

**The Water is Wide & I Can't Cross O'er:
Navigating Musical Currents with Joan Baez**

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Introduction

Joan Baez occupies a unique place in American pop culture history. A major figure in the mid-century folk revival as well as the Civil Rights Movement, she embodies the relationship between folk music and organized social action prevalent in the 1950's and '60's. Even as a teenager performing in coffee houses around Boston, Baez could sing songs like "Oh Freedom" and "All My Trials" as though she had been singing them for decades. Audiences responded in kind, rapturously receiving her music and hailing her as the new High Priestess of Folk. Her first two albums, consisting entirely of traditional folk tunes, sold more than 500,000 each—a remarkable feat for any folk musician in the early 1960's. Joan Baez was twenty years old.

Joan Baez is also a Mexican-Scottish woman. This meant that certain avenues of music were unavailable to her, even in the ostensibly egalitarian world of folk music. While some male folk artists such as Bob Dylan went through a folk "period" before moving on to other genres, Baez was so closely aligned with folk music and social activism that it was difficult for her to move beyond this identity. As the Civil Rights Movement faded from the public eye, musical tastes changed as well, leaving Baez in a folk backwater from which she never fully escaped. There are two exceptions to this generalization: a cover of The Band's "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" (1971) and the only hit song Baez wrote herself: "Diamonds and Rust" (1975). Like her debut albums recorded fifteen years earlier, it sold over 500,000 copies and gave her career a much-needed boost, enabling her to tour with Dylan in a folk music nostalgia act. Even then, the press emphasized how the song offered tantalizing details into her romance with Dylan. Once again, Baez's success was seen in relation to something—or in this case, someone—else.

Now eighty years old, Baez lives quietly in an affluent suburb in the Bay Area. She has generally been outside the public consciousness for about forty years. Though she continued to

perform for audiences around the world until she retired from the stage in 2019, she never approached the level of success she enjoyed throughout the sixties.

Why study Joan Baez? Because in so doing, we are forced to examine the socio-cultural forces that produced a Joan Baez the public wanted, and needed, to construct at that moment. And because we learn about limitations—not only of folk music in general, but of the roles afforded female singers in particular.

In order to explore these limitations, I collected, sorted, watched, and listened to hours of tapes and films. The most significant artifact is the existing concert footage from across her career. From her earliest recorded shows to her most recent, I scoured every decade for scenes which revealed something about Baez's persona. I did the same with documentaries, though there is only one substantial work that is interested solely in Joan Baez, *Joan Baez: How Sweet the Sound* (2009). Consequently, I expanded my watching list to documentaries which deal obliquely with Baez or the American folk revival; these included Martin Scorsese's works on Bob Dylan, *No Direction Home* (2005) and *Rolling Thunder Revue* (2019), as well as films concerned with broader cultural phenomena like *Woodstock* (1970), *Echo in the Canyon* (2018), and the many films which cover the New England folk revival. Throughout all this research, I listened many times over to the records of Joan Baez. I sat with my eyes closed and revisited her studio works, but also listened to whatever bootlegged recordings I could find. From all this data, the hundreds of hours of recordings that exist, I have selected three moments that typify the stages of Joan Baez as a musician: a coffeehouse performance in 1958; the March on Washington in 1963; and one of Baez's last performances on 1978.

I investigate these moments in a qualitative manner. Through thick description, I examine the evolution of Baez's persona as it arises—and changes—in her movements, her clothing, her

voice, and her guitar across these three moments and 20 years. With Baez in particular, theatrical choices become rhetorical tropes, constructing a certain image, attracting a particular audience. My method is highly interpretive, relying on my own ability to describe a performance, then locate it within a broader socio-cultural context. In so doing, I hope to shed new light not only on Baez herself, but on the limited roles afforded women in folk music and the wider spectrum of popular music in mid-century America.

Chapter 1: The Imitation of Mary

Joan Baez sits quietly on a stool tucked into the corner of the Cambridge coffee shop Club 47¹. Wearing only a simple dress and leaving her feet bare, the seventeen-year-old smiles gently in response to the clapping audience. Looking down at her guitar on this typical 1958 night, she begins “Barbara Allen.” A few plucks across the strings of her guitar are followed by a gentle voice—strong in its delivery and never loud but soothing as if singing a lullaby to a small child. “‘Twas in the merry month of May / When green buds all were swelling / Sweet William on his death bed lay / For love of Barbara Allen.” One light shines down on Baez with a soft glow that just barely illuminates her. Another comes from behind the audience, casting a shadow of Baez’s profile against the curtain beyond the little stage area. In the brightness her face emerges from her black hair. Long and wavy, it hangs past her shoulders onto her dress with shortly cut bangs resting in the middle of her forehead. Reflections from Baez’s light dimly lit their small faces but most of their body remains in darkness. As Baez sings, “He sent his servant to the town / To the place where she was dwelling / Saying, ‘You must come to my master, dear / If your name be Barbarie Allen,’” she gazes calmly out into a small crowd of about thirty silhouettes.

Interestingly, Baez does not contort her face or rock to and fro like one might expect from a performance of an emotional song. Instead, she plays with almost no movements except for the repetition of thumb and fingers across the strings of the guitar. Although her voice is clear and every note sound, her mouth never opens more than required. Her eyes, too, never break from their neutral position as they gaze out but look for nothing in particular. Without the privilege of sound, one would hardly assume that the young girl was so confidently interpreting an old, sad ballad. It

¹ 1958, Joan Baez sings “Barbara Allen:” www.youtube.com/watch?v=EFHTJ08U_Fg and “I Will Never Marry:” www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYTNatfCjN0

is as if she received this gift from the heavens and, as a sacred medium, now offers this gift to her audience. She sings with only the most necessary motions making her talent appear effortless.

Baez's youthful soprano voice infuses this tragic seventeenth-century ballad with a stroke of innocence. Yet this innocence of youth heightens the solemnity of the song. One would hardly expect a seventeen-year-old to be singing these lines: "Oh mother, oh mother go dig my grave / Make it both long and narrow," sings Baez, "Sweet William died of love for me / And I will die of sorrow."

As still as Baez is, the audience even stiller. Some sit back, slouching in their wooden chairs, while others lean forward onto their fist so heavily that the fat of their cheeks pushes up into their eyes. They all gaze up to Baez from their seats which press up as near to the stage as possible. When Baez's gaze slowly shifts across the room, they do not react or move from their positions. There is no stirring, only an audience enrapture by a single voice. The room, then, is filled with an inescapable sound of solemnity as Baez sings about love's failure and death. Her pure voice and her pleasant arpeggios on the guitar are enough, however, to just bring the mood just back toward ambiguity.

In an era when popular music was dominated by female singers such as Patsy Cline, Doris Day, and Debbie Reynolds, it must have been odd sight for these East Coast beats to see the seventeen-year-old Joan Baez recalling a centuries-old ballad. While Baez sings about Barbara Allen's death, Doris Day sings her hit single: "Everybody loves a lover / I'm a lover / Everybody loves me!" Debbie Reynolds sings, "I hear the cottonwoods whispering above / 'Tammy, Tammy, Tammy's in love." And the McGuire Sisters sing, "Sugar in the morning / Sugar in the evening / Sugar at supper time / Be my little sugar / And love me all the time!" In sharp contrast, Baez's voice traverses the American Folk songbook. Many of its sorrowful are songs and ensure that she

will be far away from Billboard's year-end top singles. "And father, oh father, go dig my grave / Make it both long and narrow / Sweet William died on yesterday / And I will die tomorrow." Such a sentiment subverts all that is expected of a young songstress.

On a similar night in 1958 Baez starts to pick out the melody of the Carter Family tune "I Never Will Marry." It is closer to being a contemporary song, it was first record in 1933, but it is as despairing as a seventeenth-century ballad. "Some say that love is a gentle thing," sings Baez, "but it's only brought me pain." Again, she sits unmoving with her mouth moving only the slightest bit and eyes only half open. The crowd, too, remains unchanged from the previous night; with their hands either clasped in front of themselves or held to their chins, everyone sits in an engaged silence akin to a Protestant parish. They dare not stir and even some offer only a sidelong glance toward Baez as she continues: "The only boy I ever loved / Is gone on that midnight train," Baez carefully draws in her breaths and sings in her refined soprano, placing a steady vibrato on any held syllable.

The stage of Club 47 is large enough to allow for a standing performance perhaps, but movements beyond a rhythmic stomp would throw Baez onto the small coffee table where some beatnik is sat. Baez remains with her eyes relaxed and unfocused, singing, "I never will marry / I'll be no man's wife / I expect to live single all the days of my life." She administers and participates in this stillness. All throughout, there is a pensiveness in Baez's face which determines the mood of the entire coffee shop: a strange sense of gloom that is brightened by the beauty of Baez's voice. This Cambridge night, however, carries on with its degree of hopelessness as Baez continues: "The train pulled out and the whistle blew / With a low and a lonesome sound / He's gone, he's gone like morning dew / And left me here behind." Decrescendo, Baez repeats the chorus once more as she gazes slowly downward. By now, a few more listeners have dropped their

heads into their hands. The room grows still, the sort that marks the end of a wearisome night, as Baez becomes more and more quiet until there is no sound.

The performances of “Barbara Allen” and “I Never Will Marry” were filmed two years before Joan Baez’s debut record was released and five years before the zenith of folk music, the March on Washington. Yet even in these early days, Baez was carefully, if not consciously, constructing a persona that aligned closely with Virgin Mary. Her simple dress, veil of long black hair, and the stillness of her body present a woman who is waiting to be iconicized. There is a purity about her, a disinterest in material distractions, which may ultimately point toward something better. But when Baez sings, it is not the beauty of the voice and guitar alone that holds audience’s attention; this vision of purity beautifies Baez into a religious-like figure for the folk crowd. All those who sit so closely to the stage, who fill to the back wall all the standing room of Club 47, are parishioners in the holy house of Joan Baez who is the Virgin Mary of folk: the mother, pure and untouchable, of the holy.

True to her Quaker roots, Baez exhibits a renunciative purity that rejects excesses of post-war America. With their brightly colored silks and manicured hair, Debbie Reynolds and Doris Day display a different kind of innocence—one born of affluence and embellishment. Aesthetic choices become rhetorical strategies for all these performers. Day and Reynolds are cute and inaccessible, laden with romantic fantasies of contest and victory by someone who has the means to provide for them. Baez repudiates all these extravagances and the playfulness that comes with them. She looks more like the Lady of Guadalupe than America’s next pop sweetheart, and yet she sings and plays with such talent and to great successes.

Already when Joan Baez was singing at Cambridge at the age of seventeen, she was woven into the tradition of American folk music. Of course, her performance reflects the image of the matriarchs of folk—Malvina Reynolds, Odetta, Sis Cunningham, Maybelle Carter, Ronnie Gilbert—who are, rather than the entertainer or lover, the mothers, and the educators. They are the ties that brand Baez. Adopting this role positions Baez as a means for social and political ends; that is, without the excesses of popular culture, the singer who could have that same level of success as Patsy Cline or Debbie Reynolds is unencumbered and free to be the queen of folk and all things associated with it. Baez, however, is so young, especially in comparison to folk matriarchs that people could name at the time. This youth allows the folk purists to hoist Baez up as a representation of purity, a virginal innocence which is untouched by the commercial and capitalistic. Although she operates under the tradition of those matriarchs, then, the folk audience as well as the surrounding social movements consume Baez as the epitome of the role, the incarnation of everything the female folk musician could be. Consequently, she is to be saved.

The lack of glamour is charismatic and endears Baez to the beats and folkies who frequent the Cambridge coffee shops. It is, in its own way, a kind of glamour which appeals not to a vision of love and sex but chastity and purity. That is, Baez's angelic presence in the folk world is beyond sexual. She is the Virgin Mary, a spiritual idol whom followers revere as much as they protect. With her bare feet and black hair shrouding her brown skin, she was the angel of the movement. Though it is maybe a shocking image, this young girl who seems to be rejecting the popular role of women in music, the unsuspecting viewer would have to stop and say, "What is going on here?" and figure that it must be something special. Chastity is praised, it seems, throughout folk. Perhaps in the earlier days when the Carter Family were recording many folk songs this was religious, but the relatively secular folk revival of the sixties must have a different reason. An alignment with

contemporary social movements suggests that progress, whether political or social, was expected to be the focus of the folk musicians' work; fun and play were either marked as commercial, distracting, or self-indulgent and therefore uncritical of the social plagues.

In fact, when placed next to the expressive faces of the McGuire Sisters, who had two number-one hits in the late fifties, Baez appears statuesque, fitting comfortably within the folk music tradition, in which performances are markedly controlled. The stage itself, plain and offering nothing more to the eye than Baez sitting on a stool, is not prepared for anything besides a sitting performance and Baez fits the bill perfectly. This is not anything out of the ordinary for folk music, however. In general, the movements of folk performances are markedly controlled. Far from the duck walking of Chuck Berry, folk icon Pete Seeger stomps his foot in rhythm with his banjo. Rather than the hips of Elvis Presley which repulsed or seduced suburbanites, the Freedom Singers clap their hands. Whereas the grand stage of rock and pop affords their performers new forms of appeal through dance, physical movements in folk provide another rhythmic device for the solo performer or small group rather than another method of means of desire. Baez's unfaltering pensive look, which at times seems to lack any expression at all, is alone not enough to suggest a Marian persona then. However, when this familiar renunciation merges with Baez's youth and undeniable talent, the result is an exemplar of folk.

It is the arrangement of the folk repertoire alongside her youth, the social climate of the 1950s and 60s, and the aesthetics of Joan Baez herself which constitute the image of the Virgin Mary. Though it is significant that Baez plays "Barbara Allen" and "I Never Will Marry," her role is more than that single quality. Nor can Baez's stage performance and fashion be considered as the dominant factor. The image of the Virgin Mary is dependent upon all parts. More so, the restrictions of the folk revival, in its values and aesthetics, are foundational to Baez's character in

the same way that the landscape of pop and rock is foundational for iconoclasts like David Bowie. The genre seems to prescribe what can be done. The genre which Joan Baez operates under for the first ten years of her career seems to deny the stardom and freedom which other forms of popular music promote. It certainly has nothing like the flash or the glamour that pop and rock music have. There is no sex, no volume, and, perhaps consequently, not much money in this world of folk music. Nonetheless, these limitations in folk music produce a character who fulfills the needs the folk purists and patrons who understand there to be some connection between these communally owned songs and the social movements that are revving into gear.

Chapter 2: We Shall Overcome Someday

Crouched in front and sidling up behind the small lectern where Joan Baez stands, photographers hurry to capture the moment at every angle. Right to the back of her head they shoot; over the shoulders of other photographers, they shoot; leaning upon the lectern, and obscuring Baez from the procession below, they shoot. Without exclusion, they all fail to capture how small Baez appears amongst the crowd that is the March on Washington. Still, the photographers squatting beneath her fire away at Baez who stands quietly with her hands in position on the guitar. Wearing a simple dress, Baez stands out from all the suits and ties that seem to be so interested in her. Her hair, too, alienates her as it falls past her shoulders, long and dark compared to the capped and clean cuts worn by most people around. The dress, with its pattern of plaid squares quilted together, lands at her knees and leaves her shoulders bare. On it she dons a small pin printed with a peace sign. She sports the same emblem on necklace hanging to the top of her dress. Besides these miniature pendants, which the naked eye cannot make unless standing next to her, there are no frills. This is true especially in the case of her footwear: her feet are covered only by the thin ribbons of leather of a simple sandal. Along with her simple dress, that little lectern which Baez hunches over, with her guitar butting up against it, barely rises above the crowd making her indistinguishable at a distance. The only thing that might mark Baez as significant to someone squinting from the back is the thin metal railing and the flurry of photographers who encircle the dark-haired girl with a guitar. A thicket of microphones extends from atop the lectern and further obscures her face from the crowd which is, in the humidity of a D.C. summer, packed tightly together in front of the stage. Thousands stand around Baez and overflow the already large space where, above them all, the Washington Monument casts its cooling shadow. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is going to speak soon. But first, a song.

Despite the anxious bustle of technological intrusions and the ambient hum that comes from any mass of people standing in one place, the sound of Baez's voice rings out clearly: "We are not afraid / We are not afraid / We are not afraid today."² Slowly turning at the hips, Baez rotates to face each boundary of the crowd to her left and right. She brushes the strings of her guitar with her right thumb, sounding the chords to the well-known "We Shall Overcome," but the intricate picking which distinguishes Baez's playing is not present. The guitar in whole is subsumed by the volume of her voice as she continues, "Oh-oh deep in my heart / I do believe / We shall overcome / Someday." Baez's precise vibrato is nearly constant throughout the verse, lifting her voice above the few marchers who join in. But she wants to hear the, so in folk fashion she lines out or recites the words for the next verse, speaking, "We shall overcome." Baez calls out the line with the expectation that a mass of voices will join her own, even absorb her own as soon as the verse begins. An oceanic voice does rise; singing all together now, "We shall overcome / We shall overcome / We shall overcome today." Louder, louder, and louder now, "Oh-oh deep in my heart / I do believe." Baez's voice soars with the aid of the microphone but only barely above the roar of the march. Men in dark suits open their mouths wide while mothers and fathers hoist up a child on their shoulder do the same. Everyone takes in big breaths of the sultry air so that they might sing as, if not more, mightily than they do in church. As Baez sings the main line of the melody, many voices from below round out the song with harmonies so that they end the song as a massive choir, singing, "We shall overcome someday."

That oceanic voice, though it dominates the performance of "We Shall Overcome," quiets when Baez lulls the march with the sound of her singular voice—this time singing directly to, and not with, the people. Standing at another small lectern, the same one which Dr. Martin Luther

² Two films exist of this moment: one exclusively focuses on Joan (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuSih-Z30TY>) and the other captures the ambience: (www.youtube.com/watch?v=7akuOFp-ET8)

King, Jr. will deliver his speech from later that day, Baez begins “All My Trials.”³ Gradually raising the pitch of her voice, she sings, “Hush little baby don’t you cry / You know your momma was born to die / All your trials, Lord / Soon be over.” Without the responsibility of accompanying or harmonizing, the crowd gazes up toward Baez with weary eyes. She is, for the most part, visible from below. The sinuous arms of microphones still reach toward Baez’s mouth, but the compulsive photographers are nowhere to be seen. Movement has slowed entirely except for the few people who move about behind the lectern, surely preparing for some program to come. The heat from the August sun still shows itself as sweat on the many foreheads. Like before, Baez looks across the expansive march with only the slightest movements. Her eyes dance around the approximately two hundred fifty thousand faces assuring everyone that are being addressed. She sings, “The river of Jordan is mighty and wide / But you’ve gotta home on the other side.” Straying from the traditional line “All my trials,” she sings again at the audience, “All your trials, Lord / Soon be over.”

Baez’s delicate picking has returned in this unaccompanied performance. Whereas before the guitar kept the oceanic voice in tune, Baez now plays arpeggios by plucking out individual strings. Each chord rises and falls, swells to its crest and descends into its depths, simulating the undulating arms of a parent putting a child to sleep. This movement is as precise coming from the guitar as it is coming from her voice which dips in volume and then crescendos back into place. With this combination Baez continues, “There grows a tree in paradise / And the pilgrims call it a tree of life,” constantly changing her gaze but never anxiously. Nor is she animated at all; her face, like her dress, is without frills. All that is left for the crowd to do, especially in this suspension of responsibility, is to accept Baez’s simplicity and give into her voice. And so they do, until Baez

³ The truncated footage of Joan singing “All My Trials:” www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRJajS6_Hbs. The full audio is here: <http://www.folkmusicworldwide.com/interviews/29-Civil-Rights-March-Washington.mp3> (01:13-04:09)

once more repeats to the audience, “All your trials, Lord / Soon be over,” and the crack of applause resounds in the heart of Washington D.C.

When Baez sings “We Shall Overcome” beneath the Washington Monument, she begins by leading the crowd in song, but quickly her voice falls into the oceanic voice and the distinction between performer and audience dissolves. The song itself, a popular protest song adapted from a gospel tune, affords the performance its transcendence. The lyrics begs for mass participation in the repetitive use of “we” throughout. This plural pronoun is the simplest way to call for unity in song. Baez, however, calls out the lines of the verse as a gospel singer in a church might. If someone does not know the song well enough, Baez still encourages them to sing by providing the next words. She multiplies the possibility of mass participation as she calls out, “We shall overcome.” More so, by bolstering the voices in the crowd below, people beyond the material stage still share the song with Baez. The performance transcends the material boundaries established by lecterns, microphones, and metal railings; what was once demarcated as space for the audience has become the stage too. That is, the boundaries between performer and audience have become blurred to the point where one voice cannot be picked out as the most salient. Both Baez and any single demonstrator allow their individual voice to dissolve into the oneness. Though Baez’s individual voice is certainly important in the beginning—she leads, but it is a traditional song that the crowd knows—the song starts like any cheer at a baseball game wherein one person may lead for a second, but in an instant a mass of voices subsumes the individual and continues on its own accord. That singular voice may call out the next line, but the oneness always returns. The contrary to this is something like Bob Dylan singing “Only a Pawn in Their Game” at the March. Being his own composition, and a relatively new one as well, the crowd cannot join in and

thus the individual voice reigns. In the brief time of “We Shall Overcome,” Baez unifies the stage and the audience, adopting the folk, the common people who have always been the originators of the music she sings, into her performance.

Unification was the significant theme of the entire day in Washington D.C. and “We Shall Overcome” is an appropriate match, but when Baez sings “All My Trials,” she reveals another purpose of folk music: to quell the pains of the March, comforting the many tired demonstrators. “All My Trials” is suited for a single motherly voice; it is a lullaby, an allaying and quieting device rather than a song of hope and unification. Instead of the March singing itself into comfort, Baez relieves them of the task and alone sings, “All your trials, Lord / Soon be over.” Although Baez’s voice was just an inspiration to the many other voices of the March, a method of encouraging mass participation and the consequent dissolution of individuality, it now takes authority. The unstirring crowd do not sing along, nor does Baez encourage it this time. She does not call out the lines or make any diversion from the song. She just sings with a great volume and searing vibrato that settles the March. With few other audible sounds than Baez’s voice, she is shockingly isolated from the massive demonstration.

No longer does Baez sing for the sake of singing or for the sake of preserving traditional material, however. These songs now actively benefit the people. Though the footage of “All My Trials” is noticeably similar to the performances in 1958—everyone gazes up toward Baez and she sings without much animation—the consequences of the song have been raised significantly as the audience feel its effect immediately. “All My Trials” may produce a similar feeling in a coffee shop or basket house but soothing the tired demonstrators in D. C. has an importance beyond soothing Friday-night concertgoers. The character of the Virgin Mary of folk is realized in full in

this new context which is entirely social inasmuch that both Baez and these two songs now exist outside of a record or a concert dedicated to folk music.

Both functions of Baez's voice during the March on Washington rely on her established persona. Without the purity and renunciation which Baez demonstrated throughout the years, an act which separated her from the figures of popular music, she would not occupy the stage in the same way. The work she does, injecting hope and then, like wiping the brows of the demonstrators, allowing a moment for rest, is tied as much to her character as it is to the songs themselves. Though the hopefulness of Baez may be attributed in part to the spirit of the folk revival, her role as Virgin Mary engenders the comfort supplied with "All My Trials."

The March on Washington in 1963, with the most famous speech since the Gettysburg address, marked the ultimate pinnacle of music and social progress. This is the moment which the Virgin Mary of folk was being saved for: the union of a multitude of civil right organizations rallying in one massive effort that captured the nation's attention. Baez embodies this hopeful moment in which the folk revival and the Civil Rights Movement spoke with one voice. Here, Baez puts songs into action on a larger stage. Whereas the performances in Club 47 and even at the Newport Folk Festival were largely surrounded by people seeking out a folk show, the March on Washington was an assembly of regular people not expecting to see someone like Baez seizing this moment with her guitar and voice. Civil rights were on the line, and so was freedom.

But even as Joan Baez sang "We Shall Overcome," she herself was being captured, and ultimately entombed, in this moment. The next fifteen years would see Baez's attempts to overcome this confining moment in her own career.

Chapter 3: Mary Entombed

Twenty years have passed and the Norwegian winds blow Baez's bob cut across her face⁴. Lone on the stage, she starts: "Farewell, Angelina / The bells of the crown." Noticing a problem with the mic pointed towards her guitar, she dips her head in slight disappointment and turns to address the technicians on her right. "Just one second. The um..." Baez speaks while scratching her head. Instantly a slight hum of feedback confirms her unspoken request to turn up the mic. In an unanimated tone that reveals no sincerity, she offers a "Thank you." Now, one breath taken in and: "have been stolen by bandits / I must follow the sound." All has been rectified. The last note of the line rings out from Baez's trademark Martin 0-45, filling the speakers until it is interrupted by another dip of her chin. Once more Baez breaks from song into speech. Raising her hand and signaling the many photographers, like a mother might to a rowdy child, she speaks again, "Better sit down, huh? Sit down and take them from sitting...sitting down." Some of the crowd let out a cheer while others try their best, scrambling around the many sitting listeners, to capture a picture of Baez as she attempts to finish the first verse of Bob Dylan's "Farewell, Angelina."

With success she continues on, her voice strengthened by twenty years of practice and booming with the help of the microphone and speakers. Baez's voice, though sounding full and confident, remains as pure as it was in 1958; no growl or vocal impurity interrupts her clear, sustained notes. Her dress, too, recalls the image of Joan Baez from the late fifties. The beige turtleneck and long skirt she wears, printed with a familiar floral pattern, are nothing out of the ordinary. Atop the outfit, however, is no longer the long black hair which so many associated with Baez. Instead of the Marian tresses framing her face, a neat bob cut falls no further than her chin. A silk scarf adorns her neck, blowing in the wind with her hair. This image of Baez, nonetheless,

⁴ 1978, Joan Baez sings "Farewell, Angelina" in Norway: www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HAbELz2_Xc (00:00-04:12)

is not all too shocking, even when removed from its context and placed next to the footage from 1958. It is only when combining this new image of Baez with the large stage, fit with a full drum set and amplifiers, unused for the time being, that the passage of time becomes apparent. Far from Cambridge, far from the intimate coffee shops plumb full of beats and bohemians, she stands above the Norwegian crowd, alienated from the attendees by the monolithic platform. The familiarity of the New England folk scene has dissolved and given way to a European tour on large, outfitted stages beset by unknown faces. What was once so embedded in shared tradition now tries to stand on the international stage.

In harsh August sun Baez squints, forcing an apparent scowl onto her face as she picks up the song where she had left off, “The triangles tingle / And the trumpets play slow.” Besides the gestures which accompanied the spoken pauses, Baez performs in near stillness just as she had twenty years before. With a controlled vibrato she holds on to the last syllable of the verse, “But farewell, Angelina / the sky is trembling / and I must leave,” thumbing the strings of her guitar until—. “Tell ya what we’ll do,” Baez says, muting the strings with her right hand and dropping her left from the neck of the guitar so that her arm lays flat against the side of her body. “Why don’t we do two things. One is turn the guitar mic,” and with one movement she raises a finger and forces it swiftly towards the ground, “...down. Thank you.” Now, unlike the other two pauses, the audience is silent as if preparing like children for their mother’s third reproach, a called third strike. At any moment it looks as if Baez might rub her hands across her face, tousle her hair, draw in and release a great volume of air. She relates her wishes, or more so her demands, to everyone around with weary irritation. Her face, too, holds a weariness that the relentless photographers and tinkering, but failing, sound technicians have brought about. Still, not a stroke of anger or admonishment is necessary to resolve the situation, only a confident voice which seems to say,

“This always happens, and this is always how I resolve it.” She continues, “Number two: we’ll take a minute to do all the photographs you want to do and after that...we’ll start again. M’kay?” Applause and a few approving whistles ring out from the audience as Baez shifts around a bit with her guitar hanging, now ornamentally, from her shoulder. The song has come to a full stop after having a difficult time getting down the tracks in the first place.

Instructing the audience in the same tone as before, Baez says, “Whoever wants to do photographs, go ahead. And then when we have finished—*ptui*—then we’re really finished. Okay? This is for the photographers.” Breaking from her stillness and assumed authoritative role, Baez places her hands back on the guitar and begins to mime a passionate performance. Her face opens and, raising her eyebrows, she reveals enough white in her eyes to make the audience laugh in shock. Her mouth rounds and opens in a manner unnatural for a typical Joan Baez performance. All the cameras gather at the foot of the stage and let loose a great orchestra of clicking shutters as Baez, still holding her portrait of an impassioned singer, holds out one hand with her palm facing the sky. Oscillating between positions, she mimics movements which photographers might like to see from a performer: eyes wide open and gazing to the sky; then closed but still pensive; facing her left; now the right. All the while the crowd let out one sustained giggle and finally Baez shows a big goofy smile.

After nearly a minute and a half of this unmusical interlude, Baez starts to wrap things up. “M’kay, we’re going ten, nine, eight—you may be the most beautiful looking bunch of people I’ve seen in my life. It’s really disgusting—five, four...” “Smile?” interjects one of the few remaining photographers. Putting back on her big smile, Baez speaks through closed teeth: “I am trying to—three...two...” still talking through a forced smile, “one.” And with a wave of her hand, the kind that might be used for encouraging along a group of kids, Baez ends the assembly. “Okay,” she

says in a drawn-out manner, “have a seat.” The photographers return, settling on the grassy expanse with the rest of the audience, and Baez’s hands assume their position on the guitar.

With one brush against the strings, she starts again, back into verse as if she hadn’t stopped for a moment: “King Kong, little elves / On the rooftops they dance.” The seriousness which characterized her face earlier in the song has been replaced by a smile. It is not the goofy, mimicking smile, but a sincere expression that welcomes the new stillness of the crowd. Pleased by this stillness, Baez is embedded back into “Farewell, Angelina” and soon her smile relaxes, her face becomes focused as she finishes these last two verses. When the song is unbroken, progressing at its normal pace like this, it becomes apparent to the ear how Baez slides between the upper and lower registers of her voice. She is comfortable in either direction as she supplies volume to the words with a steady vibrato. “Call me any name you like / I will never deny it / But farewell, Angelina / The sky is erupting / I must go where it’s quiet,” she sings *ritardando*. Ending the song with a slight raise of her right hand, Baez turns away from the stage while removing the capo from the neck of her guitar as the crowd applauds. It is no eruption, certainly not, but a few yips and hollers from some appreciative Norwegians dotted across the grass.

The weary irritation that marked the trials of “Farewell, Angelina” begins to lift from Baez’s face as she prefaces the next song. “In the last twenty years I’ve had...two hits,” she says with a joking smile. “I was not cut out to make hit singles, but if they happen, you find that financially they’re very useful.” And suddenly she breaks into “Diamonds & Rust,”⁵ picking out the melody in a palpably minor key but all the while wearing that playful smile which follows a successful joke. The deflation from earlier has given way to a newfound inflation. Though for the moment the two dispositions seem to be displaced: whereas the fairly jovial and fantastical

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HAbeLz2_Xc (04:17-08:28)

“Farewell, Angelina” was met with irritation, the reflective “Diamonds & Rust” begins with an unmatching smile of glee. Soon, however, concentration returns to Baez’s face as the first verse begins. “Well, I’ll be damned / Here comes your ghost again / But that’s not unusual / It’s just that the moon is full / And you happened to call.”

Yet the steadiness of “Diamonds & Rust” can last no longer than the song itself as Baez, ending the song with an upward stroke of the strings, bows slightly and laughs at the high-pitched hollers from the crowd. The bustle of the photographers has died down and the hill which stretches out before Baez is blanketed by an expanse of cross-legged Norwegians. Only at the far edge of the crowd do a few stand. Baez starts with the sun now growing long, “Seems like only yesterday I left my mind behind / Down in the gypsy cafe with a friend of a friend of mine.”⁶ For about ten years now, “Love is Just a Four-Letter Word” has been a principal song in Baez’s repertoire and accordingly the crowd cheer. Before it can carry on without any dilemma, however, as though it’s been too calm, Baez constricts her voice. It’s almost unmusical; it’s not so much singing as it is emphatically talking through a voice pushed up into a nasally whine. “My experience was a-limited and under...*fed* / You were...*rapping* as I hid,” she raises her voice at the end of the line as she rocks onto her toes. Baez then bends her knees, cocks her head off-kilter, and assumes the same poses which she mockingly called up for the photographers during the unmusical interludes of “Farewell, Angelina.” With oddly placed breaths that twist the phrasing into something strange, accents fall so heavily on single words that they become isolated, at least in the moment, from the rest. “*You*...probably didn’t think I did / But...*I*...*heard*,” and now rushing to get through the last line, “You say that love is just a four-letter *word*.” Standing tall on her toes she sings crescendo.

⁶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HAbeLz2_Xc (22:15-25:00)

Whistle and cheer echo down the hill as a few listeners comprehend Baez's theater as an imitation of Bob Dylan. Still, an even greater number give no response, baffled by the outburst. A man holding a pipe up to his mouth smirks but averts his eyes from the stage, embarrassed. Without much time for acknowledgment Baez slides back into the heavenly, "I went on my way unnoticed / Pushed forth into my own games / In and out of lifetimes / Unmentionable by name." Her voice rings clearer as she exits the imitation, dislodged from the nasal cavity and reaching high into her register.

By the time that Joan Baez plays Bob Dylan's "Farewell, Angelina" in front of the Norwegian audience in 1978, this move away from the strict folk tradition had already begun. It had been ten years and Baez had released ten studio records which primarily reflected this attitude. Throughout these years, Baez had been bridging the gap between her early role as a significant folk musician and social icon and the commercial world which was industrializing music. The fact that she is playing in Norway is the first clue that Baez has traded, if only to a degree, the intimacy of the New England folk scene for something more. Nonetheless, there is a slight impatience in Baez's dealing with the photographers and sound technicians, a fatigue with the complicated nature of what a concert has become. There is a disinterest in the bustle of the commercial and all the advancements which accompany it: photographers, who are not a new sight but appear in much larger hoards, scamper at the foot of the stage to get a picture of the great Joan Baez while the advanced stage, with its microphones, amps, speakers, and all, fails to benefit the concert. Contrarily, the simplicity of the Cambridge folk scene engenders an orderliness. The small stage of Club 47, not even outfitted with one microphone, is surrounded by a familiar and calm group of listeners. Beyond this material neatness, there is also an emotional order. Both the deflation and

inflation seen in during Baez's Norwegian show lay outside the bounds of the 1958 inasmuch that she breaks from her characteristic stillness either out of irritation or for a bit of fun.

In a manner which would be unfit for her folk performances, Baez can now mimic Bob Dylan while singing "Love is Just a Four-Letter Word." Whether Baez breaks from her regular stiffness from irritation or in good spirit, she uses the affordances of the new stage, the larger stage of popular music, to her advantage. This is not the first occurrence of her playful theater, however. Mockery and "trouble-making" become a little excursions for Baez on stage after the zenith (this seems to be the case, though the recordings on *Early Joan* are un-dateable and could possibly predate the March) and show a distinctly fun side of Baez. For the brief moment, seriousness is thrown off. Baez's mimicry of the commercial ("She's a Troublemaker"⁷ and "Little Darlin'" were recorded around 1963 and released on *Very Early Joan*) solidifies her status as a folk idol in the early days. Nasally voicing the songs that she would have loved as a child, but which exist outside the bounds of the un-commercial folk, brings a joyous laughter out of her crowd who expect Baez to be the opposite of rhythm and blues. Perhaps these are not sincerely mocking the songs—she certainly loved rhythm and blues when she was younger and in her first studio session in 1958, released as *In San Francisco* (1964), she even recorded "Annie Had a Baby"—still, there is a marked distinction between the sexiness and fun of rhythm and blues and the solemnity of the songs which Baez became known for singing. In mocking the commercial she seems to be bolstering the traditional, ensuring the audience of her role as the pure folk performer, the Virgin Mary, who knows folk to be the serious music. When she mocks Dylan, however, in her performance of "Love is Just a Four-Letter Word," she is not solidifying the image of Mary. No, she is doing the opposite. That is, rather than taking a moment to mock the commercial world of

⁷From a 1965 BBC broadcast: www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNy-itf_q8w (06:41-09:07)

music, she takes a song from her own repertoire and tears it down in the same fashion. The seriousness, perhaps even the power, of her own music is thrown off by a bit a self-mockery. Baez demonstrates how easily a song, which seemed to be one of the most valuable tools in the decade before, can be diminished. Though “Love is Just a Four-Letter Word” is not a sacred song like “Oh Freedom” or “We Shall Overcome,” Baez is still challenging something close to home in order to reject the role which still hangs over her.

The social never fully dissolves from Baez’s work—she continued to sing traditional folk tunes until her last show in 2019—but as she begins incorporating her own material into studio sessions and even performances, this new focus on individual experience and introspection becomes more apparent. Preservation of the past gives way to the present. The purpose of Baez’s music shifted away from social considerations, civil rights but even more so in her interest in shared songs, and moved towards an individual reflection. There is an attempt to shake the image of Mary, to rattle the tomb and emerge as something that is at least slightly new. Yet Baez’s image has more value to the audience than it did before; clearly her image has always been valuable to the consumer, whether they be a folk purist, a fan of music in general, or a social organizer, but it has reached a new level by the time she plays this show in Norway. Being so heavily attached to the Civil Rights Movement and the folk revival entombs Baez in the role of Virgin Mary. As folk music and the social movements were reaching their heights, Baez was the symbol of their confluence and, more importantly, their success. Consequently, Baez’s role has calcified in the minds of the audience and carved deep grooves in their minds. Baez has changed in the twenty years that pass between Club 47 and the Norwegian show, her voice has matured and rounded out and she allows for visible moments of emotional deflation and inflation. But more so the way the

audience consume her has changed. They still see her as the Virgin Mary of folk, as a vision of purity, but now as a relic of the past.

Besides the one hit “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down,” Baez’s presence only reaches the level of success seen in the early and mid-sixties when she re-engages with Bob Dylan. That is, only when she sings about or with this major musical figure does she capture the interest of the consumer. Besides the role of the Virgin Mary, which has already run its course, the only other path available to Baez in the industrialized music world is one which links her to an established star who long ago broke out of the folk tradition. This paper, however, does not attempt to release Baez from Dylan’s gravity or to free her from any apparent trap that she is stuck in; she does that on her own. She exists independently of Dylan thanks solely to her own merits and needs no help from an academic paper in establishing her artistic and cultural significance. Nevertheless, the performances Baez shares with Dylan during the Rolling Thunder Revue and Dylan’s past involvement in the folk revival movement reveal the looming shadow of the Virgin Mary.

Baez’s reconnection with Dylan recalls the days when the two stood in the same formation on the stage of the Newport Folk Festival. Many a year they stood together in front of a skinny microphone singing “It Ain’t Me Babe” or some old folk song. In 1975, they do the same thing but on a new stage. Even when her music shifts from traditional and communal songs towards her own compositions, the proximity of Dylan, both on the stage and in the songs, hints at the past. Although *Diamonds & Rust* (1975), with its horn sections and keyboards, might be an attempt to shed the sound, and the subsequent role, which had subsumed Baez’s artistic identity, it is inevitably linked to that era when the image of Virgin Mary was at its height. The restrictions of the folk revival, then, still loom. Her ambition was expected to be rooted in the social sphere and expressed through the traditional. Though “Diamonds & Rust” might at first appear to extend

Baez's artistic life beyond the role of Virgin Mary, it does not allow her an independent existence. She remains attached to Dylan, but ultimately to the roles and images of the past. The photographers hounding Baez as she plays in Norway flash their shutters not to capture some new form of Baez, but to re-capture the image of Baez which was so significant a decade before.

Chapter 4: Dissolution of the Folk Revolution

The reemerging interest in folk music in the fifties and sixties was a revival, but also a hopeful revolution tied to the changing politics and attitudes of American culture. Some legislative changes were happening (the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965), and the ideas of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson seemed to suggest a change in the moral consciousness of the country. Soon, however, the visions of utopia were muddled by the slow results of that legislation and finally shattered by bullets fired from American guns in Vietnam. There seems to have been a failure to overcome. When hope for wide-spread social change diminished, the folk music which shared the stage with the Civil Rights Movement began fading from the public eye as well. But it would be wrong to say that folk music simply upped and vanished as the racial hostility and the Vietnam War deterred faith in social progress; Joan Baez and others continued to sing in protest, the difference now was that music consumers were no longer as interested as they once were.

With the diminishing hope for Johnson's talk of the Great Society, the governmental accompaniment to these grass-roots movements, came a turn inward. The individualism that seemed amiss in the folk and civil rights revolutions resurfaced as a popular creative method. Individual expression in the music of Linda Ronstadt, The Byrds, and Buffalo Springfield, sometimes lumped together as "folk-rockers," eclipsed the old-time, socially involved music that Baez was singing. This growing disinterest in traditional folk music as a social tool and an artform leaves Baez cast in a role which no longer is desirable to the consumers. She is irrevocably linked with the movements and moments of hope in the early sixties. Though Baez makes it clear that she was not too concerned with any of this, singing, "I really should tell you that deep in my heart / I don't give a damn where I stand on the charts," near the end of the song "Time Rag" (*Blowin'*

Away, 1977), she is still singing about. Her voice is tinged with self-depreciation bordering on frustration. Nonetheless, her career enables us better understand the American folk revival and the artistic consequences of the tumultuous sixties.

The simplest reason to examine Joan Baez instead of the many other folk revival performers is that, as a Mexican-Scottish woman, she stands out from the majority of folk practitioners during the fifties and sixties. Even more so, Baez is unique from the figures who inhabit the stories we tell about the revival. Her name itself, Baez, distinguishes her from any Seeger, Gibson, Cunningham, or Zimmerman. Consequently, the folk revival of the sixties is often remembered as a white, liberal event. As much as that might be the case—the figures who dominate the narratives of the revival are almost exclusively white males—the tradition of folk, in its absolute form, borrows from every corner of life.

But in the end, who gets to voice and who benefits from this “universal” music? Though we think of folk as a collective movement that does not depend on racial or national boundaries, the performers do not seem to reflect the diversity of the music. We remember the Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and the Phil Ochs, and for that we ought not blame them, but the actual folk seem to fall by the wayside, the folk who marched across the country throughout the decade. If there is any distrust from folk communities in Appalachia or the American South towards this revival, in which traditional songs were studied and recorded by people like the Lomax’s or Charles Seeger, it has to do with the fact that the music, with such diverse roots, eventually is disseminated mostly through white males.

Joan Baez’s Mexican-Scottish identity at first seems to challenge this overly white image of the folk revival. Then, as we examine her career, the roles which are available to her as a Hispanic woman assert themselves as new problems: a Madonna, a vision of purity for folkies, or

a sex symbol for the record labels. Nevertheless, Baez's success surpasses any of her contemporaries (even if she might not appear to be all that well remember today, that is just the nature of folk music). She therefore offers a unique lens into the limitations of her role because, despite her initial success, she was unable to bridge the gap between her folk past and the burgeoning rock and pop sound. As folk music enters the rock market it leaves behind its intimate roots, Baez is there to bear the consequences.

Joan Baez, more than anyone, allows us to tell these stories about cultural tropes which some cannot break from because she does not stand at a crossroads but a trap. What lies between the mawkish, overly cute roles which the McGuire Sisters fulfilled and the chaste savior which Baez did? Sure, Baez reflected the past matriarchs rather than pursuing an iconoclastic role in the already maximized industry, but folk music does not afford the musician, especially the female musician, any other role. Many record companies desperately wanted to put their resources into this possibility of Baez being more than the sacred virgin of folk, something more akin to what Linda Ronstadt would become at the end of the sixties when consumers were enthusiastically entering a new period in American music. Those opportunities, however, laid outside the world of folk.

Baez was still ambitious, but in a particular way that harmonized with the social values of folk. Monetary ambition, the dreaded commercialism that marked the rest of the music world, was nearly blasphemous. There seems to be no opportunity for intense individualistic expression. The folk musician implies not only all other folk musicians, but all the folk who constitute the culture from which the songs come. They may each have their idiosyncrasies, yet they all participate in the shared spirit of folk. As Baez stands behind the same lectern that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would speak from during the March on Washington and sings "We Shall Overcome" and "All My

Trials,” folk music is of and for the people. Baez puts the folk tradition into action and allows herself to be subsumed by the crowd. A song shared by many voices, especially in the case of Baez and the audiences’ performance of “We Shall Overcome,” promotes the wealth of that universal spirit; that is why commercial values leave such a bad taste in the mouth of folk purists. The exigency of expression is social, at times familial, and not, as it might be for a record company, capitalistic. More so, the iconoclast necessarily breaks the tie with the masses when they pursue something beyond folk. Bob Dylan is the principal case here. His *Bringin’ it all Back Home* (1965) lives in the mythology of the folk revival as a turn away from the people, from the folk community and towards individualism.

There is a strong distrust throughout the folk revival concerning hyper-individuality and the possible success it might bring. It is a certain feeling of the bourgeois blues which singers and writers scorn, warn of, and satirize. Extreme success brings along the possibility of excess which is just a bunch of ticky-tacky distracting from something else that ought to be given your time, a higher call like social change. Where folk music is seemingly abstinent, popular music like rock, even Dylan’s *Bringin’ it all Back Home*, is indulgent and therefore exportable. Baez, however, confounds this distinction between the rigid folk tradition and the potentials of popular music because she could have secured a career with Columbia Records or some other company with more interest in the commodifiable than the social aspects of her music. Without accepting the opportunity, the prospect of Baez’s commerciality still looms over the consumer’s perception of her. But folk music displaces sex appeal and rearranges Baez as the revered angel, still beautiful and appealing, but in a reverent way.

Yet when Baez did attempt to move away from the role in which she had been cast in for more than a decade, nothing much came of it. Partly because consumers could not dissociate Baez

from her Virgin Mary identity and music tastes had moved beyond the purists folk form. Simply put, the music Baez performed and recorded no longer satisfied popular music consumers. The songs that once unified common people lost their when utopian dreams of the Great Society melted away. Descendants of the folk revival, such as The Byrds, Linda Ronstadt, and Buffalo Springfield, supplanted these songs.

The characteristics of folk music shift drastically when it attaches itself to rock. First, the attitude has changed from communal to private, and therefore the aesthetic and rhetorical choices of these performers conform to the new cultural landscape. In addition, there is also a geographic migration, from the East Coast to the West Coast. Popular music became “Laurelized” around the end of the sixties when figures like Linda Ronstadt who resided in Laurel Canyon, Los Angeles replaced the folk revival with “folk-rock.” The placeness of folk-rock must be acknowledged because the West has always held the ideas of self-indulgence and individual prosperity in the cultural imagination. There was plenty of unrestrained entertaining music coming from this creative and eccentric neighborhood to allow consumers to distract themselves from the turmoil and declining hope that marked the end of the decade. But even as music moved to the West, something was lost. There is also a moral migration insomuch that traditional songs are no longer committed to their simplistic roots, nor the social action that was essential to the revival.

Of course, there are some exceptions to the divorce between music and politics in folk-rock. Buffalo Springfield’s hit “For What It’s Worth” (1966) and later Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young’s “Ohio” (1970) come from the new Laurel Canyon tradition. “For What It’s Worth” is the most salient example as it re-emphasizes the powers of music as protest in context of Vietnam. The lyrics, written by Stephen Stills, could fit any folk-style protest song that Joan Baez or Pete Seeger might have sung at a rally. Stills’s relaxed voice sings, “There’s a man with a gun over

there / Tellin' me I got to beware / I think it's time we stop, children / What's that sound? / Everybody look what's goin' down." But shimmery guitars and a full rhythm section lay beneath his voice, suggesting that something has changed. Folk-rock implies a grand stage, one large enough to accommodate heavy equipment and electronics. Traditional folk, on the other hand, does not require, nor does it want, anything more than a voice and a simple instrument—nothing more than Baez and her guitar. The remnants of the folk revival which live on in folk-rock, which may be nothing more than a few traditional songs, are difficult to relate to Baez's early career because the aesthetics differ so much. Excess has replaced renunciation.

Folk-rock is a misnomer. The folk themselves, the social aspect of the music, are abandoned in favor of individual expression. The turn inward brings success at a level which traditional music never has accomplished. This new music, however, is not blasphemous for reflecting on individual experience; it only serves another purpose. Folk music in the sixties promoted the people with its shared songbook and shared performances at rallies, but folk-rock does something else. It balances the collective mind with the private and personal. When hope dissolves and all the work that was done within the context of large communities seems to be slowing, people turn inward to create meaning and thus to create music. *Diamonds & Rust* and the following late-seventies albums mark Baez turning inward, writing about her own life, but her music never reached the power of the March or even of the earlier days at the Newport Folk Festival again.

And though Baez began composing her own songs in the mid-seventies, reflecting on her individual experience in songs like "Diamonds & Rust," "O Brother," "Time Rag," she never bridged the gap from folk to rock or pop in the same way Bob Dylan or even her protégés Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt did. When Baez begins writing her own songs, the distance afforded by

the traditional songs through an unknown or unimportant authorship vanishes. There is no longer a distinction between writer and performer. What is aesthetically pleasurable to the folk purist is the song which has at least an ambiguous authorship if not a long forgotten one. But these are very clearly songs recently written by Baez, rendering her no longer just a medium for old-time music. For a moment, then, Baez seems to shed the Virgin Mary persona; she is no longer a medium of the old-time music. To the music consumers who want a distraction from the politics or relief from the social world, however, Baez remains attached just enough to the movements that her music does not serve the same purpose as the Laurelized canon. Still, she continued to record albums throughout the seventies that featured no traditional songs. There was an attempt to shake off the heavy weight of her Marian persona, but it never could amount to much. "The water is wide / And I cannot cross o'er," the Scottish folk song goes. Her persona, the object of great veneration in her time, made the transition to individualistic music unobtainable.