 27, 1998, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/states/docs/sou98.htm>.

Given the magnitude of the threat, the current policy... is dangerously inadequate. The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

The signatories read like a “who’s who” of Neoconservatives that would soon control the Executive Branch- John Bolton, Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz to name a few.

In October of that year, President Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act passed by the Republican controlled congress. It clearly states, “It should be the policy of the United States to seek to remove the regime headed by Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq and to promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime.” It authorized that the president could spend up to \$97 million dollars to achieve this goal.<sup>5</sup>

In December of 1998, a bombing campaign known as “Operation Desert Fox” was undertaken by the Clinton administration in the hopes of disrupting Hussein’s weapons program. The Pentagon estimated that the program suffered a two-year set back because of Desert Fox.<sup>6</sup>

By the time George W. Bush became president, it was clear that many in the administration had grown tired of the containment policy. Dick Cheney, then Vice President-elect, asked for the Pentagon to brief the President on Iraq, and on Iraq alone, instead of the usual

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<sup>4</sup> “Letter to President Clinton on Iraq,” *Project for the New American Century*, January 26, 1998, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> US Congress, *Iraq Liberation Act of 1998*, Library of Congress, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?c105:1:./temp/~c105PpDjG9>.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon, *Cobra II*, 14.

briefing on global issues.<sup>7</sup> According to Paul O'Neill, Bush's first Secretary of Treasury, "from the very beginning, there was a conviction, that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go." O'Neill states regime change in Iraq was "topic A" only ten days after Bush's inauguration.<sup>8</sup> In addition, a memo titled "Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts," from March 5, 2001 was released as a result of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit along with maps of Iraq's oil fields, and pipelines. The memo details foreign oil firms interested in purchasing these assets.<sup>9</sup> In June of 2001, a meeting was held to discuss Iraq policy with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, CIA Director George Tenet, and Vice President Cheney among others. Possible solutions for Iraq included continuing the current containment policy, supporting insurgents against Hussein, and an US invasion. The meeting ended with no clear strategy put in place.<sup>10</sup>

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, many in the CIA were convinced on that very day that Al Qaeda, led by Osama bin Laden, were behind them. The now infamous August 6, 2001 presidential daily briefing (PDB) titled, "Bin Laden determined to attack inside the US," contained intelligence that Al Qaeda was seeking ways to hijack American planes.<sup>11</sup> Yet it was clear that some in the administration still had Iraq on their minds. It was Rumsfeld who first inquired about a connection between Al Qaeda and Iraq. In the afternoon of September 11, 2001, Rumsfeld dictated his interest in Iraq to one of his aides. Notes from 2:40 pm that day read, "Judge whether hit SH [Saddam Hussein] at the same time. Not only UBL [Usama bin

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>8</sup> Rebecca Leung, "Bush Sought 'Way' to Invade Iraq?" *CBS News*, January 11, 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/01/09/60minutes/main592330.shtml>.

<sup>9</sup> US Department of Commerce, *Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts*, Judicial Watch, March 5, 2001, <http://www.judicialwatch.org/iraqi-oil-maps.shtml>.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon *Cobra II*, 16.

<sup>11</sup> "White House releases bin Laden memo," *CNN*, May 19, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/10/bush.briefing/>.

Laden].”<sup>12</sup> In a phone call that day to Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, suggested a retaliatory attack against Iraq. Rumsfeld echoed this sentiment that night in a meeting with the President and his national security team.<sup>13</sup>

These voices did gain a small victory that day. Richard Perle, chairman of the Defense Policy Board Advisory Committee (DPBAC), convinced Bush speechwriter David Frum to include language in the president’s address to the nation that would could later sanction action against Iraq.<sup>14</sup> That night from the Oval Office, President Bush proclaimed, “The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts... We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.”<sup>15</sup>

On September 15, President Bush gathered his national security team at Camp David to design a response to the 9/11 attacks. According to the authors of *Cobra II*, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz pushed for action against Iraq, but received push back from Colin Powell.<sup>16</sup> At the end of these meetings, Bush spoke with Hugh Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Bush had decided that Al Qaeda should be the primary target and asked Shelton if he concurred. According to the book:

Shelton reassured the president that he had made the correct call. Attacking Iraq out of the blue and apparently without clear provocation, Shelton argued, would upset the Middle East and hamper the coalition-building effort. Nor, he added was there any reason to think that Iraq was linked to the September 11 attacks. “That’s what I think,” Bush told

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Kirk, *Frontline: Bush’s War*, transcript, PBS, 2008, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/bushswar/etc/script.html>.

<sup>13</sup> *Frontline: Bush’s War*, DVD, written, directed, and produced by Michael Kirk (PBS, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> George W. Bush, “Text of Bush’s address,” *CNN*, September 11, 2001, <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/11/bush.speech.text/index.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon, *Cobra II*, 18.

Shelton. “We will get this guy but at a time and place of our choosing,” Bush added, referring to Saddam.<sup>17</sup>

However, that did not seem to be the mindset of others in the administration. On September 19, Richard Perle convened the DPBAC for a two-day conference, mostly about Iraq. A prominent voice at this conference was Ahmed Chalabi, the president of the Iraqi National Congress (INC). The INC was formed in 1992 as an umbrella group of political factions in opposition to Saddam Hussein, backed by the United States.<sup>18</sup> After a failed coup in 1995, Chalabi and other members of the INC exiled from Iraq had the ear of many in Washington. Chalabi lobbied intensely for the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act. Not only did he have support in Washington, but financial backing as well. Between 1992 and 2004, the INC received more than \$100 million from the government, \$39 million from the Bush administration alone.<sup>19</sup> Chalabi and the INC were an early source for the chief allegations that would become the administration’s justification of the war- Iraq’s cache of WMD and it’s support of the 9/11 terrorists.<sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> Mark Garlasco, who worked in the Defense Intelligence Agency from 1997 to 2003 claimed, “At that time, we had INC constantly shoving crap at us. You know, they were providing information that they thought that we wanted to hear. They were feeding the beast.”<sup>22</sup>

While the CIA and State Department had strong doubts about Chalabi, he had powerful allies in Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Dick Cheney.<sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> He was a special guest of First

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq’s Opposition Movements*, Congressional Research Service Issue Brief, March 26, 1998, Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/crs-iraq-op.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Jane Mayer, “The Manipulator,” *The New Yorker*, June 7, 2004, [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/06/07/040607fa\\_fact1](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/06/07/040607fa_fact1).

<sup>20</sup> Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 433

<sup>21</sup> *Bush’s War*.

<sup>22</sup> Kirk, *Bush’s War*, transcript.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon, *Cobra II*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Mayer, “The Manipulator.”



Lady Laura Bush at the 2004 State of the Union Address.<sup>25</sup> Later, US plans for a post-Saddam Iraq would include handing over power to Chalabi, however this failed as he had little public support within the country.<sup>26</sup> The administration would later distance itself publicly from him, authorizing a raid on his home in Iraq<sup>27</sup> and accusing him of being an Iranian agent.<sup>28</sup> Chalabi claimed that these actions were taken to make him a scapegoat.<sup>29</sup>

For the rest of 2001, while the public policy was aimed toward Afghanistan, war plans for Iraq were being drawn up at the Department of Defense (DOD). According to the authors of *Cobra II*, “Rumsfeld’s Pentagon was one step ahead of the president. By the time Bush ordered that a contingency plan for Iraq be drawn up the effort was already quietly under way.”<sup>30</sup>

Iraq’s major reentry into public discourse in the US came on January 29, 2002, during President Bush’s first State of the Union Address. He proclaimed Iraq, Iran, and North Korea to be a part of an “axis of evil.” He gave the most weight to Iraq:

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections -- then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave

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<sup>25</sup> Office of the First Lady, “Special Guests of Mrs. Bush at the State of the Union,” The White House, January 20, 2004, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040120-5.html>.

<sup>26</sup> *Bush’s War*.

<sup>27</sup> Mayer, “The Manipulator.”

<sup>28</sup> Walter Pincus and Bradley Graham, “Coded Cable In 1995 Used Chalabi’s Name,” *The Washington Post*, June 4, 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A14020-2004Jun3.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Mayer, “The Manipulator.”

<sup>30</sup> Gordon, *Cobra II*, 22.

and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic.

We will work closely with our coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology, and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction.

We will develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America and our allies from sudden attack. And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security.

We'll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons.<sup>31</sup>

Three months after 9/11, with his approval ratings above 80%,<sup>32</sup> President Bush outlined the chief principle of what would come to be known as the “Bush Doctrine,” that the US had the right to strike pre-emptively against nation-states it saw as a possible threat.

A chief component of the case for military action in Iraq was an alleged connection between the nation and Al Qaeda. Evidence of such an involvement with Al Qaeda came a few days after the September 11 attacks. On September 18, 2001, Stanislav Gross, then interior minister of the Czech Republic, stated that Mohamed Atta, one of the 9/11 hijackers, met with alleged Iraqi intelligence agent Ahmad Khalil Ibrahim Samir al-Ani in April of 2001 in Prague. The CIA, however, contended that mobile phone records and photos from bank surveillance

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<sup>31</sup> George W. Bush, *State of the Union Address*, The White House, January 29, 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20020129-11.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Simon Jeffery, “George Bush’s approval ratings: 2001-09,” *The Guardian*, January 16, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2009/jan/16/george-bush-approval-ratings-america>.

cameras placed Atta in Virginia Beach, VA and then Coral Springs, FL at this time.<sup>33</sup> Another source of this connection was Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, who was captured in Pakistan in November of 2001. After being subjected to “enhanced interrogation techniques” in Egypt, al-Libi told interrogators that Iraq trained Al Qaeda operatives in the use of chemical and biological weapons.<sup>34</sup> Al-Libi later retracted his statement, saying that he made it to end the torture techniques to which he was being subjected. Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, the chief-of-staff to Colin Powell while he was Secretary of State, said of the techniques used against al-Libi and others, “its principal priority for intelligence was not aimed at preempting another terrorist attack on the US but discovering a smoking gun linking Iraq and al Qaeda.”<sup>35</sup> Bush administration officials continually repeated this alleged connection, especially Cheney, who continued to assert it, even after it was publicly debunked.<sup>36</sup>

Another allegation against Iraq was that it was seeking uranium “yellowcake” in order to advance a nuclear weapons program. Documentation of this information was given to the US by British intelligence. These documents were later found to be forgeries originating in Italy.<sup>37</sup> In February of 2002, former Ambassador to Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe, Joseph Wilson was asked by the CIA to travel to Niger to investigate this claim that would later come to be known as the “sixteen words” after uttered by President Bush in his 2003 State of the Union Address. He stated, “The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant

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<sup>33</sup> Brian Whitmore, “A 9/11 legacy: confusion over a name Czechs find error in tracking Atta,” *The Boston Globe*, September 19, 2004, [http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2004/09/19/a\\_911\\_legacy\\_confusion\\_over\\_a\\_name\\_czechs\\_find\\_error\\_in\\_tracking\\_atta/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2004/09/19/a_911_legacy_confusion_over_a_name_czechs_find_error_in_tracking_atta/).

<sup>34</sup> Dana Priest, “Al Qaeda-Iraq Link Recanted,” *The Washington Post*, August 1, 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30909-2004Jul31.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Matt Smith, “Powell aide says torture helped build Iraq war case,” *CNN*, May 14, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/05/14/iraq.torture/>.

<sup>36</sup> Anne E. Kornblut and Bryan Bender, “Cheney link of Iraq, 9/11 challenged,” *The Boston Globe*, September 16, 2003, [http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/09/16/cheney\\_link\\_of\\_iraq\\_911\\_challenged/](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2003/09/16/cheney_link_of_iraq_911_challenged/).

<sup>37</sup> Robert Collier, “Seeds of leak scandal sown in Italian intelligence agency,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 30, 2005, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/10/30/INGJPF2J11.DTL>.

quantities of uranium from Africa.”<sup>38</sup> Wilson was sent because of his ties to the region as a diplomat at the request of the CIA, which had been asked to investigate the claim by the office of Vice President Cheney.<sup>39</sup> Three months after the invasion of Iraq, on July 6, 2003, Wilson wrote an op-ed for *The New York Times* called, “What I Didn’t Find in Africa.” In it, Wilson wrote:

I met with Ambassador Owens-Kirkpatrick at the embassy. For reasons that are understandable, the embassy staff has always kept a close eye on Niger's uranium business. I was not surprised, then, when the ambassador told me that she knew about the allegations of uranium sales to Iraq; and that she felt she had already debunked them in her reports to Washington.

Concerning his own investigation, he wrote:

Given the structure of the consortiums that operated the mines, it would be exceedingly difficult for Niger to transfer uranium to Iraq. Niger's uranium business consists of two mines, Somair and Cominak, which are run by French, Spanish, Japanese, German and Nigerian interests. If the government wanted to remove uranium from a mine, it would have to notify the consortium, which in turn is strictly monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Moreover, because the two mines are closely regulated, quasi-governmental entities, selling uranium would require the approval of the minister of mines, the prime minister and probably the president. In short, there's simply too much oversight over too small an industry for a sale to have transpired.

He went on to say:

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<sup>38</sup> George W. Bush, “Bush's State of the Union speech,” *CNN*, January 29, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/01/28/sotu.transcript/>.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Wilson, “What I Didn’t Find in Africa,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/opinion/06WILS.html?pagewanted=1>.

Before I left Niger, I briefed the ambassador on my findings, which were consistent with her own. I also shared my conclusions with members of her staff. In early March, I arrived in Washington and promptly provided a detailed briefing to the C.I.A. I later shared my conclusions with the State Department African Affairs Bureau... Those are the facts surrounding my efforts. The vice president's office asked a serious question. I was asked to help formulate the answer. I did so, and I have every confidence that the answer I provided was circulated to the appropriate officials within our government.<sup>40</sup>

Despite Wilson's findings, the administration continued to use the claim as justification for military action in Iraq. Many believe that in retribution for his op-ed, the White House leaked the identity of Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame who was a covert CIA operative, to reporter Robert Novak.<sup>41</sup>

The Bush administration alleged that Iraq had stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons as well. In a radio address to the nation, on the week congress was to vote on the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, Bush claimed, "In defiance of pledges to the United Nations, Iraq has stockpiled biological and chemical weapons, and is rebuilding the facilities used to make more of those weapons."<sup>42</sup> The administration claimed that Iraq was attempting to deceive foreign intelligence and inspectors by hiding the weapons and developing them in mobile facilities. According to Colin Powell in his February 5, 2003 address to the UN Security Council, "most of the launchers and warheads had been hidden in large groves of palm trees and were to be moved every one to four weeks to escape detection." In addition he stated:

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> "Plame Wilson: Leak severely hurt U.S. intelligence," *CNN*, March 27, 2007, <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/03/16/cia.leak/index.html>.

<sup>42</sup> George W. Bush, "President: Iraqi Regime Danger to America is 'Grave and Growing,'" Radio Address to the Nation, October 5, 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021005.html>.

Dr. Blix told this Council that Iraq has provided little evidence to verify anthrax production and no convincing evidence of its destruction. It should come as no shock then that since Saddam Hussein forced out the last inspectors in 1998, we have amassed much intelligence indicating that Iraq is continuing to make these weapons. One of the most worrisome things that emerges from the thick intelligence file we have on Iraq's biological weapons is the existence of mobile production facilities used to make biological agents.<sup>43</sup>

However, the aforementioned Dr. Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector in Iraq claimed that the evidence presented by Powell was “shaky” at best. In regards to the mobile facilities, he said, “Our inspectors had been there, and they had taken a lot of samples, and there was no trace of any chemicals or biological things.” He continued, “and the trucks that we had seen were water trucks.” He said that he conveyed this information to the Bush administration, but “I think they chose to ignore us.”<sup>44</sup>

For his own part, Secretary Powell later regretted his remarks to the UNSC, saying, “It's a blot. I'm the one who presented it on behalf of the United States to the world, and [it] will always be a part of my record. It was painful. It's painful now.”<sup>45</sup> Col. Wilkerson said of his part in preparing the speech,

It makes me feel terrible. I've said in other places that it was – constitutes the lowest point in my professional life. My participation in that presentation at the UN constitutes the

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<sup>43</sup> Colin Powell, “Transcript of Powell’s U.N. presentation,” *CNN*, February 6, 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/02/05/sprj.irq.powell.transcript/>.

<sup>44</sup> “Iraq war wasn't justified, U.N. weapons experts say,” *CNN*, March 22, 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/03/21/iraq.weapons/>.

<sup>45</sup> “Colin Powell on Iraq, Race, and Hurricane Relief,” *ABC News 20/20*, September 8, 2005, <http://abcnews.go.com/2020/Politics/story?id=1105979&page=1>.

lowest point in my professional life. I participated in a hoax on the American people, the international community and the United Nations Security Council.

He went on to say:

In fact [Powell] did his best-- I watched him work. Two AM in the morning on the DCI and the Deputy DCI, John McLaughlin. And to try and hone the presentation down to what was, in the DCI's own words, a slam dunk. Firm. Iron clad. We threw many things out. We threw the script that "Scooter" Libby had given the – Secretary of State.

Forty-eight page script on WMD. We threw that out the first day. And we turned to the National Intelligence Estimate as part of the recommendation of George Tenet and my agreement with. But even that turned out to be, in its substantive parts – that is stockpiles of chemicals, biologicals [sic] and production capability that was hot and so forth, and an active nuclear program. The three most essential parts of that presentation turned out to be absolutely false.<sup>46</sup>

The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which Wilkerson cites, is a document created for policymakers that presents the intelligence community's authoritative conclusions on a certain intelligence issue. Former Senator Bob Graham (D-FL) was the chairman of the Senate Intelligence committee at the time. He stated of the creation of the NIE for Iraq:

We had a meeting of the Senate Intelligence Committee, a closed meeting, with Director Tenet. And several of us ask [sic] him, "What did the National Intelligence Estimate say about this issue?"... The answer that we got from Director Tenet is, "We've never done a National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq, including its weapons of mass destruction."

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<sup>46</sup> Lawrence Wilkerson, interview by David Brancaccio, *NOW*, PBS, February 3, 2006, <http://www.pbs.org/now/politics/wilkerson.html>.

Stunning. We do these on almost every significant activity, much less significant than getting ready to go to war. We were flying blind.

Tenet informed the committee that the CIA was busy with other matters, such as Al Qaeda, Graham retorted, “We said, ‘We don't care. This is the most important decision that we, as members of Congress, and that the people of America are likely to make in the foreseeable future. We want to have the best understanding of what it is we're about to get involved with.’”<sup>47</sup>

NIEs often take a number of months, sometimes years to complete. This one was completed in two weeks.<sup>48</sup> The following is taken from the PBS documentary *Bush's War*. In it, intelligence officers interviewed said the following of the creation of the NIE:

**NARRATOR:** To some in the CIA, it looked like the vice president himself was determined to control the content of the NIE. Both Cheney and Scooter Libby had made about 10 trips to CIA headquarters, where they personally questioned analysts.

**MELVIN GOODMAN** [Fmr. CIA Officer]: I was at the CIA for 24 years. The only time a vice president came to the CIA building was for a ceremony, to cut a ribbon, to stand on the stage, but not to harangue analysts about finished intelligence.

**W. PATRICK LANG** [Fmr. Defense. Intel. Agency Officer]: Many, many of them have told me they were pressured. And there are a lot of ways. Pressure takes a lot of forms.

**PAUL PILLAR, National Intel. Officer, 2000-'05:** The questions every morning, the tasks, the requests to look into this angle one more time, turn over that rock again. If you didn't find anything last week, look again to see if there's something there for that-about that connection.

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<sup>47</sup> Kirk, *Bush's War*, transcript.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



**VINCENT CANNISTRARO, Fmr. CIA Officer:** So you start looking very hard for anything at all that will support that answer that the vice president wants, that the Defense Department wants.

It goes on to say:

**NARRATOR:** The media blitz, the visits by the vice president and his chief of staff- some in the CIA say it was all a kind of subtle arm-twisting. Later, a divided Senate commission would say that it did not constitute undue pressure. But at the CIA, some said it did.

**PAUL PILLAR:** Politicization, real politicization, rarely works that way- that is to say, you know, blatant, crude, arm-twisting. It's always far more subtle.

**NARRATOR:** And so under intense political pressure both from the Congress and the administration, the CIA developed the NIE. In early October, Tenet delivered it. Much of it was outdated, from the 1990s. There were four or five new allegations- the aluminum tubes, mobile biological, chemical and nuclear programs.

In addition:

**NARRATOR:** Amidst a clamor to release the classified NIE, Tenet had passed out a sanitized version known as "the white paper."

**Sen. BOB GRAHAM (D-FL), Select Cmte. on Intel., 2001-'03:** And one of the surprising things about it was it was of a very high production level- graphs, photographs in color. It was an advocacy piece.

**INTERVIEWER:** What does it say to you?

**Sen. BOB GRAHAM:** Oh, it says to me that the decision had been made that we're going to go to war with Iraq, all of this other was just window dressing, and that the

intelligence community was being used as almost a public relations operation to validate the war against Saddam Hussein.

**NARRATOR:** Paul Pillar, a veteran high-ranking CIA analyst, was one of the primary authors of the white paper. He now disavows it.

**PAUL PILLAR:** It was clearly requested and published for policy advocacy purposes. This was not informing a decision. What was the purpose of it? The purpose was to strengthen the case for going to war with the American public. Is it proper for the intelligence community to publish papers with that purpose? I don't think so. And I regret having had a role in that.<sup>49</sup>

These US intelligence officials were not alone in their assessment of the push to war. The now infamous “Downing Street Memo,” leaked to the UK press in 2005, conveys the British government’s knowledge that despite the evidence, the decision to invade Iraq was already made and that there was no concrete plan for a post-war Iraq. The following is from that July 23, 2002 memo, the person identified as “C” is Sir Richard Billing Dearlove, then head of the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6):

C reported on his recent talks in Washington. There was a perceptible shift in attitude. Military action was now seen as inevitable. Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD. But the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy. The [National Security Council] had no patience with the UN route, and no enthusiasm for publishing material on the Iraqi

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

regime's record. There was little discussion in Washington of the aftermath after military action.<sup>50</sup>

Despite this knowledge, the UK contributed 46,000 troops, the second largest force after the US, to the war in Iraq. On March 20, 2003, coalition forces invaded Iraq. Gallup polling in the US on March 24-25 showed a 75% approval of the war.

### **Personal Conclusions**

In an interview during his last days as president, George W. Bush said of his time in office, “the biggest regret of all the presidency has to have been the intelligence failure in Iraq.”<sup>51</sup> However, from what those intelligence officers and government insiders have asserted, it seems that there was no such failure, rather a submission to pressure from the highest levels of government to find the evidence and make the conclusions that they wanted. Even before Bush took office, the Neoconservative agenda was to remove Saddam Hussein from power. According to former Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neill, “it was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The president saying ‘Go find me a way to do this.’”<sup>52</sup> The administration capitalized on the fear and desire for retribution that 9/11 gave American citizens. However, when they lost that battle for “hearts and minds” in the US, they sought to place the blame on the intelligence community.

After their initial justifications for entering Iraq were proven false, the Bush administration continued to justify the war, contending that the invasion was necessary to

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<sup>50</sup> “The secret Downing Street memo,” *The Sunday Times*, May 1, 2005, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article387374.ece>.

<sup>51</sup> “Bush calls flawed Iraq intelligence biggest regret,” *Reuters*, December 1, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE4B071020081201>.

<sup>52</sup> Leung, “Bush Sought ‘Way’...”

liberate the Iraqi people from an oppressive dictator.<sup>53</sup> It is true that Hussein was a war criminal who killed his own citizens through deadly military crackdowns and chemical weapons.<sup>54</sup> However, of all the dictatorships in the world, why was it more important to go into Iraq than any other nation? Furthermore, will Iraq be a better place because of the US invasion? According to many, especially in Iraq, human conditions are now as bad, and in some cases, worse than they were under Hussein. A 2005 UN survey in the country showed that many citizens lacked basic amenities such as food, electricity, clean water, sanitation, and healthcare.<sup>55</sup> Under Hussein's secularist government, women, in large part, had more rights and freedoms than they do now.<sup>56</sup> The new constitution in Iraq, written with the guidance of the US, states, "Islam is the official religion of the state and is a basic source of legislation... No law can be passed that contradicts the undisputed rules of Islam." This leaves women's rights under the interpretation of religious leaders.<sup>57</sup> In addition, some contend that abuses, torture, and murders by governing Shia religious leaders with their own secret militias are worse now than under Hussein's Sunni government. Ayad Allawi, a former prime minister of Iraq, stated, "people are doing the same as [in] Saddam's time and worse."<sup>58</sup>

The invasion, and key decisions made by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) under L. Paul Bremer, such as the disbanding of the Iraqi army and the "de-Ba'athification" of

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<sup>53</sup> Dan Eggen, "Continue Pressing Al-Qaeda, Bush Urges," *The Washington Post*, December 10, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/09/AR2008120902835.html>.

<sup>54</sup> "Whatever Happened To The Iraqi Kurds?" *Human Rights Watch*, March 11, 1991, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1991/IRAQ913.htm#4>.

<sup>55</sup> Chris Shumway, "Iraqis Endure Worse Conditions Than Under Saddam, UN Survey Finds," *The New Standard*, May 18, 2005, <http://newstandardnews.net/content/?items=1816>.

<sup>56</sup> Sanjay Suri, "Saddam Better for Women," *Inter Press Service*, March 29, 2006, <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=32693>.

<sup>57</sup> Abdu Rahman and Dahr Jamail, "Women Miss Saddam," *Inter Press Service*, March 12, 2010, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50642>.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Beaumont, "Abuse worse than under Saddam, says Iraqi leader," *The Guardian*, November 27, 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/nov/27/iraq.peterbeaumont>.

the government, helped to create an armed and aggrieved Sunni insurgency in the country.<sup>59</sup> The invasion removed forces, assets, and attention away from Afghanistan. Now, nine years after he attacked the US, Osama bin Laden has escaped Afghanistan and is now believed to be in Pakistan.<sup>60</sup> The war in Iraq has removed the chief counterweight to Iranian power in the region in a time when it seems to be seeking a nuclear weapons program.<sup>61</sup> Favorability of the US in predominately Muslim nations is at a troubling low.<sup>62</sup> Yet, most importantly, the war has taken the lives of over 4,400 American soldiers<sup>63</sup> and around 100,000 Iraqi civilians.<sup>64</sup>

Only time will tell if Iraq will become a better place because of our actions, but it is my opinion that war in Iraq was unjustified. *War Songs* is a call to remember the Iraq war, its misguided beginnings, and those who fought in it, especially those that gave their lives. *War Songs* is a call for its listeners to remember the sacrifices of these men and women and to honor them. To honor them, we need only to remember, because if we remember why they died, we can use our democratic power to prevent future wars of choice.

### **“Over There (Johnny Get Your Gun)”**

The first song of the cycle is an arrangement of the popular 1917 song “Over There” by George M. Cohan. In his day, Cohan was known as “the man who owned Broadway.” “Over There,” is one of his most well known songs, along with “You’re a Grand Old Flag” and “Give My Regards to Broadway.” “Over There” is a patriotic call for young men to join the military. It was written in 1917, after the US declared war on Germany, but its popularity endured through

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<sup>59</sup> *Bush’s War*.

<sup>60</sup> “CIA chief says bin Laden in Pakistan,” *Reuters*, June 11, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN11512545>.

<sup>61</sup> “Iran’s Nuclear Program,” *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/info/iran-nuclear-program/>.

<sup>62</sup> “Obama More Popular Abroad Than At Home, Global Image of U.S. Continues to Benefit,” *Pew Research Center*, June 17, 2010, <http://pewglobal.org/2010/06/17/obama-more-popular-abroad-than-at-home/>.

<sup>63</sup> “Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom Casualties,” *icasualties.org*, <http://www.icasualties.org/>.

<sup>64</sup> “Documented civilian deaths from violence,” *Iraq Body Count*, <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>.

the Second World War and is familiar to many today. For the most part, the arrangement in *War Songs* presents a direct transcription of the tune in the vocal line. The accompaniment, however, is completely original and heavily inspired by the work of American composer Charles Ives.

There are two main reasons for the inclusion of this song. First, it is a historical example of how music can be used to influence public opinion. While we have no data to tell us how many young men, if any, were swayed by this song to join the war effort (although any man eligible for the draft would have been forced to participate anyway), we do know the song was extremely popular during both World Wars. It was so popular in fact, that it and “You’re a Grand Old Flag” earned Cohan a Congressional Gold Medal in 1936.<sup>65</sup> <sup>66</sup> In his biography, *George M. Cohan: The Man Who Owned Broadway*, John McCabe writes, “This was the first time in its history that Congress had given a medal for the writing of songs, and it was a signal recognition of music’s power of inspiration in time of war.”<sup>67</sup>

Second, it is an example of the public enthusiasm that precedes the entrance into many wars. It is a pleasant tune that speaks of the pride and glory a young man can receive from joining the military. After reflection though, one might find the levity of the song to be disturbingly ignorant to the harsh realities of war.

I think this latter point is especially resonant in terms of the Iraq War. While there may not have been enthusiasm to enter Iraq, it seems that the fears that lingered after 9/11, exacerbated by the Bush administration’s claims of the danger Iraq posed to the US, pushed the American people’s willingness and acceptance of the invasion. According to the Gallup findings previously cited, public support for entering the war was 75% in 2003. I do think there is a great

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<sup>65</sup> Office of the Clerk, “Congressional Gold Medal Recipients,” US House of Representatives, [http://clerk.house.gov/art\\_history/house\\_history/goldMedal.html](http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/house_history/goldMedal.html).

<sup>66</sup> John McCabe, *George M. Cohan: The Man Who Owned Broadway* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 234

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

ignorance of what American soldiers must endure on the battlefield. We are far removed from the dangers of war, and besides the attack on Pearl Harbor, have never had to experience military battle on our soil since the Civil War. Because of this, it is frankly easier for us to justify the use of military force. This ignorance is one thing that *War Songs* seeks to address through the use of experiences by those who served on the front lines.

As previously stated, this arrangement of “Over There” features a nearly complete transcription of the original vocal line. The transcription is of a 1917 recording by Billy Murray, which I found on the Internet. The changes I made to the vocal line were small stylistic ones. For example, at times, the singer is asked to shout instead of sing, like in the examples below:

(shouting)




Hur-ry right a-way, no de-lay go to-day!



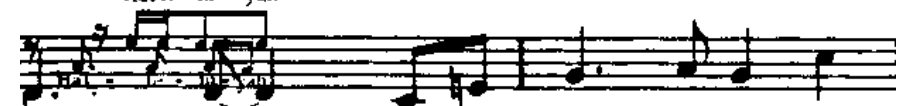
Hoist the flag and let 'er fly!

This technique was inspired, in part, by the use of shouting in Charles Ives' song “General William Booth Enters Into Heaven”:



the blood of the Lamb of the Lamb? Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah

(upper voices as a shout)  
Hal-le-lu-jah



raight-ened, with-ered limbs un-curled And

However, the notation used in *War Songs* is taken from the *sprechstimme* technique, which calls for a singer to speak at an approximate pitch.

The influence of Ives is more evident in the accompaniment. Before and during the composition of this song, I examined two songs by Ives “They Are There (Fighting for the People’s New Free World)” and “General William Booth Enters Into Heaven,” along with his wind band piece *Country Band March*. These pieces, like much of Ives’ work, feature tuneful melodies, such as popular or patriotic songs, along with original material, juxtaposed with bitonal or polytonal material, chromaticism, free atonality, and heavy syncopation. These combined elements create a cacophony of sounds and seem to be a musical depiction of chaos. This style anchored Ives in an American musical tradition, while allowing him to create something entirely new. I believe this style is very effective and can communicate powerful messages to an audience. While the cacophony may alienate or even trouble some listeners, the popular tunes or pleasant original melodies give the listener something to hold on or relate to in the music. I believe this technique has two possible psychological effects on the listener. 1.) The familiar or tuneful melody undermines the chaos, giving the listener relief that something “traditional” or even tradition itself survives through the chaos. Or 2.) the chaos undermines the familiar or tuneful melody, making the former seem comical, distorting the original meaning of the tune, or showing the true nature of the tune. My arrangement of “Over There” seeks to achieve the latter effect.

Themes from armed forces songs are quoted in the accompaniment throughout the song. The Air Force Song, Marine’s Hymn, and Anchors Away are quoted in B flat major against A flat major, while the Caisson Song is quoted in A flat. These quotes do not appear in order to be mocked or undermined like the original “Over There” melody, instead they reinforce the fact that



it is military service that the original song is calling the young men to, in order to “make [their] Daddy glad” and their Mother or sweetheart proud, not to serve their country in a civilian context. They also serve as another example of music used to influence people. Lastly, they are more familiar melodies to add to the musical chaos.

### **“Beat! Beat! Drums!”**

This poem was written by Walt Whitman and appears in his collection *Leaves of Grass*. English writer and biographer Phillip Callow called the poem a rallying cry for the North upon the entrance of the Civil War.<sup>68</sup> However, the poem does not seem to represent the values of the North, or even the South for that matter. Instead, it seems to depict the cruelties of war, especially one fought on native soil. This poem is relevant to other wars, even Iraq. Its lines echo the concerns of many especially during the decline of public support. For example:

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow! Through the windows—through doors—burst  
like a ruthless force...

Into the school where the scholar is studying;

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain...

These lines echo the fears of many that the US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan was straining the military and would force the government to reinstate the draft in order to be successful in these conflicts. This concern came to the forefront during the 2004 Presidential election in a question to President Bush in a town hall style debate on October 2, 2004. The exchange between Bush and the questioner has become famous more for the grammatical error made on the part of the President than the substance of the question and answer:

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<sup>68</sup> Philip Callow, *From Noon to Starry Night: A Life of Walt Whitman* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992), 283

**FARLEY:** Mr. President, since we continue to police the world, how do you intend to maintain our military presence without reinstating [sic] a draft?

**BUSH:** Yes, that's a great question. Thanks. I hear there's rumors on the Internets [sic] that we're going to have a draft. We're not going to have a draft, period. The all-volunteer army works. It works particularly when we pay our troops well. It works when we make sure they've got housing, like we have done in the last military budgets. An all-volunteer army is best suited to fight the new wars of the 21st century, which is to be specialized and to find these people as they hide around the world. We don't need mass armies anymore...<sup>69</sup>

The US did not have to reinstitute the draft during these wars, but many service men and women found themselves on multiple deployments with little time in between to spend home with family. In addition, over 4,400 American soldiers have lost their lives in Iraq. These concerns find a voice in Whitman's words:

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
 Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
 Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
 Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,  
 Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses...

However, earlier lines from the poem seems to speak especially to us during our current economic crisis, which some call the “Great Recession,” “Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds/No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators would they continue?” There is a debate among economists as to the cause of this

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<sup>69</sup> “October 8, 2004 Debate Transcript,” *Commission on Presidential Debates*, October 8, 2004, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-8-2004-debate-transcript>.

financial crisis, but many agree that it was a number of contributing factors, which came to a climax in 2007. Some believe a series deregulations and refusals to regulate, which began under Ronald Reagan and continued through the presidency of George W. Bush, created a culture of excessive risk taking on Wall Street among “brokers and speculators.”<sup>70</sup>

Most economists agree that the bursting of the so-called “housing bubble” in 2007, caused by a large number of borrowers with subprime mortgage loans, loans to those with less than ideal credit and therefore more likely to default on payments, were foreclosed on because of payment defaults.<sup>71</sup> These foreclosures not only kicked large numbers of people out of their homes, but also caused the ruin of important financial institutions.

Today’s soldiers returning from war are coming home to this economy and an unemployment rate of 9.6%.<sup>72</sup> They are also finding that there are “no beds prepared” for them. One of every four homeless people in the US is a veteran and the Veterans Affairs Department has calculated that there are 1,500 homeless veterans from our current wars alone.<sup>73</sup>

This poem, written over 150 years ago, is universal in its themes of warfare, religion, education, and financial prosperity, among others. I was drawn to this poem because of its reference to brokers and speculators, along with its reference to schools. In our current financial crisis, these words ring true to us, as if it were written recently. In addition, I believe that students should remain informed about developments in the wars in the Middle East and other policy debates at home. Even if young people are not called into compulsory service, many of those fighting in these wars are college-aged.

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<sup>70</sup> Jacob Weisberg, “What Caused the Economic Crisis?” *Slate*, January 9, 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2240858/>.

<sup>71</sup> “Foreclosures,” *The New York Times*, May 6, 2010, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/f/foreclosures/index.html?scp=4&sq=foreclosure%20crisis&st=cse>.

<sup>72</sup> US Department of Labor, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, August, 2010, <http://www.bls.gov/cps/>.

<sup>73</sup> “Veterans make up 1 in 4 homeless,” *USA Today*, November 7, 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-11-07-homeless-veterans\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-11-07-homeless-veterans_N.htm).

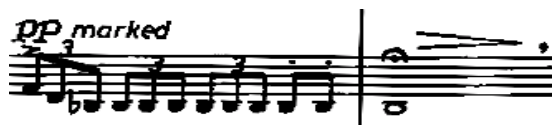
This poem has been set to music multiple times, most notably by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams in his cantata *Dona Nobis Pacem*. His setting was a chief inspiration of my own. *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Latin for “grant us peace,” was written in 1936, a time of both economic and diplomatic turmoil. The world was in the grips of the Great Depression.<sup>74</sup> In addition, Germany, now under Nazi power, was asserting itself militaristically, breaking the Treaty of Versailles by reoccupying the Rhineland and signing the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, effectively beginning the Axis Powers. The cantata also sets two other poems by Whitman, text from the *Angus Dei* of the Latin Mass, Biblical texts, and a quote by the 19th century British politician John Bright, taken from a speech given on the floor of the House of Commons in opposition to the Crimean War.<sup>75</sup>

The setting of “Beat! Beat! Drums!” in *War Songs* pays homage to Vaughan Williams’ setting and his message of peace by quoting the fanfare-like motive used throughout the movement:

<sup>74</sup> It is curious, however, that the words “no brokers or speculators” are omitted from Vaughan Williams setting of “Beat! Beat! Drums!” given that the depression was caused by a collapse of the stock market.

<sup>75</sup> Toby Baxendale, “John Bright: The ‘Angel of Death has Been Abroad’ Speech – A Poetic Anti-War Masterpiece,” The Cobden Centre, August 24, 2010, <http://www.cobdencentre.org/2010/08/the-angel-of-death-has-been-abroad/>.

In addition, a quote from the Dies Irae of Britten's *War Requiem* is used throughout the setting, also paying homage to his inspiration on *War Songs*:



Britten's *War Requiem*, as the score notes, was commissioned for the consecration of St. Michael's Cathedral, Coventry. The original structure of the medieval cathedral was nearly destroyed completely by bombings during WWII.<sup>76</sup> In his work, completed in 1962, Britten sets the text of the traditional Latin Requiem Mass, yet intersperses poetry by Wilfred Owen, a soldier who served and died in WWI. The poetry is dark and bitter, and at times seems to comment on the text of the Requiem Mass. While the UK was not engaged in war at the time, the period was marked by tensions of the Cold War, along with the United States' war in Vietnam.

The use of these quotes not only pay homage to their original composers and musical activism for peace, but are also meant to display the universal experience of war and desire for peace. This universal attitude, a spirit of "us," is also conveyed in the arrangement of "Over There." Using recognizable themes and melodies, I hope to provide a sense of familiarity that the listener can identify with. These first two songs represent the views of the population at large. Among these authors and composers, only Vaughan Williams was a soldier, but they were all affected by war. Their sharp differences are a reflection of their times, cultures, and their own beliefs. In bringing them together, I hope to present a picture of a general populace, affected by war, but not directly threatened by it. The next two settings of poetry by Iraq War veterans are very personal and tell a firsthand story of war.

<sup>76</sup> Malcolm MacDonald, Preface to Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1997), v

## Sand

The poem “Sand” comes from a collection called *Blood, Sweat, and Fury* by Andrew Borene. A native of Edina, MN, Borene served as a military intelligence officer in the Marines. In 2003, he participated in major combat operations in Iraq and left the country in May of the same year. In 2006, he ran as a Democrat to become the State Senator of his hometown of Edina. However, Borene withdrew from this election after he was charged with domestic assault. In this time, he was treated for alcoholism and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>77</sup> The poems in *Blood, Sweat, and Fury* were written throughout his life, some from his time in Iraq, law school, on the campaign trail, and after his withdrawal from the campaign.<sup>78</sup>

I had the pleasure of speaking with Mr. Borene over the phone. He is now a lecturer at the University of Minnesota, where he focuses on global policy and intelligence. We spoke about his poem, time in Iraq, personal struggles, and his opinions on policy. “Sand” talks about trying to hold grains of sand. It states that the best way to do so is “with lots of practice and a broom and pan.” Its last line states, “When you lose you learn.” When I originally read the poem, I saw it as an allegory of the US policy in Iraq and interventionist foreign policy in general for the last 60 years. I felt it symbolized the United States’ apparent need to have control and influence throughout the world, and the lesson that sometimes, we need to rely on our allies and international structures such as the UN. However, Mr. Borene informed me while I was right about a need for control, that it was about personal relationships. I believe my setting defers to his interpretation.

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<sup>77</sup> “Veteran and Poet Raising Money for IAVA,” Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, December 10, 2008, <http://iava.org/blog/veteran-and-poet-raising-money-iava>.

<sup>78</sup> Andrew Borene, *Blood, Sweat, and Fury* (New York and Bloomington: iUniverse, 2008), ix

It is in a definitive e minor and far less tonally ambiguous than the previous two songs. It is not martial or violent, rather, it is contemplative and personal. It does not employ the brass and percussion, instead the flute, strings, and piano play an intimate accompaniment to the voice. Even though it does not mention warfare and, as Mr. Borene informed me, was not an allegory to it, I was very drawn to this poem because of the imagery of sand. A poem that I have set to music by Edgar Allan Poe called “A Dream Within a Dream” uses a similar imagery of sand:

I stand amid the roar  
 Of a surf-tormented shore,  
 And I hold within my hand  
 Grains of the golden sand—  
 How few! yet how they creep  
 Through my fingers to the deep,  
 While I weep—while I weep!  
 O God! can I not grasp  
 Them with a tighter clasp?  
 O God! can I not save  
*One* from the pitiless wave?

In both poems, sand is seen as a symbol of the human life, our fate, circumstances, or problems. We try our best to control them, yet at times doing so only seems to end in failure. As Mr. Borene told me, “you can’t control anything outside of yourself” and that at times we need “external help” And while he says it is not specifically about his time in Iraq, I find it interesting that as someone who was surrounded by sand in Iraq, he returned home to see it as a symbol for his personal hardships.

Another interesting aspect of “Sand” is its use of punctuation. It uses standard punctuation until the last three lines. These lines are void of any punctuation, it does not even end in a period. While I was not completely sure of the meaning, or even what I interpreted it as, it played a crucial role in the ending of the song. Instead of a clear ending, the voice ends on scale degree six with followed by a short staccato and plucked E in the piano and cello respectively. This sudden ending gives the listener the feeling that the song should not have ended there. This is accentuated by the brevity of the song. I had the same impressions when reading and analyzing the poem, and felt that there was a certain power to this, whose meaning I did not quite understand.

The melody of this last line is another quote, this time from Aaron Copland’s setting of “The World Feels Dusty” by Emily Dickinson. Besides the fact that I was listening to Copland’s Dickinson settings a lot around this time, I saw a connection to “Sand” and Dickinson’s poem in the imagery of dryness:

The World — feels Dusty  
 When We stop to Die —  
 We want the Dew — then —  
 Honors — taste dry —  
  
 Flags — vex a Dying face —  
 But the least Fan  
 Stirred by a friend's Hand —  
 Cools — like the Rain —



Mine be the Ministry  
 When they Thirst comes —  
 And Hybla Balms —  
 Dews of Thessaly, to fetch —

Dickinson's poem also hints at wanting to be in control of something we have no control over, in this case, our death. Her words "when we stop to die," seem to say that we decide when our time on earth has ended. This sentiment, or at least her desire for it, is found in the lines of another one of her poems in which she states, "Because I could not stop for Death/he kindly stopped for me."

### **Here, Bullet**

The poem "Here, Bullet" shares its name with the award winning collection in which it is found by Brian Turner. Turner served in the Army for seven years, including a year in Iraq starting in November of 2003.<sup>79</sup> <sup>80</sup> Turner's poetry has been featured in many media forums, including The New York Times,<sup>81</sup> The New Yorker,<sup>82</sup> NPR, and PBS.<sup>83</sup> Turner has received numerous awards and honors for his work, including the 2005 Beatrice Hawley Award, the Maine Literary Award in Poetry, a 2006 Lannan Literary Fellowship, a 2007 National

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<sup>79</sup> "Iraq Soldier Describes War in Poetry," *NPR*, January 6, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5126583>.

<sup>80</sup> "Brian Turner," *From the Fishhouse*, April 18, 2005, [http://www.fishhousepoems.org/archives/brian\\_turner/index.shtml](http://www.fishhousepoems.org/archives/brian_turner/index.shtml).

<sup>81</sup> Joshua Clover and Joel Brouwer, "Poetry Chronicle," *The New York Times*, November 27, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/27/books/review/27clover.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Dana Goodyear, "War Poet," *The New Yorker*, November 14, 2005, [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/11/14/051114ta\\_talk\\_goodyear](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/11/14/051114ta_talk_goodyear).

<sup>83</sup> "Poetry Profile: Brian Turner," *PBS Newshour*, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth\\_coverage/entertainment/poetry/profiles/poet\\_turner.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/indepth_coverage/entertainment/poetry/profiles/poet_turner.html)

Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship in Poetry, and the 2009 Amy Lowell Traveling Poetry Scholarship.<sup>84</sup>

Brian Turner's poetry is raw, honest, and personal. In the poem "Here, Bullet," the speaker dares a bullet to kill him, describing the bones and organs it would travel through to do so in vivid detail. The poem does not seem defiant, telling the bullet that it will fail in its mission, nor does it seem like a plea for the bullet to end the speaker's misery. It seems to accept something inevitable. The words neither embrace the bullet's coming, nor prevent it. It seems to be an acceptance, which I find powerful, yet depressing. Here are some selected lines from the work:

If a body is what you want,  
 then here is bone and gristle and flesh...  
 And I dare you to finish  
 what you've started. Because here, Bullet,  
 here is where I complete the word you bring  
 hissing through the air... because here, Bullet,  
 here is where the world ends, every time.

The poem evokes a scene of war, not a glorious and flattering one, but a real and honest one. In my setting, I seek to evoke the same scene. I was inspired by the cliché scenes found in many war movies today when the action runs in slow-motion and the protagonist is seen center screen. Many times, this happens when it seems like the protagonist's side is losing and he watches his comrades fall. These scenes are often accompanied by only a few sound effects, and a slow somber score in which a haunting melody is sung, often in a foreign or ancient language, or just

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<sup>84</sup> "Brian Turner," *From the Fishhouse*.

on a vowel sound such as “ah.” While these scenes may be cliché, they are usually a powerful and emotional depiction of war and my hope is that this song evokes a similar depiction.

The vocal line is haunting with its constant use of descending half steps, descending and ascending minor thirds, and tritones. While it is strictly notated, the melody has the feel of a recitative and sounds as if it is being improvised. The meter changes and the occasional placement of strong syllables on weak beats makes it hard for the listener to feel a steady pulse. Most of the vocal line is in a limited range, and stays within the dynamic range of mezzo piano and mezzo forte. This gives the vocal line a dispassionate and emotionally detached quality. The melody is accompanied by an equally haunting accompaniment.

The instruments are called to use extended techniques such as pitch bends in the flute and trumpet. The pianist is asked to use their hands inside of the piano to mute the strings of the pitches they are about to play and to strum the strings with their fingernail. For most of the piece, the trumpet player is asked to use a Harmon mute without its stem, and the horn player is asked to fully stop the bell with their hand, making an ethereal and distant sound in both instruments. One of the percussionists is asked to play a slide whistle, which sounds like the crying of an otherworldly creature.

Yet, the most important aspect of the accompaniment is in the strings. I use a technique originally developed by 20th century Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi. Many of Scelsi’s pieces, especially his string quartets, only consist of one or two notes. The music seems to explore the wide range of sounds that can occur playing a single note. He apparently developed this technique after going through a mental breakdown, which prevented him from composing for years. He would often spend his time at the piano playing only one note repeatedly.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Alex Ross, “Giacinto Scelsi: ‘The Messenger,’ ” *The New Yorker*, November 21, 2005, [http://www.thereistisnoise.com/2005/11/giacinto\\_scelsi.html](http://www.thereistisnoise.com/2005/11/giacinto_scelsi.html).

Throughout his music, changes in dynamics, rearticulations, and bowings, are constantly occurring throughout the ensemble, at different times and seemingly at random. He also uses octaves, harmonics, tremolos, pizzicati and trills to explore the range of sounds within one note. This technique creates a constantly moving and swirling mass of sound. Here is an example of the technique in Scelsi's *Quartet No. 3*:

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation for Scelsi's *Quartet No. 3*. The first system is in 8/4 time with a tempo of 76. It features four staves with the following annotations:
 

- Staff 1: *TAST.*, *ppb*, *pp*, *(vibr. lento e ampia)*
- Staff 2: *SORD.*, *ppb*, *(pizz. H.S.)*, *ppb*
- Staff 3: *pppp*, triplets of eighth notes
- Staff 4: *pppp quasi impercettibile*, *III. b.*

 The second system is marked with a boxed number '5' and includes the following annotations:
 

- Staff 1: *NAT.*, *(strettissima)*, *mp*
- Staff 2: *mp*, *(mp)*, *pp*
- Staff 3: *mp*, *(dist.)*, *mf*, *pp*, *pizz.*, *(pizz. H.S.)*, *(arco)*, *mp*
- Staff 4: *mp*, *mf*, *pp*, *ALLA --- TAST.*

In this setting, I combine this technique with micropolyphony. Micropolyphony is a technique developed by György Ligeti in which a mass block of constantly moving sound is created by dissonant chords in which every instrument moves to another note, usually by a step or half step, at completely different times throughout the music. In the beginning of "Here, Bullet," the

strings all start on C4, and through the use of these two techniques, in 17 measures they eventually reach a tone cluster consisting of D, E flat, E natural, and F sharp:

The image displays two systems of musical notation for strings, likely in 3/4 time. The first system consists of four staves: two treble clefs (Violins I and II) and two bass clefs (Violas and Cellos/Double Basses). The second system also consists of four staves, continuing the same parts. Dynamics are marked as *p* (piano) and *fp* (fortissimo). Performance instructions include "with mute" for the upper staves and "with mute arco" for the lower staves. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated in the second measure of the first system. The piece concludes with a "slow gliss" (slow glissando) in the final measure of both systems, leading to a dissonant tone cluster.

Despite its unemotional nature, the song ends in a passionate declaration by the voice, with the words, “because here Bullet, here is where the world ends every time.” The instruments respond in an equally passionate and dissonant three-measure coda.

### Dirge for a Soldier

The final poem of this cycle comes from Paul Laurence Dunbar, who is regarded as the first nationally recognized African American poet. He was born in 1872, in Dayton, Ohio. His father Joshua escaped slavery via the Underground Railroad and fought in the Civil War for the Union Army. Although he was born seven years after the war and his father left the family and divorced his mother while he was very young, Paul Laurence Dunbar greatly admired his father's service and the Union cause, writing a number of poems and other works about the war.<sup>86</sup>

In "Dirge for a Soldier," the speaker is observing a military funeral at dawn, describing the action and speaking proudly of the soldier's bravery. Both the opening and closing stanzas begin with the words "In the east the morning comes." I see these words as not only a description of the time, but as a statement of hope. These words along with others throughout the work, such as, "And he answers to his name/In the higher ranks of fame." convey the hope that the soldier has left this world of strife and is now in a better place.

While there is hope, it is still a dirge, a poem of mourning for the dead. The setting in *War Songs* explores the dichotomy between hope and sorrow found in this text. The song begins in an unambiguous B flat major. It portrays the sunrise, while the trumpet plays a noble and reverent melody. However, the music soon moves to g minor and the voice sings the opening words in a mournful melody:



In the east the morn-ing comes hear the roll - in' of the drums on the hill.

<sup>86</sup> Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Collected Poetry of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, Edited and introduction by Joanne M. Braxton (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1993), x-xi

This melody has appeared before in the piece. It is first heard in the horn in “Over There”:



It was heard two more times in the flute in “Here, Bullet”:



The presence of the melody in the earlier songs foreshadows its future use and represents the fact that war will end in sorrow for some. While this cycle is not a narrative one, it does have an emotional progression. As previously stated, the first two songs are the attitudes of the general populace. “Over There” reflects a country’s pride and confidence in a coming conflict and that it will emerge victorious. “Beat! Beat! Drums!” reflects the population’s shift to anger toward the harsh price of war. “Sand” and “Here, Bullet” are the stories of war told by those that we have sent to fight them. They are the stories we must hear in order to remind ourselves that these are people just like us, with hopes, dreams, and families that we are asking to risk and give their lives. Finally, “Dirge for a Soldier” is the lament for one who paid the ultimate sacrifice. However, within the song is the hope that their sacrifice will not be in vain.

Throughout the song, the music shifts between the hope of B flat major and the lament of g minor. After the initial statement of the final verse, the words “In the east the morning comes” are repeated. The accompaniment leads to a cadence to G major in the strings, flute, and right hand of the piano, symbolizing the hope that there will be a day that we will no longer have to

fight wars and lose human lives. However, the horn, trumpet, and left hand of the piano interject with a dissonant cluster comprised of B flat, F, C sharp, and E natural on top of the G major chord. The other instruments play the G major chord twice more, as if to shake off the grim cluster, yet both times, this sad sonority returns, finally getting the last word as the G major chord dies away. This coda symbolizes the entire argument of this cycle, that we must remember why this soldier died and all of those that we have lost in our current and past conflicts. If we do not remember, then we will have no hope of avoiding unnecessary and unjust wars, and eventually, all wars entirely.



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