

“IT TAKES A WOMAN”

HELLO, DOLLY! AND COLD WAR WOMANHOOD

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“Yes it takes a woman

A dainty woman

A sweetheart, a mistress, a wife

O yes it takes a woman

A fragile woman

To bring you the sweet things in life...”

— “It Takes A Woman,” *Hello, Dolly!*

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INTRODUCTION

It takes a certain kind of woman to don a headdress of towering red feathers, pair it with a choker dripping with diamonds, and complete the look with a sensational off-the-shoulder red dress. As this woman emerges through red velvet curtains and sashays down a red velvet staircase to the enamored smiles of an entire restaurant, it is so clear that she is right where she belongs—center stage, warmly meeting the gaze of the hundreds of eyes upon her. She is confident. She is glamorous. She is spunky. She has agency. In the two-hour musical spectacle of *Hello, Dolly!*, the title character brings life, chaos, excitement, and love to her every interaction.

Dolly Gallagher Levi is exactly the hilarious, fabulous diva the audience is expecting. She is imbued with the glamour and gumption of the leading ladies who play her. As one reviewer put it, Carol Channing, “with hair like orange sea foam, a contralto like a horse’s neighing,” brought the “confidential swagger of a blowsy showgirl” to her Dolly.¹ Mary Martin brought whimsy and compassion to hers.² Most of all, every incarnation of Dolly Levi brought to life the fiercely charming, mischievous, self-reliant woman penned by Jerry Herman.³

She is the kind of woman who gets everything she wants and gives more. She is the kind of woman to know when to abandon a goal, especially when it causes more trouble than it is worth. Especially when this goal is a man. She is the kind of woman to take it upon herself to ask a man to dinner. And to tell him to propose to her. But she is not the type of woman to grovel or beg or pine. She is the kind of woman to sing “so long, dearie,” if he turns down her advances

¹ Steven Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway: A Critical Quotebook of the Golden Era of the Musical Theatre*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 297–301.

² Richard Skipper, “Call on Dolly,” <http://www.callondolly.com/mary-martin/>.

³ Jerry Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, (Washington, DC: DBS Publications, Inc., 1964). *Hello, Dolly!* is a musical adaptation of the 1954 play *The Matchmaker* written by Thornton Wilder, a rewrite of his earlier play, *The Merchant of Yonkers*, written in 1938.

one too many times.⁴ If a man ever dares to treat her “rotten and rough,” she’ll give him a wave and march away to bigger and better things.⁵

And yet, when it comes down to it, she marries that man. Her calling in life is to make matches and the musical chronicles the most important match of her life: her own. Mere moments after sweeping onstage for the opening number, Dolly announces that she intends to marry Mr. Horace Vandergelder. By the end of the song, the audience is fully confident of her ability to do just that. By the end of the show, she has done it. Not only has she procured a ring, but she has also gotten Mr. Vandergelder to fall in love with her. He falls for all of her—her whole confident, mischievous, spunky, decadent self. This intrepid, bedazzled heroine explains partway through the show that she sees her unmarried self as “without color and without life.”⁶ Once engaged to Horace, Dolly loses none of herself, only gaining a little color and a little life.

As a representation of the ideal American women, Dolly Levi is hard to pin down. Is she the ideal feminist woman—using her agency to shape her circumstances? Is she an affirmation of traditional feminine domesticity? Is she both?

Hello, Dolly! opened on Broadway in early January of 1964. Four months after opening, the show won a record-breaking ten Tony Awards, sweeping every major and minor category. Propelled to popularity by Louis Armstrong’s recording of its title song earlier in the winter, *Dolly!* fever swept the nation. The cast album rose to number one on the Billboard pop charts a

⁴ Original Broadway Cast, “So Long, Dearie” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*, Masterworks Broadway, 1964, <http://www.masterworksbroadway.com/music/hello-dolly-original-broadway-cast-recording-1964/>.

⁵ Original Broadway Cast, “So Long, Dearie” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*.

⁶ Jerry Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, (Washington, DC: DBS Publications, Inc., 1964) 63.

month after the Tonys, eventually being named America's top performing pop album of the year, outperforming even The Beatles on their world tour.⁷

In the years before *Dolly!* was written, Americans were adjusting to post-war prosperity and relative stability. Hoping to finally secure “normalcy” uninterrupted by financial depression, Nazis, or atom bombs, Americans hurried to the altar and then straight on to the suburbs. Rates of marriage went up and divorce rates went down in the years following the war.⁸ Unlike the generation before or after them, the post-war generation embraced marriage and homelife with unprecedented fervor.⁹ Home, to families of the 1950s, was supposed to be “a shelter and a haven from the stresses of the world.”¹⁰ The threat of another—this time, atomic—war and the vivid memories of brutal post-war depression pushed Americans to favor security.¹¹

Communism served as the greatest perceived threat to post-war American security. Communism threatened the American way of life not only by threatening to upend American economic superiority but also by threatening the sanctity of American values. After crushing the threat of fascism, Americans saw both the physical threat of the Soviet Union as well as the ideological, economic threat of communism as their most intrepid foe. By the end of the Second World War, American propagandists were presenting the American family as the embodiment of democratic values—and the clear foil to “unhappy” and “unfulfilling” Soviet way of life.¹²

The image of satisfied, well-supported American families drove both the defensive and offensive American Cold War anti-communist doctrine. American propaganda promoted the idea

⁷ “Billboard 200 Albums of the Year: 1956 to Now,” *Billboard*, December 10, 2015, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://www.billboard.com/photos/6804579/billboard-200-albums-of-the-year-1956-to-now>.

⁸ Elaine Tyler May, “Introduction,” in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

⁹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 9.

¹⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 190. A 1950s housewife, Nora Grey, articulates this understanding of Cold War era homelife for American families.

¹¹ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, 13.

¹² Laura A. Belmonte, “The Red Target is Your Home: Images of Gender and the Family,” in *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 137.

that “happy family life cannot exist in the communist scheme of things.”¹³ Normative gender roles and upstanding Christian family life were understood as bulwarks against “dictatorship and intolerance, mind slavery and statism”—in other words, all that came along with Communism.¹⁴ This anti-communism necessitated the image of the *happy*, white, suburban, heterogeneous family. American Cold War politicians and cultural producers understood this. TV producers, magazine publishers, and advertising agencies popularized the image of heteronormative familial bliss which both acknowledged and promoted a gendered ideal.¹⁵ Politicians reinforced this image in pro-America propaganda to encourage support of American capitalist ideology that both fostered and allowed for this happy family.¹⁶ This cultural production and Cold War propaganda, intentionally and unintentionally, linked any kind of subversion from this heteronormativity to communism. This ideological link propelled the acceptance and promotion of heteronormative lives.¹⁷

Popular culture depictions of everyday Americans reflected this gendered conception of ideal post-war life. Icons of demure domesticity flourished in the Cold War period of the late fifties and early sixties. Popular television shows, like *Leave it to Beaver* and *Father Knows Best*,

¹³ Laura A. Belmonte, “The Red Target is Your Home: Images of Gender and the Family,” in *Selling the American Way*, 146 and 139. Belmonte references both USIS propaganda posters and the USIA essay “Democracy Begins in the Home.”

¹⁴ Jane Sherron De Hart, “Containment at Home: Gender, Sexuality, and National Identity in Cold War America,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington and London, Smithsonian Institution Press, 2010), 130. De Hart outlines her analysis of cultural subversiveness in Cold War culture in light of the importance of cultural normativity to American national security.

¹⁵ To read more about popular culture Cold War era representations of gender—especially in television and music, see Susan J. Douglas’ *Where the Girls Are*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994). For a more detailed analysis of gendered constructions of identity in magazines and magazine advertisements, specifically, see Nancy A. Walker’s *Shaping Our Mothers’ World: American Women’s Magazines* (Jackson, MI: University of Mississippi Press, 2000) and her corresponding anthology of primary source material, *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998).

¹⁶ Chapter five of Laura A. Belmonte’s *Selling the American Way*, “The Red Target is Your Home: Images of Gender and the Family,” brings to light many of the advertising initiatives of the United States Information Agency, outlining a clear adoption of traditional gender roles in propaganda rhetoric.

¹⁷ De Hart, “Containment at Home: Gender, Sexuality, and National Identity in Cold War America,” in *Rethinking Cold War Culture*.

centered around the homelife of white suburban families. The effortless domesticity of the housewife character was an integral part to this idealized image.

Many American women tried to emulate this idealized domestic bliss in their own homes and marriages. Women hoped that their husbands would regard them as Carol Sears's husband Robert Sears did her. Robert noted that "when I'm crabby, [Carol] can handle me nicely and soon has me smiling."¹⁸ While women strove to support their husband's emotional well-being, they also kept the house and took care of their children. Nora Grey remembers her day-to-day routine including "children's care, housework, repairs, leaf raking, snow shoveling, some lawn mowing, and making all our clothing."¹⁹ Women strove to do all they could to maintain the quality of their marriages and homelife. Their workplace was the home, yet their work was never supposed to look or feel like work. A well-functioning home and family was thought to be paramount to the happiness and success of Americans, and women were at the center of this.

Underneath the weight of this idealized—and for the most part, unattainable—cultural heteronormative bliss, American people—especially women and minorities—grew more and more discontented with the prevailing ideal. For women, homemaking and mothering was meant to be as effortless and satisfying as it was for June Cleaver. The popularity of Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, suggests that by the mid-1960s, many women of the Cold War era considered domesticity to be the opposite of effortless and satisfying. Elucidating the "problem that had no name," Friedan faulted what she saw as "oppressive" and contradictory domestic expectations for women reinforced by the male-dominated society.²⁰ In 1964, the same year that

¹⁸ May, in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 183, drawing on the responses from participants in the 1955 survey of homelife and marriage, the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS).

¹⁹ May, in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 189, drawing on the responses from participants in the 1955 survey of homelife and marriage, the Kelly Longitudinal Study (KLS).

²⁰ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1963).

Dolly! was climbing the pop charts, *The Feminine Mystique* became the best-selling non-fiction book of the year, selling over one million copies.

Betty Friedan's critique helped to revitalize the feminist movement.²¹ Women like Gloria Steinem began picking up the cause of domestic oppression sparked by Friedan's book and upheld by her National Organization for Women. Married women began fighting in droves for the legal use of contraceptives and the right to work for equal pay outside of the home.²² As the gender revolution pushed on, women began calling for access to legal abortions and promoting the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Soon these women would be creating popular media content of their own in magazines like *Ms*, but until its founding in 1971, burgeoning feminists were seeking out feminist icons in other forms of popular media. Television shows with stronger women who had more agency within the home, like *Bewitched* and *The Addams Family*, were hitting airwaves to much popular appeal.²³ Women were seeking out representations of themselves in popular culture that acknowledged their independence, intelligence, and agency, both inside and outside of the domestic sphere.

Just as these women began to challenge, break down, and reconstruct popular Cold War era gender ideals, the Cold War began spiraling into a hot war on the East Asian front. America's effort in Vietnam to contain the spread of communism reached new heights when President Johnson deployed the first defensive combat troops to the country in March of 1965. Americans feared that the spread of communism in other countries would threaten democratic, capitalist

²¹ Margalit Foz, "Betty Friedan, Who Ignited Cause in 'Feminine Mystique,' Dies at 85," *The New York Times*, (New York, NY), February 5, 2006, Accessed February 21, 2018, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/05/us/betty-friedan-who-ignited-cause-in-feminine-mystique-dies-at-85.html>.

²² The Supreme Court decision in *Griswold v Connecticut* gave married women access to contraceptives. 1964 Civil Rights Act included the word "sex" which disallowed any workplace discrimination against women.

²³ Susan J. Douglas, "Genies and Witches" in *Where the Girls Are*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994).

way of life and, thus, had to be contained. As women were contained inside of the home to enforce cultural normativity and traditionalism, men were sent to the front to fight to contain communism abroad. Both were tasked with protecting American cultural and political superiority.

By studying *Hello, Dolly!* through the lens of the national cultural and international diplomatic dynamic of the mid 1960s, I will show that the musical has a significance far beyond its popularity as a Broadway production. In the following pages, I will analyze plot, music, lyrics, performances, and productions of *Hello, Dolly!* to determine who Dolly Levi is. As the writers and directors were working to craft the image of a ideal American society in two hours of farcical romance, I will study how they construct the ideal woman. In pinning down how an immensely popular product of American culture crafted the ideal woman, I will elucidate how popular culture both reflects and constructs the values American society.

CHAPTER ONE

“Where You Belong”: *Hello, Dolly!* and Popular Constructions of American Womanhood

Dolly Levi, a widowed matchmaker blazing her way through 1890s New York, could bring an entire restaurant to its knees with a little tilt of her spectacularly feathered head. She was beloved. She was trusted. She could do it all. She had it all. Except for a husband. But by the time the curtain dropped and the audience erupted in applause, Dolly had secured herself the hand of Mr. Horace Vandergelder, the famed “Yonkers half-a-millionaire,” and a home to hang her feathered headdress in—just as she’d promised she would. Not only that, but she relinquished none of her agency, charm, authority, or spunk in the process. In fact, she only gained more. She was once again married, and as a married woman, she was once again *herself*.

As the curtain of *Hello, Dolly!* rises, chorus members stand on a New York City street singing, “Call on Dolly, she’s the one the spinsters recommend,” preparing for the infamous Dolly Levi to glide in from stage right.²⁴ A horsecar rolls on stage and, lowering her newspaper, Dolly announces that she will be unavailable for her usual lightning matchmaking services that day because she is on her way to Yonkers to arrange the second marriage of Mr. Horace Vandergelder.²⁵ As she hops back on the horsecar, she reminds the passing pedestrians that, besides matchmaking, she is also available for “financial consultation, instruction in the guitar and mandolin, short distance hauling, and national monuments restored.”²⁶ Her main talent, however, as all her fellow New Yorkers know, is matchmaking. A woman of many skills, Dolly

²⁴ Original Broadway Cast, “Prologue” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*, Masterworks Broadway, 1964, <http://www.masterworksbroadway.com/music/hello-dolly-original-broadway-cast-recording-1964/>.

²⁵ Jerry Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, (Washington, DC: DBS Publications, Inc., 1964) 4.

²⁶ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 4.

dedicates them all to being New York's resident Yente. Marriage is, after all, the major goal for any respectable woman of the 1890s.

Ambrose Kemper, a young man who has hired Dolly to help him marry Mr. Vandergelder's niece, Ermengarde, asks Dolly, "Tell me Missus Levi, what's in all this for you?" Chuckling, she responds, "A living, Mr. Kemper. Some people paint, some sew—I meddle."²⁷ Continuing in song, she croons, "I have always been a woman who arranges things for the pleasure and the profit it derives."²⁸ The profit she makes turns out to be a little more important than she lets on. Before hopping on the train to Yonkers, she looks to the heavens and announces to her deceased husband, Ephraim Levi, that she is planning on marrying Mr. Vandergelder herself. Although she knows that it won't be a marriage of love like hers and Ephraim's, she is sure that she will be able to "make [Horace] happy."²⁹ She tells Ephraim that she is marrying because she is "tired of living hand to mouth" and sustaining herself as an independent woman.³⁰

The man she plans on marrying, Mr. Horace Vandergelder, has retained Dolly's services because he is in search of someone to take care of his home. Dolly is fully aware, knowing what Horace really wants is "someone steady to clean the house."³¹ Responding to Ambrose's shocked look at her candor, she quips, "marriage is a bribe to make a housekeeper *think* she's a householder."³² Horace would readily plead guilty to that accusation. In fact, one scene later in his hay and feed shop, he tells his clerks, Cornelius Hackl and Barnaby Tucker, that he has

²⁷ Original Broadway Cast, "Prologue" in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*.

²⁸ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 7.

²⁹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 9.

³⁰ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 9.

³¹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 5.

³² Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 5.

decided to marry because, “This house without a woman would be an empty shell...and pretty dirty, too!”³³

Explaining his motives to the two younger men, Vandergelder launches into, “It Takes a Woman,” singing, “It takes a woman all powdered and pink, to joyously clean out the drain in the sink, and it takes an angel with long golden lashes and soft Dresden fingers for dumping the ashes.”³⁴ Cornelius and Barnaby catch on quickly, understanding that marrying a woman will bring them “all the sweet things in life,” including (but not limited to) a clean sink, polished shoes, and a spotless stable.³⁵ Flanked by male members of the chorus, the three men cheer the wonders of femininity that will “work until infinity.”³⁶ In a bit of subtle dramatic irony, the teasing orchestrations—with accompanying violins playing short, high-pitched eighth notes that sound like laughter—along with the emphatic misspelling of “femininity” draw out the absurdity of Horace’s ideal, hinting that he has no idea what he has coming for him if Dolly has anything to say about it. And she always does.

The woman Vandergelder hopes will take up the role of his hardworking sweetheart is New York City’s Irene Molloy. Mrs. Molloy owns a hat shop in Manhattan where she has made a living ever since losing the late Mr. Molloy. Before her shopgirl, Minnie Fay, can even ask, Irene explains that she is planning on marrying Mr. Vandergelder because she hates being suspected of being a “wicked,” independent woman with “nothing to show for it.”³⁷ She swears to Minnie that married life will allow her the freedom she needs to “go to restaurants or balls or

³³ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 14.

³⁴ Original Broadway Cast, “It Takes a Woman” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*, Masterworks Broadway, 1964, <http://www.masterworksbroadway.com/music/hello-dolly-original-broadway-cast-recording-1964/>.

³⁵ Original Broadway Cast, “It Takes a Woman” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*.

³⁶ Original Broadway Cast, “It Takes a Woman” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*. All of the men cheer, “rah rah rah...rah rah rah... F E M - I T Y.”

³⁷ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 35.

theatres.”³⁸ In a burst of determination, she swears that if Mr. Vandergelder doesn’t marry her, she’ll “break out of [her shop] like a fire engine.”³⁹ Despite talking a good game to Minnie, Irene reveals how desperately she wants to fall in love with a man when she begins to sing her first act aria. While trimming a hat with ribbons, she promises, “I’ll be wearing ribbons down my back this summer...that might happen to catch a gentleman’s eye...making me recall how lovely love can be.”⁴⁰ Love, for her, is secretly the kind of adventure she yearns for.

But Mr. Vandergelder is not looking for love. Cornelius Hackl, however, has promised himself that he’ll, at the very least, get a kiss while risking his job playing hooky in New York. The moment he steps into Mrs. Molloy’s millinery shop, it becomes clear that they are both going to get what they are looking for. Especially when Dolly enters. Through a series of tricks orchestrated by Dolly, Irene takes up with Cornelius and manages to avoid a loveless match with Mr. Vandergelder. Falling in love with Cornelius seems to serve as enough adventure for Irene, because in the finale she settles down with him and his hay and feed shop in Yonkers, away from all of the enticing adventures she had yearned to partake in as a married woman in New York City.⁴¹

Dolly has no trouble fostering Irene and Cornelius's love affair. It is, after all, her great talent. She does so happily, too, because she has set her sights on Horace. Dolly, despite of all of her bravado and spirit as a single woman, spends the first act laying the groundwork for a marriage of her own. Before her first big solo number, “Before the Parade Passes By,” Dolly looks to the heavens and addresses her late husband:

³⁸ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 35.

³⁹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 35.

⁴⁰ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 36.

⁴¹ Shortly before “Ribbons Down My Back,” Mrs. Molloy tells Minnie how she wishes to be married so she may go out on the town, something societal norms prohibited unmarried or widowed women from doing.

Ephraim, let me go! It's been long enough, Ephraim! Every evening for all these years, I've put out the cat, I've locked the door, I've made myself a little rum toddy and before I went to bed I said a prayer thanking God that I was independent, that no one else's life was mixed up with mine. Then one night an oak leaf fell out of my Bible. I placed it there when you asked me to marry you, Ephraim. A perfectly good oak leaf but now without color and without life. And I suddenly realized that I was like that leaf. For years I had not shed one tear nor had I been filled with the wonderful hope that something or other would turn out well. And, so, I have decided to rejoin the human race! I'm going to marry Horace Vandergelder and Ephraim I want you to give me away!⁴²

Shortly before this moment, Dolly had run into an old friend of hers. This woman, a family friend of Dolly and Ephraim's, catches Dolly up on all of the neighborhood gossip that she has missed since Ephraim's death. Even though, from her very first entrance, Dolly has presented herself as happy and successful independent woman, it all turns out to have been a facade. She has missed out on life, community, and friendship since his death. In this moment, she reveals—only to Ephraim and the audience—how unhappy she has been since his death. Pleading with him for permission to move on, Dolly swears to herself that she is going to “live again.”⁴³

Grabbing a baton and vowing to “go and taste Saturday's high life,” she marches up to Horace and arranges for him to meet her for dinner.⁴⁴

While Cornelius and Barnaby guide Irene and Minnie through the streets of New York on the least expensive date they can think of, Dolly is dusting off her most decadent feathered headdress and diamond choker. She has orchestrated an encounter with Horace at the Harmonia

⁴² Haplology Kloof, “‘Before the Parade Passes By’ - Hello, Dolly! (Original Broadway Production, 1964),” video, 3:33, June 14, 2013, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_w3TmF5Jr4E.

⁴³ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 64.

⁴⁴ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 64.

Gardens Cafe. A venue she often frequented with Ephraim, Dolly has not been back since his death ten years before. The moment the waiters catch word that *the* Dolly Levi might return, they set down their trays and gather in impatient excitement for her entrance. The music swells and the red curtains at the top of the Harmonia Gardens' velvet staircase open to a dazzlingly bejeweled Dolly and emphatic applause. Descending the stairs, she begins to sing the opening lines of the title song as her friends and the audience listen enraptured. Singing "one of her favorite songs from way back when," Dolly sashays down the line of her old friends, stopping by each one to say a long-awaited hello. When she reaches the end of the line, they burst out in excitement, gushing, "it's so nice to have you back where you belong."⁴⁵ She winks, agreeing with them, and together they launch fortissimo into "Hello, Dolly!"

The combination of the "magical inventiveness" of Gower Champion's staging with Carol Channing's "blowsy glamour" and David Merrick's budget made this number as remarkable as Dolly's matchmaking skills.⁴⁶ And what better way to announce Dolly Levi's return? In this moment the audience gets a glimpse of what Dolly looks like when she is able to live again. Unlike the lifeless, dried oak leaf she had been before (with half the diamonds and no feathers), this Dolly Levi is absolutely spectacular. She is finally able to live the life she knows she deserves and, as she has sworn to do, she is living it to the fullest. She is able to step into this revived Dolly because she is moments away from convincing Horace Vandergelder to propose to her. A taste of what is to come once married, she arrives "overjoyed and overwhelmed" and completely *alive*.⁴⁷

With thirty minutes of the show left, Dolly has some ends to tie up and some weddings to arrange. After a nice kick in the pants courtesy of Mrs. Levi, Ambrose Kemper and Ermengarde

⁴⁵ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 86.

⁴⁶ Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway*, 297–301.

⁴⁷ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 87.

are headed off to the altar. Cornelius and Irene are not far behind with Barnaby and Minnie following right along. Horace, however, is still resistant. He vows that “never in a million years” will Dolly convince him to marry her.⁴⁸ But the moment she leaves him to his cash register and loneliness, he realizes that he has fallen love with her.⁴⁹ Soon thereafter, Dolly returns to Yonkers in order to ensure the happy marriages of Cornelius and Barnaby. Resigned to continue her independent life as best she can, Dolly arrives ready to face Horace with her head held high. When she does, she turns to Horace, swearing that she has finally found him the ideal wife. Before she can finish, Horace erupts, declaring, “Dolly Gallagher, I don’t want you to find me no ideal wives! If I want an ideal wife, I’ll find one of my own, and I’ve found her! And it’s you, dammit!”⁵⁰

Feigning surprise, Dolly takes on her usual matchmaking air, assuring that Horace will allow her to live just the life she planned. Almost on his knees, Horace agrees to all of her expectations. And just in time, right before she says yes, Ephraim sends her his sign. As the newly engaged couples celebrate onstage, the orchestra begins the familiar refrain of “Hello, Dolly!” Dolly sings, “here’s my hat, Horace, I’m stayin’ where I’m at, Horace, Dolly will never go away again.”⁵¹ She’s home. Just as she had promised she would be at the top of the show, Dolly is once again back where she belongs. As the curtain closes, the company sings their final notes, promising, “Dolly’ll never go away again.”⁵²

Hello, Dolly! at once pushes against the traditional domestic boundaries laid out for women while also celebrating their merit. Depictions of women in American media have always

⁴⁸ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 104.

⁴⁹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 106. In “So Long Dearie,” Dolly mocking tells Horace that without her he can go “snuggle up to [his] old cash register.”

⁵⁰ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 111.

⁵¹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 114.

⁵² Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 117.

been rife with contradictions.⁵³ From Walt Disney's cartoon princesses and fairies to June Cleaver and her children to the Shirelles and *The Flying Nun* to *Charlie's Angels* and Hillary Clinton, mass media has called for women to be demure, small-footed princesses, domesticated genies, bionic bimbos, femme fatales, and perfect mothers.⁵⁴ These schizophrenic expectations demanded that women perform as many contradictory roles as possible. *Hello, Dolly!* is no exception.

The popular Cold War era image of the American woman, however complicated and contradictory, was almost always white and middle class. Both Friedan and the writers and producers of *Hello, Dolly!* adhere to this construction, reflecting broader Cold War understandings of who was American. *Hello, Dolly!* treated theatergoers to an ideal American society, free from the racial and social strife brewing in 1964 America and glossing over the social conflicts of Gilded Age New York. Studying the intricacies of character portrayal and their social interactions in this musical illuminates a broadly popular "ideal" of the early 1960s.

Musicologist Raymond Knapp argues in his book, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, that all American musicals attempt to answer two questions: either "Whose America?" or "Who is American?"⁵⁵ The answer each musical provides to these questions reveals who the creators believe make up America, or can lay claim to it. By emphasizing female characters and women's lives, the authors of *Hello, Dolly!* craft an answer to "Who is the American woman?" Their answer, in disregarding women of color and other class backgrounds, is necessarily incomplete. This reveals more that it hides. By ignoring women of any other racial or class background, the creators expose their constrained understanding of an

⁵³ Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994) 8.

⁵⁴ Douglas, *Where the Girls Are*.

⁵⁵ Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

ideal American society. This white, middle-class ideal speaks to a common Cold War adherence to normative, homogeneous boundaries.

Like other popular culture depictions of American women, *Dolly!* cannot avoid contradictions in its depiction of the female ideal. The women of *Hello, Dolly!* are their own bundle of seemingly contradictory traits and choices. These contradictions are an effort to balance earlier, established gender roles rooted in support of the patriarchy with emerging feminist disruption of these expectations. Dolly Levi and the show's other female characters embody this rift. While they look like happily and successfully independent women, they yearn for marriage and domestic life. In analyzing the plot, music, and production of *Hello, Dolly!*, I will be looking at which normative social boundaries are challenged and which, ultimately, are embraced.

The absurd image of the fragile, dainty janitor in "It Takes a Woman" pokes fun at Vandergelder's seemingly ludicrous expectations for a wife. These expectations, however, wouldn't have been far off for June Cleaver's of the world—or the June Cleaver wannabees.⁵⁶ Many of the women of a mostly white, middle-class audience would have easily identified with this "absurd" expectation. As if she were likening her husband to Horace Vandergelder, Norma Wells wrote, "I get the impression that what [Mr. Wells] wants is just a good housekeep to keep everything comfortable at home and peaceful."⁵⁷ In the 1950s and 1960s, women were expected to return to the pre-war domestic ideal and take up their duties as wife and mother.⁵⁸ 1950s housewives interviewed in Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* spoke of how they were expected to effortlessly maintain a perfect home; requiring them to "mow the lawn" and "scrub

⁵⁶ June Cleaver, the fictional wife of Ward Cleaver in the popular 1950s sitcom, *Leave it to Beaver*, came to symbolize the classic demure, domestic 1950s suburban housewife.

⁵⁷ May, *Homeward Bound*, 198.

⁵⁸ This domestic, family-centric ideal was, of course, an ideal, not a reality, for the Depression-ravaged 1930s America.

the floors,” all while nurturing their husbands’ and children’s emotional well being.⁵⁹ Just as Horace was expecting from his original ideal wife, these women were supposed to give their husbands “all of the sweet things in life.”⁶⁰

In her very first aside to Ephraim’s spirit, Dolly promises that she will “make [Horace] happy.” Rather than promising her deceased partner that *she* will be happy in her choice of man and marriage, Dolly promises to fulfill her marital and domestic duties as best she can in order to keep *him* happy. This focus on the well-being of the marriage—and, thus, the well-being of the woman as wife, as dependant on the well-being of the man—was a common refrain in the interviews analyzed by Elaine Tyler May in *Homeward Bound*. Margaret Benson reported that “I’m always building [my husband] up in any way I can” and summed up her relationship as “a good marriage..and complete peace” even though she felt so distanced from her husband that she found herself interested in other men.⁶¹ Like the constrained housewife suffering from the “problem with no name” in *The Feminine Mystique*, these wives and mothers adjusted and constrained their own happiness in order to maintain their marriages.⁶² Most women, in order to perfectly perform the American ideal, had to ensure the well-being of others around them—especially the men—before and in order to ensure their own.⁶³ Post-war couples were expected to find happiness in the home, and women were expected to cultivate this happiness.⁶⁴

Women were expected to provide all of life’s happy moments because in post-war constructions of society, the home and the family were the locus of personal fulfillment, freedom, leisure, and happiness. Women—who have traditionally been at the heart of

⁵⁹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 189.

⁶⁰ Original Broadway Cast, “It Takes a Woman” in *Hello, Dolly!* - *Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*.

⁶¹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 196.

⁶² May, *Homeward Bound*, 207.

⁶³ May, *Homeward Bound*.

⁶⁴ May, *Homeward Bound*, 185.

constructions of the home and homelife—were expected, not only to construct happiness for their families, but also to feel happiness themselves in this construction. While most of the housewives in May’s book rated their marriages as “highly successful,” they detailed their own emotional anguish in the long answer responses.⁶⁵ Most of their answers pushed any blame for their own unhappiness on themselves. Margaret Benson, whose husband “expend[ed] his energies on carpentry hobbies...and never seemed to need [her] more than to have a hot meal ready,” wrote that she didn’t “blame *him*...” because “maybe [she] wasn’t what *he* desired.”⁶⁶ Margaret rated her marriage highly, thankful that it brought her “children, a normal home life, happiness and companionship.”⁶⁷ These women understood their seemingly privileged position—sheltered in this happy place—yet felt unfulfilled and unhappy.

Unlike the many housewives interviewed in May’s book, Dolly and Irene’s impending marriages grant them happiness rather than constrain it. The belief that women *want* to be individualistic, resourceful, yet feminine housewives (although not household servants) is deeply woven into the plot. Beyond seeking a respite from the hardships of independence, the women of *Hello, Dolly!* feel that their lives as independent women are lacking without husbands. Dolly, who has to wheedle her way into a proposal, is not chasing Horace for love. (Although, by the time he proposes, a certain amount of love and admiration has arisen between the two.) Instead, she is looking for marriage. Her existence as a meddler with a myriad of skills is nothing without a husband. Without marrying, she is not a full member of society. None of her adventures as a matchmaker stand up to her previous or future life as a wife. Despite Dolly’s glamorous,

⁶⁵ May, *Homeward Bound*, 188.

⁶⁶ May, *Homeward Bound*, 196.

⁶⁷ May, *Homeward Bound*, 197.

extravagant outward appearance and act, she sees her unmarried, self-reliant, independent self as “without color, without life.”⁶⁸

Dolly is able to support herself—a prerequisite for independent womanhood—but believes that she is not truly *living* as an unmarried woman. The moment both Irene and Dolly realize they are close to marrying, the audience begins to see just how much of themselves and their happiness their unmarried lives have suppressed. During her date with Cornelius, Irene begins to cry, telling Dolly, “Oh, Dolly, the world is full of wonderful things.”⁶⁹ Dolly, bound and determined to once again take part in these “wonderful things,” knows that she must get Horace to marry her.⁷⁰ She must and she will. When she makes her entrance as an almost engaged woman, she has fully restored herself to her former grandeur—something that the thirty waiters and cooks of the Harmonia Gardens Cafe readily attest to. Her “Hello, Dolly!” entrance marks the first moment she begins once again to live life to her fullest, knowing that she is able to because she is so close to convincing Horace to marry her.

The show ends with Horace declaring that Dolly is his ideal wife. So different from his his original demure, domesticated ideal, Dolly is individualistic, self-assured, brazen, outrageous, and bold. She knows that if “marriage is a bribe to make a housekeeper *think* she’s a householder,” she plans to get as much out of the bribe as possible.⁷¹ She understands how much power she can squeeze out of a relationship where the man is clearly the head of the household, and she intends to claim it. Before agreeing to marry Horace, she preemptively thanks him for “loading [his] wife with money and jewels” and insisting that she “be a benefactress of the

⁶⁸ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 63.

⁶⁹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 64.

⁷⁰ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 64.

⁷¹ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 5.

town.”⁷² These traits, while influential, relegate her to the boundaries of separate spheres. She will advertise their wealth by looking wealthy and she will spend their wealth by nurturing other, less privileged people. In both these duties, she is adhering to the traditionally feminine, domestic traits of the private sphere. While she asserts her ability and choice to perform these expectations, she never asserts a wish to break out of the boundaries of separate spheres.

Not only is Dolly looking for marriage and traditionally domestic roles, but she hopes for her deceased husband to give her permission to do. While her intelligence and resourcefulness are not downplayed in this show (they are, in fact, emphasized), she willingly adheres to the traditional female gender roles of domesticity and subservience to men.

Dolly and Irene’s happiness and freedom are derived from marriage because marriage allows them re-entrance into society. As widowed women they were socially discouraged, or unable, to participate fully in society. For Dolly, readmittance into society requires a loss or deemphasis of aspects of her identity. She must relinquish part of her non-normative self. In marrying Horace, she surrenders her urban, Jewish identity for a suburban, Christian one. Horace is a staunch Presbyterian, and though left undiscussed, one can assume that Dolly will adopt his religious identity. Similar to the American process of homogenization in the post-war decade, Dolly, like other “normative” Americans, made her way to the suburbs.⁷³ It is because she is accepting the Presbyterian, suburban, domestic norm, that she is suddenly able to reenter society and feel she can *live* again.

Over the course of the long fifties, the most commonly depicted expectation for a woman was her happy, demure, and effortless performance of the tasks of wife and mother—a role many

⁷² Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 112.

⁷³ May, *Homeward Bound*.

women were bristling against by the end of the decade.⁷⁴ Inspired by Friedan's critique of domesticity-centered magazine articles, restless, educated, white, middle-class women were calling for more nuanced representations of themselves.⁷⁵ By putting women at the forefront of *Hello, Dolly!*, the musical confronted these expectations.

Despite its national popularity, the libretto of *Hello, Dolly!* was regarded essentially as fluff. The popularity of this musical, and the elements that made it popular, illuminate what were considered norms of society at the time. Even though the soundtrack would go on to be the best-selling album of the year, critics referred to the songs as "agreeable" and "serviceable."⁷⁶ For the critics, the production and the performances of *Dolly!* were the true draw to the show. John McClain of the *New York Journal American* noted, "Seldom has a corps of dancers brought so much style and excitement to a production which could easily have been pedestrian."⁷⁷ Carol Channing, who originated the role of Dolly, was universally beloved. Acclaimed theater critic Walter Kerr observed that, while the book and lyrics of the show left something to be desired, the audience adored Channing's performance.⁷⁸ Theater columnist Dick Kleiner wrote in 1964; "you sit in the audience and Carol Channing comes out, turns on her huge eyes and monumental smile—and you sit there with a silly grin on your face for 2 1/2 hours, bathed in the benevolent spell of a great comedienne."⁷⁹ She and the other luminaries who accepted the feathered headdress infused the role with the light, spunk, hilarity, and love that audiences adored.

⁷⁴ I am using the term "the long fifties" to refer to a period of assumed cultural heteronormativity that thrived in America beginning with the end of the Second World War and continuing on through the early 1960s.

⁷⁵ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*.

⁷⁶ Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway*, 297–301.

⁷⁷ Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway*, 297–301.

⁷⁸ Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway*, 297–301.

⁷⁹ Dick Kleiner, "Analyze Hello, Dolly and You Get Carol Channing," *The Progress-Index* (Petersburg, Virginia) July 9, 1964.

Like the Friedan-inspired feminists, Dolly had agency, verve, confidence, and intelligence. But while these feminists were using their intelligence to break free of domestic oppression, Dolly was focusing every bit of her own on seeking out domesticity and upholding the Cold War era domestic ideal.

The women of *Hello, Dolly!* do push the boundaries of idealized traditional womanhood. As many women were beginning to do in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the women of *Hello, Dolly!* emphasize their agency. Like the women motivated by *The Feminine Mystique*, the women of *Hello, Dolly!* indicate their refusal to sacrifice their agency in order to foster a marriage. Unlike the 1950s housewives and mothers lining up in droves to sign up for the National Organization of Women and break down traditional gendered expectations, however, the women of *Hello, Dolly!* build them up. They find liberation, opportunity, and happiness in marriage.

CHAPTER TWO

“Motherhood, America, and a Hot Lunch for Orphans”: Traditional Gender Ideals and Cold War Patriotism

The image of the woman in *Hello, Dolly!* as one who *seeks* domesticity and readily adheres to traditional gender roles differed little from the idealized depiction of women in American Cold War propaganda. The portrayal of the woman in *Dolly!* aestheticized the ideology that promoted “traditional” American families, marriages, and gender roles. Cold War propaganda images of America commonly portrayed women as lovingly subservient to their husbands and seeking a role in the domestic sphere. These traditional gender roles were propagandized to promote and valorize American values. As the Cold War developed into a battle of warring ideologies, Americans portrayed communism as a threat to the American way of life.

Women’s domesticity and role as wife and mother were considered at the heart of American way of life. An American-generated propaganda radio in Persia extolled that “The basis of American family life is a happy marriage.”⁸⁰ According to a USIA women’s packet, this happy marriage entailed a partnership between the money-earning husband and the wife who “cooks the meals, cleans the house, washes the dishes...cares for the children” while still having time to remain active in her neighborhood and volunteer for her church.⁸¹

Washington promoted this focus on homelife as the indicator of national stability. Thus, women as mothers and nurturers of the nation were understood as integral to Cold War defense of the nation. A happy family life—one molded by the loving hand of the mother—would keep subversion from entering the home, and therefore out of the nation. In Cold War propaganda

⁸⁰ Belmonte, “The Red Target is Your Home,” in *Selling the American Way*, 144.

⁸¹ Belmonte, “The Red Target is Your Home,” in *Selling the American Way*, 149.

depictions of America, women—like the women of *Hello, Dolly!*, willingly and happily fulfilled their “traditional” roles. Women, thus, were implicitly on the frontlines of the battle against Soviet aggression.

For the women of *Hello, Dolly!*, marriage is the gateway to liberation, opportunity, and happiness. Once married, they will have the security to embark on the adventures they yearn for. Dolly, Irene, and Minnie understand, however, that once married, they will still be expected to fulfill and promote traditional gendered expectations. They also know that fulfillment of these will further foster their own liberation, opportunity, and happiness—as well as cultivate societal freedom and happiness. As they embrace marriage, the women of *Hello, Dolly!* embrace and celebrate these other gendered expectations. Chief among them is motherhood.

Partway through the first act, Mr. Vandergelder travels from Yonkers to New York to pay a visit to Mrs. Molloy’s hat shop. He intends on checking in on her one last time before proposing. What he does not know is that his clerks, Cornelius and Barnaby, having defied his orders to keep the shop open, have also traveled to New York. Wandering around Manhattan, they happen upon Mrs. Molloy’s hat shop in an accident that can only be orchestrated for a farce like *Dolly!*. Just after introducing themselves to Irene and Minnie (an instant flirtation having quickly arisen between the pairs), they spot Mr. Vandergelder making his way to the shop. Barnaby dives under the nearest table and Cornelius sequesters himself in the closest closet. With Dolly in tow, Mr. Vandergelder marches into Mrs. Molloy’s hat shop and instantly senses that something is wrong. Incensed that Mrs. Molloy might be hiding something from him, Vandergelder insists on searching the shop. Dolly rushes to block his advances towards the closet and Horace demands, “For the last time, Mrs. Levi, will you stand aside.”⁸²

⁸² Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 50.

Improvising an impassioned response, Dolly fires back, “Stand indeed, Mr. Vandergelder...I know what I stand for!”⁸³ As the pit begins to play a marching tune, she backs him away from the closet and sings, “I stand for motherhood, America, and a hot lunch for orphans.”⁸⁴ Irene and Minnie catch on and soon they adopt Dolly’s refrain while Dolly fires off muddled references to wartime patriotism. Singing, “Alamo! Remember the Alamo! I regret that I’ve one life to give for my country. In the words of Lincoln, one if by land and two if by sea. Yes, dad, I chopped that cherry tree down,” Dolly, Irene, and Minnie march militantly throughout the rows of hat displays, pledging their allegiance to motherhood.⁸⁵ Soon even Vandergelder joins in, so fervently caught up in his patriotism that he forgets to peek into the closet. As the song builds, Cornelius and Barnaby run around wildly trying to avoid being seen by Vandergelder, desperately trying to find a better hiding spot. Unable to do so before the song ends, Vandergelder realizes that Mrs. Molloy’s shop is “swarming with men,” and leaves in a huff, all of their communal patriotism instantly abandoned.

“Motherhood” is a classic example of what musical theater producer Jack Viertel refers to as a “tent pole song.”⁸⁶ While these songs are integral for the structure of a musical, the lyrics are often entirely inconsequential to the plot. Viertel names this kind of song a “tent pole song” because they keep the production from caving in on itself.⁸⁷ Tent pole songs are written to “give

⁸³ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 50.

⁸⁴ Original Broadway Cast, “Motherhood” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*, Masterworks Broadway, 1964, <http://www.masterworksbroadway.com/music/hello-dolly-original-broadway-cast-recording-1964/>.

⁸⁵ Original Broadway Cast, “Motherhood” in *Hello, Dolly! - Original Broadway Cast Recording 1964*, Masterworks Broadway, 1964, <http://www.masterworksbroadway.com/music/hello-dolly-original-broadway-cast-recording-1964/>.

⁸⁶ Jack Viertel, *The Secret Life of the American Musical: How Broadway Shows Are Built*, (New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2016).

⁸⁷ Well known tent pole songs are “Tevye’s Dream” in *Fiddler on the Roof*, “The Rain in Spain” in *My Fair Lady*, “Pick-a-Little, Talk-a-Little” in *The Music Man*, and “History Has Its Eyes On You”/“Yorktown” in *Hamilton*.

the theater goes a shot of energy so they'll stay attentive until intermission.”⁸⁸ They energize the audience, whom, up until this point in the first act, are barraged with plot exposition. The most effective tent pole songs do so while also accentuating the setting of the musical.

“Motherhood,” engages this dual purpose: to energize the audience and to reinforce the setting. Composed as a march, a style traditionally reserved for festive military fanfare, the song’s main aim is to excite the audience. The lyrics offer little to the plot of *Hello, Dolly!* but emphasize the setting in a society that valorizes traditionally separate gendered duties as patriotic, reminding the audience of Dolly’s values. The song’s structural placement propels the plot forward by serving as an introduction for Irene and Cornelius and Minnie and Barnaby while also disrupting Irene and Horace’s potential relationship, allowing Dolly to double down on her quest for Horace’s hand.

“Motherhood” also anticipates the concern that these leading ladies, despite their interest in marrying, are not interested in the domestic. While it may seem that “Motherhood” has no place in the show, it is, in fact, working to convince the men in the room (whether hidden or not) that Dolly, Irene, and Minnie are serious about their intentions as traditional women and future housewives, and that they understand acceptance of these roles to be their duty.

In choosing motherhood for the refrain of her patriotic distraction, Dolly draws on the traditional female sphere of patriotism. She sings of motherhood and nurturing orphans as innately tied to her allegiance to America. This refrain is contrasted with the lines she sings later that consist of jumbled references to traditionally male spheres of patriotism like war and politics. Her clear emphasis on the motherhood refrain, and obvious confusion when undertaking the wartime refrain, indicate that patriotism is gendered in the world of *Hello, Dolly!* A feminine

⁸⁸ Viertel, *The Secret Life of the American Musical*, 148.

patriotism entails supporting the role of motherhood and taking on that role in nurturing the nation's children, while a male patriotism requires war and politics.

None of the women in *Dolly!* are mothers or indicate any interest in motherhood, so the song provides little insight into the three individual characters. Yet, because "Motherhood" is an off-the-cuff manifesto invented to distract, the subject must have been easily conceived of and effectively distracting. The fact that Dolly's march for motherhood was so quickly developed and easily adopted by Irene and Minnie means that the conflation of motherhood and patriotism must not have been much of a leap for any of the women. The diversion that the song served for Mr. Vandergelder implies that the lyrics and composition must have been somewhat appealing to him. This indicates that the understanding of motherhood as the feminine form of patriotism was commonly accepted in the world of *Hello, Dolly!* The plot has no need for any mention of patriotism; it was simply referenced as a easily conjured distraction.

Set in a fictional world where motherhood is commonly understood to be the patriotic duty of women, the three main women seek to fulfill their womanly duties as potential mothers. Although Dolly is most likely too old to have children, she dedicates her life to matching up potential parents. The driving desire of all three women to be married corresponds to this domesticated image of the woman: women are to be married, and once married, are to have children. While this is never directly spoken of in the musical, the use of this gendered societal norm as a mere plot device points towards an innate acceptance of a separate, feminine version of patriotism.

In building and promoting a feminine version of patriotism within the context of the show, *Dolly!* embraces the idea that women fulfill their patriotic duty by seeking out and happily subscribing to traditional gender roles. This same argument was embraced by American Cold

War rhetoric and propaganda. As early as 1944, prominent politicians were openly promoting this gendered form of patriotism as a wartime duty. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, in an article entitled, “Mothers...Our Only Hope,” claimed that a mother’s sole war job should be caring for her children. He ends his piece by arguing, “Her patriotic duty is not on the factory front. It is on the homefront!”⁸⁹ Although Hoover’s anti-working women rhetoric might have been the exception to the otherwise supportive government propaganda during the Second World War, his viewpoint became more and more accepted as American men returned home from Europe.⁹⁰ Upon return, men were given the priority in employment ventures.⁹¹ Women, in turn, were expected go back to the kitchen and the nursery.⁹² While many women did remain employed, governmental rhetoric shifted from wartime support of female employment outside the home to scorn.

American Cold War propaganda argued that Soviet women “can’t have time to raise their children, to provide for their home and take part in community life,” and, thus, societies which provided these opportunities for women—namely, democracies—were culturally superior.⁹³ Arguing cultural superiority on the basis of the ability to adhere to traditional gender roles equated the adherence to these gender roles to support of democracy. Not only were women fulfilling the expectation of societal norms by adhering to traditional gender roles, but during the 1950s and 1960s, these societal norms began to be seen as integral to national security.

⁸⁹ J. Edgar Hoover, “Mothers...Our Only Hope” in *Women’s Magazines 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, ed. Nancy A. Walker, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1998), 44.

⁹⁰ Emily Yellin, *Our Mother’s War: American Women at Home and on the Front During World War II*. (New York: Free Press, 2005, reprint, 2006.)

⁹¹ Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*.

⁹² Yellin, *Our Mother’s War*.

⁹³ Belmonte, “The Red Target is Your Home,” in *Selling the American Way*, 138.

In previous Cold War era popular media, strong-willed women with agency had often been portrayed as villains due to their subversive—and, thus, communist—threat.⁹⁴ In Philip Wylie's *Smoke Across the Moon*, the main character's female love interest believes women should follow a career path rather than care for a husband and children in the home. She seduces a minister and he hangs himself when she refuses to marry him. Her independence and sexual nature is explicitly associated with communism.⁹⁵ Perhaps more like *Dolly!* in age and appearance, the mother character in the 1963 film *The Manchurian Candidate*, Eleanor Iselin, is an enigmatic, middle-aged woman. Mrs. Iselin, a communist agent, plays puppet master to husband and son. She poses such a threat that her own son sets out to kill her.⁹⁶ For this early Cold War media, women who neglected or pushed aside traditional roles were seen as threatening to American way of life—leaving it vulnerable to communism.

“Motherhood” reassures the men in the show and the audience members watching the show that the female characters of *Hello, Dolly!* will not morph into villains, despite their strong-willed natures and agency. In fact, these women fulfill their prescribed roles as women even more effectively *because* of their agency and strong wills. “Standing” for motherhood allowed Dolly the power to renegotiate her current crisis and brought her one step closer to marrying Mr. Vandergelder. Rather than playing on the fears of “the sinister power of women” to drive them back into the home, portrayals of women like that in *Hello, Dolly!* celebrate the enhanced power of women as rulers of the home to encourage them to seek out domesticity and motherhood.

Dolly!—at a moment when the the propagandized happy family ideal is being deconstructed by Friedan and her fellow feminists—presents a narrative in which women could

⁹⁴ Michael Rogin, “Kiss Me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood, and Cold War Movies,” *Representations* No. 6 (Spring, 1984): 21.

⁹⁵ Rogin, “Kiss Me Deadly,” *Representations* No. 6 (Spring, 1984): 8.

⁹⁶ For more on *The Manchurian Candidate*, see Tony Jackson's “The Manchurian Candidate and the Gender of the Cold War” *Literature/Film Quarterly* Volume 28.1 (2000).

be strong, independent, *and* forge a happy, traditional homelife. In a progressive attempt to mediate the brewing feminist agitation of the sixties, the authors of *Hello, Dolly!* portray Dolly and her female friends as strong-willed women with agency.⁹⁷

As the Cold War turned hot in East Asia with the increasing militaristic support of anti-communist troops in Vietnam, gendered Cold War patriotisms took on a new meaning. Not only was the gendered emphasis of democratic success and cultural superiority at home effective as propaganda, but the ideological gendered versions of patriotism were put to the test on the homefront and the battlefield.

⁹⁷ Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly," *Representations* No. 6 (Spring, 1984): 21.

CHAPTER THREE

Dolly Goes to War: *Hello, Dolly!*, Donut Dollies, and the Female Performance of Patriotism

In early September of 1965, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Anatoliy F. Dobrynin, sat down with the American Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Foy D. Kohler, to negotiate the renewal of the United States-Soviet Cultural Exchange Agreement of 1958.⁹⁸ The talks quickly reached a standstill as it became clear that Soviet leaders were edging close to breaking the agreement. In the days preceding the renewal talks, Soviet officials postponed a Moscow engagement of the international tour of *Hello, Dolly!* As a response to the increasing American involvement in Vietnam, this “symbolic disapproval” marked the moment in which the conflict in Vietnam began to influence cultural exchange, encompassing all areas of US-Soviet relations.⁹⁹

The United States-Soviet Cultural Exchange Agreement of 1958, better known as The Lacy-Zarubin Agreement, had fostered a series of cultural exchanges throughout the early years of the Cold War.¹⁰⁰ The agreement had been created in an effort to deepen the American relations with the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹ Both sides had various reasons for entering into such an exchange. The United States, under Eisenhower, sought largely to initiate “people-to-people” contact to win the hearts and minds of Soviet citizens and provide a channel for Americans to

⁹⁸ Robert Jervis, “Identity and the Cold War” in *How Statesmen Think: The Psychology of International Politics*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 183; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, Volume XIV, eds. David C. Humphrey and Charles S. Sampson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 125.

⁹⁹ Johnathan Colman, *The Foreign Policy of Lyndon B. Johnson: The United States and the World, 1963–69* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2010), Accessed on 1/30/2018, <http://edinburgh.universitypressscholarship.com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/view/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748640133.001.0001/upso-9780748640133-chapter-6?rskey=zyBrzX&result=1#upso-9780748640133-note-565>, 117.

¹⁰⁰ Yale Richmond, “The Cultural Agreement” in *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (State College, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004). The agreement was named after its chief negotiators, William S.B. Lacy, President Eisenhower’s Special Assistant on East-West Exchanges, and Georgi Z. Zarubin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

¹⁰¹ Richmond, “The Cultural Agreement” in *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War*.

access Soviet intelligence. Similarly, the Soviet Union is speculated to have been open to the exchange because—among other things—it would allow them to learn more about the United States, their biggest adversary.

Perhaps best known of these cultural exchanges was the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow where Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev argued over the virtues of capitalism and communism. This exchange in the early years of the Cold War would later become known as “The Kitchen Debates.” Through a discussion of the home and homelife of Americans and Soviets, focusing particularly on the kitchen, the political adversaries argued over the quality of life of their nations’ women as a means of arguing the merits of their respective societies. In these debates, Nixon claimed that American superiority rested on “the secure, abundant family life of modern suburban homes.”¹⁰² Consumer choice, rather than sophisticated weapons, marked American superiority over the communist nation. According to Nixon, the American woman, unlike her Soviet counterpart, had the leisure of staying home and tending to the home—a role she sought out and enjoyed due to the luxury the American capitalist culture afforded her.¹⁰³

This “American woman,” of course, was an ideal rather than a reality, but, like the woman presented years later in *Hello, Dolly!*, the woman constructed by Nixon enthusiastically sought out her role within the domestic sphere. As the United States hoped, the Cultural Exchange Agreement fostered propaganda and discussions that promoted American way of life as the ideal in the global ideological Cold War.

¹⁰² Elaine Tyler May, “Containment at Home: Cold War, Warm Hearth” in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 17.

¹⁰³ “The Kitchen Debate - transcript,” *Central Intelligence Agency*, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/1959-07-24.pdf>.

Set for renewal every two years, the Agreement stipulated that, among other cultural products, at least “five major orchestra or stage attractions” be exchanged between the United States and Soviet Union over the two-year period.¹⁰⁴ The program proved successful and was renewed every two years until 1964. The wildly popular *Dolly!* was set to be the fifth American show of the fourth renewal. Mary Martin would lead the touring cast in a three-week engagement in Moscow starting October 9, 1965 that would then travel to Leningrad for a two-week stint before going on to the United Kingdom.¹⁰⁵ Although the Soviets did not technically cancel the *Dolly!* engagement, thereby effectively broaching the terms of the Agreement, they indefinitely postponed the tour a month before the cast was set to travel to the Soviet Union. Because the tour had commitments shortly after their Soviet engagement, the Americans were unable to reschedule the USSR leg of the tour.¹⁰⁶

The Soviets postponed the *Dolly!* tour in response to the escalating American embroilment in Vietnam.¹⁰⁷ American involvement in Vietnam originated as an attempt to curb the spread of communism in Asia. On March 2, 1965—six months before the *Dolly!* incident—the United States launched Operation Rolling Thunder, a major bombing campaign of North Vietnam.¹⁰⁸ Six days later, the first American combat troops landed in Vietnam marking a

¹⁰⁴ Vincent J Burke, “Moscow Shuns Hello for American ‘Dolly,’” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, CA), (1923-Current File); Sep 3, 1965; Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive, Accessed January 18, 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Burke, “Moscow Shuns Hello for American ‘Dolly,’” *Los Angeles Times*. Some sources note that *Dolly!* was set to play three weeks in Moscow while others (“LBJ Agented ‘Dolly’ Tour for Vietnam Forces”) write that they were to play four weeks. Considering the touring schedule set out for the production, three weeks in Moscow seems more likely.

¹⁰⁶ Peter Grose, “Moscow ‘Postpones’ ‘Hello, Dolly!’ Run,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), (1923-Current file); Sep 3, 1965; Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive, Accessed January 18, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Grose, “Moscow ‘Postpones’ ‘Hello, Dolly!’ Run,” *New York Times*.

¹⁰⁸ *Office of the Historian*, “1961–1968: The Presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson,” Accessed February 2, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/foreword>.

significant increase in military involvement in the South Vietnamese struggle against communism, which had previously excluded sending combatants.¹⁰⁹

Several months later, Ambassador Dobrynin told Ambassador Kohler that the USSR was unable to justify to their citizens their support of a cultural product coming from a country carrying out massive air raids on a friendly nation.¹¹⁰ He argued that, to the people of the Soviet Union, the air raids “carried far greater significance” because of their experience being bombed by German troops in World War II.¹¹¹ He went on to criticize the American unwillingness to act on similarly small-scale diplomatic matters, although not cultural in nature. Kohler responded that “hostile [Soviet] propaganda attacks against the U.S.” created an environment that discouraged governmental cooperation that would prompt the United States to respond to such smaller matters.¹¹² In each of their responses regarding the *Dolly!* debacle, the ambassadors regarded cultural or nongovernment-produced propaganda as comparatively important to other diplomatic agreements, indicating the importance of promoting and upholding ideology via cultural products at this point in the Cold War.¹¹³

Upon hearing about the Soviet Union’s postponement of *Hello, Dolly!*, President Johnson was furious.¹¹⁴ He refused to recommence renewal talks with Dobrynin, and is noted to have spent his entire first meeting with Dean Acheson, a former Secretary of State under Harry

¹⁰⁹ *Office of the Historian*, “1961–1968: The Presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson,” Accessed February 2, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/foreword>.

¹¹⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964–1968, Document 125. An American memorandum of the conversation between Dobrynin and Kohler, taken down by Kohler after the conversation.

¹¹¹ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964–1968, Document 125.

¹¹² *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964–1968, Document 125.

¹¹³ See Penny Marie von Eschen’s *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) for an in depth discussion of Cold War cultural diplomacy.

¹¹⁴ Jonathan Colman, “Two Adversaries: The Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China,” in *The Foreign Policy of Lyndon B. Johnson: The United States and the World, 1963-69*. (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2010.), Edinburgh Scholarship Online, 2012. doi: 10.3366/edinburgh/9780748640133.003.0006; N. E. Sarantakes, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World, in A Companion to Lyndon B. Johnson*, ed. M. B. Lerner, (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), doi: 10.1002/9781444347494. The Soviets suffered massive destruction at the hands of the German Blitzkrieg during the Second World War.

Truman and wartime consultant for Johnson, ranting about the issue.¹¹⁵ His outburst in response to the *Dolly!* incident is regarded by historians as a moment in which Johnson allowed his personal feelings to interfere with political negotiations.¹¹⁶ He was, after all, a longtime fan of the show.¹¹⁷ Historian Douglas Brinkley recounted that Acheson warned the president to pay no mind to “such a trivial matter.”¹¹⁸ Brinkley agrees with Acheson, arguing that Johnson’s fury regarding the *Hello, Dolly!* incident indicated the “aura of insecurity and amateurism emanating from the Oval Office.”¹¹⁹ In arguing such, he disregards the political importance of this Soviet cultural diplomacy decision. In a world largely divided by the competing ideologies of these two superpowers and in a moment in which a Cold War was teetering on the verge of becoming hot, targeting America’s most beloved musical was not an unwitting slight. In turn, Johnson’s response likely did not stem purely from his personal love for the show.

As the Cold War progressed, this moment of heightening cultural tension between the Americans and the Soviets became regarded among members of the Johnson staff as “the Dolly incident.”¹²⁰ The “Dolly incident” marked the moment that American embroilment in Vietnam began to affect cultural exchange, pervading all aspects of American-Soviet diplomatic relations. American government officials regarded this postponement, along with similarly timed Soviet criticism of an American architectural exhibit in Minsk, as “obvious harassment” on the part the Soviets.¹²¹ Writing from Moscow, New York Times correspondent Vincent J. Burke noted that,

¹¹⁵ Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953-1971*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 208.

¹¹⁶ Brinkley, *Dean Acheson*, 208.

¹¹⁷ Johnson had seen the show on Broadway and on tour multiple times by this point. He was so enamored with the production that he brought Carol Channing and other cast members to Washington to perform at the White House.

¹¹⁸ Brinkley, *Dean Acheson*, 208.

¹¹⁹ Brinkley, *Dean Acheson*, 208.

¹²⁰ *Foreign relations of the United States, 1964-1968*, v.14.

¹²¹ Grose, “Moscow ‘Postpones’ ‘Hello, Dolly!’ Run,” *New York Times*. Sponsored by the United States Information agency, the American architectural exhibit was criticized as “cheap propaganda” by a Minsk newspaper.

taken together, the two events “added up to the coldest Soviet attitude displayed to the United States on the cultural front since the Vietnamese war became hot earlier [that] year.”¹²²

Subsequently, the United States-Soviet Cultural Exchange Agreement of 1958 would not be renewed for seven months until a response to the *Dolly!* incident could be worked out and preventative language could be incorporated into the renewal agreement.¹²³ Although the *Dolly!* incident was not directly mentioned, provisions were put in place to ensure neither country could postpone previously arranged engagements.¹²⁴

In light of the Soviet decision regarding the *Dolly!* tour, the show’s producer, David Merrick, proposed that Johnson send the production to Vietnam. He suggested that the tour play for American troops to boost the morale of the soldiers fighting in the very war the Soviets were protesting. Johnson embraced the idea. While the tour was completing its engagement in Tokyo, he worked with Merrick and the Departments of Defense and State to arrange a Vietnam tour.¹²⁵ Together, they arranged for *Dolly!* to fill the performance window left open by the cancelled Soviet tour in East Asia.

Johnson arranged for Department of Defense planes to pick up the cast, crew, and set of *Hello, Dolly!* from their tour stop in Tokyo in order to bring them to bases in Vietnam. Despite the fact that the production was put on in army airport hangers, Mary Martin was still able to sashay down the staircase of Harmonica Gardens in her red rhinestones. The Department of Defense planes used to fly the cast, crew, and props to Vietnam were able to fit everything but

¹²² Burke, “Moscow Shuns Hello for American ‘Dolly,’” *Los Angeles Times*.

¹²³ James McGrath, “The Scientific and Cultural Exchange,” *Central Intelligence Agency*, Accessed February, 2018, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol7no1/html/v07i1a02p_0001.htm; *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Volume XIV*, eds. David C Humphrey and Charles S. Sampson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2001), Document 154.

¹²⁴ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Document 154*. The cultural exchanges recommenced in April 1966 when the Iowa State Symphony was sent to the Soviet Union and the Bolshoi Ballet was sent to the States.

¹²⁵ “LBJ ‘Agented’ ‘Dolly’ Tour for Vietnam Forces,” *Variety (Archive: 1905-2000)*; Los Angeles Vol. 240, Iss. 4, (Sep 15, 1965): 73, Accessed January 18, 2018.

the set, meaning that the show was put up almost entirely intact.¹²⁶ An estimated 12,000 American soldiers saw the Vietnam tour in the week-long window.¹²⁷

As Americans felt their way of life was being challenged by the threat of communism, this tour served both to present one of these an idealized image of this way of life and to popularize it among those fighting to protect America. Integral to this way of life were women who happily fulfilled traditional gender expectations of domesticity and motherhood that fostered the nuclear family.

Hello, Dolly!'s lavish production starring and centered around women put women at the forefront of entertaining. While this focus would not have been not unusual for Broadway musicals, or many other forms of entertainment at the time, the launch of a full-scale production of *Hello, Dolly!* for American soldiers serving in Vietnam—because of its function as both a distraction and a subtle reminder of the home they were fighting for—illuminates wider societal understandings of the function of women at the time. While in the scheme of later wartime deployments, *Dolly's* Vietnam audience was not large, the symbolic nature of women—and a show about women—serving as entertainment and distraction for men spoke to a larger phenomenon in the Vietnam and the Cold Wars.

The role of the *Hello, Dolly!* performer in Vietnam mirrors the role of the ideal American woman promoted within the show. Within the show—in other words, within the idealized America of *Hello, Dolly!*—the ideal American woman *seeks out* traditional domestic roles like marriage and motherhood, and achieves patriotism by supporting and fulfilling these domestic roles. These domestic roles were aimed at nurturing, mothering, or entertaining men. In

¹²⁶ "LBJ 'Agented' 'Dolly' Tour for Vietnam Forces," *Variety*

¹²⁷ Shana Alexander, "Broadway Show in a Theater of War," *Life Magazine*, 22 October 1965, accessed 21 November 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/13476480@N07/7891103058>.

promoting this understanding of women's roles, the show reinforced the understanding that the ideal woman was to emotionally serve men.

Even if the troops paid no attention to the plot of *Hello, Dolly!*, this understanding that women should maintain their traditional role as emotional support for men would have been apparent in the very fact that women were performing to boost their morale. While there were, of course, male performers in the cast, the fact that the production highlighted and starred women accentuated the understanding that women were meant to serve the emotional needs of men. Like the woman within the show, the performers were fulfilling their patriotic duty in a role associated with "traditional" womanhood: this being motherhood in *Hello, Dolly!* and emotional support in Vietnam.

The idea that a woman-centric show was performed primarily to men to boost their morale in wartime would not have been unusual. The job of emotional support was often assigned to American women in Vietnam.¹²⁸ An estimated 7,500 women served the United States during the war.¹²⁹ Eighty percent of these women were nurses.¹³⁰ Most of the other twenty percent were "donut dollies," serving for the Red Cross Supplemental Recreation Program Overseas (SRAO) in planning entertainment for (male) soldiers, all to boost morale.¹³¹ While women did perform in other roles during the war, the majority of women in Vietnam were serving either to heal or to entertain the male soldier.

¹²⁸ Some women in Vietnam were "donut dollies," serving for the Red Cross Supplemental Recreation Program Overseas in planning entertainment for [male] soldiers in an attempt to boost morale. *No Time for Tears*, directed by Bouiss Elizabeth (1993; USA: West End Films, 1993), Online Documentary, accessed November 6, 2017: <https://vimeo.com/130980614>.

¹²⁹ "Facts About Vietnam Women Veterans you May not Know," nvf.org, last modified February 8, 2016. <https://nvf.org/vietnam-women-veterans/>

¹³⁰ "Facts About Vietnam Women Veterans you May not Know," nvf.org, last modified February 8, 2016. <https://nvf.org/vietnam-women-veterans/>

¹³¹ Heather Stur, "Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies: Red Cross SRAO and the Vietnam War," *The Sixties*, Volume 1, 151-165. The SRAO program was founded in 1965, the year *Hello, Dolly!* toured Vietnam.

As physical and emotional healers, women were expected to be pillars of strength and “rays of sunshine” for the men serving in combat roles.¹³² Nurses serving in the war had to both heal the wounded soldiers physically as well as accept and nurture their emotional wounds. In doing so, they often were forced to “stuff down” their feelings, both for their own mental survival, but also in service of the men they were supporting.¹³³ As Dolly expected of herself when she promised that she would “make Horace happy” or as Margaret Benson did when she “built [her husband] up as much as possible,” these women were expected to put the needs of the men they were serving above their own.¹³⁴

Women serving in the Red Cross Supplemental Recreation Program Overseas (SRAO), better known as “donut dollies,” were also responsible for caring for the emotional health of American soldiers stationed in Vietnam. Like the performers of *Hello, Dolly!*, donut dollies were sent to Vietnam strictly to entertain and boost the morale of American troops. They arranged “wholesome recreation:” planning games, playing music, and passing out soda to the troops.¹³⁵ Nicknamed “donut dollies” because they were allegedly best known for passing out donuts and coffee to troops returning from battle, these women performed reminders of an idealized domesticity and homelife which served as emotional support for soldiers.

Serving as “reminders of home” made the presence of donut dollies particularly supportive. As Heather Stur notes in “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” her study of former SRAOs, the donut dollies “embodied an ideology of ‘home’” for the American men in Vietnam.¹³⁶ Donut dollies represented both the women that these men were sent out to battle to protect, as well as the women who would comfort these men upon their return home. These

¹³² *No Time for Tears*, directed by Bouiss Elizabeth.

¹³³ *No Time for Tears*, directed by Bouiss Elizabeth.

¹³⁴ Herman, *Hello, Dolly!*, 9; May, *Homeward Bound*, 196.

¹³⁵ Stur, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” 153.

¹³⁶ Stur, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” 153.

women were supposed to embody the ideal image of the American woman: “wholesome, girlish, and chaste.”¹³⁷ In embodying this image, donut dollies were representatives, not only of the gender men were expected to protect, but also of the traditional domestic ideal inherent in Cold War American ideology. As the idealized image of “home” portrayed in *Hello, Dolly!* reminded soldiers of the ideal they were fighting to protect from communism, the women serving in the SRAO offered both a comfort to the men and a reminder of whom they were fighting to protect.

The Red Cross mission outlined for the SRAOs highlighted the intention of offering soldiers a “bit of normalcy.”¹³⁸ Former SRAO woman Rene Johnson remembered realizing that soldiers loved watching her apply lipstick because it reminded them of their mothers and sisters.¹³⁹ This “normalcy” entailed offering soldiers an image of domestic femininity on the battlefield. As *Hello, Dolly!* would do on its tour, the donut dollies offered an ideal, symbolic vision of home that was meant to both comfort and inspire the soldiers.

This was, of course, like *Dolly!* an idealized version of home. Most of the women were young, white college graduates. This ideal often translated awkwardly to the war zone because the troops they were serving were largely populated by men of color.¹⁴⁰ While these women were sent to remind soldiers of “home,” most of them came from a version of home that many of the soldiers likely would not recognize. On top of that, they were meant to be nonsexualized reminders of domesticity, a requirement often they and the soldiers paid no mind to. Unlike *Dolly!*, which was a short-lived, obviously fictional ideal of home, the donut dolly program—

¹³⁷ Stur, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” 153.

¹³⁸ Stur, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” 153.

¹³⁹ Stur, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” 156.

¹⁴⁰ Stur, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies,” 153.

because of the realities of asking real women to live as an ideal in a less than ideal environment—withstood many contradictions during its time overseas.¹⁴¹

A former American serviceman from the Vietnam War responded to a presentation of this *Hello, Dolly!* paper by arguing, “We would have had no interest in *Hello, Dolly!*. I, for one, would have much rather had a *Playboy*.”¹⁴² Like the contradictory realities of sending SRAO women to Vietnam, the reception of *Hello, Dolly!* would have been multifaceted. In both of these instances, however, it is important to focus on what American officials and American propaganda were presenting as the American ideal. Both the SRAO program and the production of *Hello, Dolly!* would have been presenting an idealized, white, suburban, middle-class America. This was the America provided by—and inherent in—American Cold War ideology. Integral to this ideology was the female fulfillment of traditional roles in domestic sphere.¹⁴³ In sending women to uphold this ideology in the warzone, American officials were providing the soldiers a symbol of the home they were fighting to protect, as well as a production of the ideology inherent in that particular image of “home.”

Although some soldiers, like the former serviceman mentioned above, may have indeed preferred other forms of entertainment, the show reportedly played to enthusiastic audiences. An article for *Life Magazine* reported that at bows the “servicemen roared with such force that curtain calls sounded like jet takeoffs.”¹⁴⁴ While the intent of sending the production as a national and international propaganda ploy might have been enough for Johnson, the productions did seem to boost the morale of the men stationed on American bases.

¹⁴¹ Stur chronicles most of the contradictions within the SRAO program in her essay, “Perfume and Lipstick in the Boonies: Red Cross SRAO and the Vietnam War.”

¹⁴² In a conversation with the author after her presentation of this paper at “Women as Cold War Weapons: A Conference.” December 13, 2017.

¹⁴³ May, *Homeward Bound*.

¹⁴⁴ Shana Alexander, “Broadway Show in a Theater of War,” *Life Magazine*, 22 October 1965, accessed 21 November 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/13476480@N07/7891103058>.

In Vietnam, Mary Martin recounted an “incident” in which a Viet Cong guerilla was discovered disguised in the uniform of a South Vietnamese police officer attempting to plant a bomb under the makeshift stage.¹⁴⁵ Although he was apprehended before the bomb was set, his intention of planting it under the stage speaks to the perceived importance of the tour. The visit was both regarded as culturally influential and emotionally important to the mental wellbeing of the troops. Targeting the tour would target both the mental stability of the troops as well as target a popular symbol of American cultural superiority and ideology.

Other than the bomb threat, the Vietnam tour was a success. In fact, Johnson was so impressed with it that he requested that David Merrick send *Dolly!* to play for troops in Korea, Okinawa, and the Philippines before heading to London.¹⁴⁶ Willing to risk ruining the costumes in the intense humidity, Merrick quickly agreed.¹⁴⁷ Between September 30th and mid-November, the Mary Martin-led *Dolly!* tour played runs on American bases, having previously played Japan the month before. These four countries, incidentally, contained some of the most strategically important American bases in Asia.

Because the Cold War was as much an ideological war as it was a economic and political battle, cultural exports were ideologically powerful weapons. The reasons for touring a production of *Hello, Dolly!* were not lost on America’s Cold War enemies. Although the Soviet Union listed only military reasons for postponing the production of *Dolly!*, the fact that they chose to show their dissatisfaction with American military actions by attacking one of its most popular cultural products highlights the importance of cultural diplomacy in this era.

¹⁴⁵ “Legitimate: Mary Martin Tells of ‘Incidents’ With ‘Dolly’ in Vietnam War Zone” *Variety (Archive: 1905-2000)*; Los Angeles Vol. 241, Iss. 1, (Nov 24, 1965): 63, Accessed January 18, 2018.

¹⁴⁶ “LBJ Sending ‘Dolly’ to Play Korea, Okinawa, Philippines After Vietnam,” *Variety (Archive: 1905-2000)*; Los Angeles Vol. 240, Iss. 4, (Sep 15, 1965): 73, Accessed January 18, 2018.

¹⁴⁷ Many of the production costs for touring to American bases were covered by Merrick’s production team. The intensely positive press response seemed to be enough in return.

The soldiers, themselves, also recognized the importance of the *Dolly!* tour. On October 17, 1965, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Paris Clark, Jr., wrote in his diary, "We have firefights pretty close to Saigon. In fact, an officer who I sent up to Bien Hoa Air Base last week to supervise airplane arrangements for the show 'Hello, Dolly!' was involved in a running gunfight most of the way back to Saigon with snipers at night. Am sure Major [Orvil C. "Bud"] Metheny did not much care for it, but all my people understand the need for certain risks."¹⁴⁸ Clark did to explain why he believed such risks should be taken, because they seemed, to him, obvious. Most likely, he understood the importance of cultural events like, the *Dolly!* visit, to the morale of soldiers and as a form of national and international propaganda.

Johnson was not the only American absorbed in the *Hello, Dolly!* "incident." The unfolding situation was widely covered in the press. As the Vietnam War was beginning to escalate, Americans' interest in the situation and the wellbeing of the troops serving there began to grow. Once the production finished its Vietnam tour, Mary Martin—the star of the touring production—was the subject of several profiles regarding her time in the combat zone. Martin recounts being deeply emotionally affected by her first time in a warzone.¹⁴⁹ Shana Alexander, a *Life* reporter accompanying the *Dolly!* tour, reminded audiences at home of the grave circumstances in which the tour was immersing itself, writing, "Often as Dolly sashayed her feathers and plumes around the sweltering, make-believe, crimson-and-gold interior of the Harmonia Gardens restaurant, she could watch real MEDEVAC rescue helicopters land their wounded and swiftly take off again right behind her audience's heads."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ "From The Editor: "Hello, Dolly!" in Vietnam, 6-13 October 1965," accessed April 10, 2018, <http://vietnamwarclerksdiary.blogspot.com/2011/05/from-editor-hello-dolly-in-vietnam-10.html>.

¹⁴⁹ "Legitimate: Mary Martin Tells of 'Incidents' With 'Dolly' in Vietnam War Zone" *Variety*

¹⁵⁰ Shana Alexander, "Broadway Show in a Theater of War," *Life Magazine*, 22 October 1965, accessed 21 November 2017, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/13476480@N07/7891103058>.

The visiting actors were deeply affected by their brief tour in Vietnam, perhaps more so than the soldiers were by *Dolly!*. President Eisenhower's goal for the Cultural Exchange Agreement of "people-to-people contact" was achieved, if not with the intended people. Soldiers and civilians had a chance to speak and share experiences, introducing many of the civilians to the Vietnam War as it began to expand.¹⁵¹ This brief, yet influential, introduction allowed for civilians to begin to grasp the realities of the burgeoning war. As Shana Alexander put it, "The week was an introduction long overdue, a Hello, Vietnam."¹⁵²

Even those Americans not traveling to Vietnam were afforded a glimpse of the wartime tour of *Hello, Dolly!*. On top of the multitude of newspaper and magazine articles covering the tour, NBC produced and filmed a documentary named "Dolly Around the World." The television special followed the Asian leg of the tour, ending with Mary Martin performing for American troops in Vietnam. Martin, decked out in her *Dolly!* feathers and sparkles, introduces the film saying:

I was invited by the State Department to take *Hello, Dolly!* to Japan as a cultural exchange program. Through that invitation came the proudest moment of my life, the President of the United States requested our troupe of seventy-one people to go to Vietnam, Okinawa and Korea. So please, with all my heart, I ask you to see with your eyes what seventy-one people saw with ours.¹⁵³

The "grey, grim reality" of Vietnam struck the company members of *Hello, Dolly!* and the American audiences of the documentary were implored by Martin throughout the film to

¹⁵¹ Alexander, "Broadway Show in a Theater of War," *Life Magazine*.

¹⁵² Alexander, "Broadway Show in a Theater of War," *Life Magazine*.

¹⁵³ jake212guy, "Mary Martin in "Dolly Around the World" - Complete," YouTube Video, July 14, 2013, Accessed February 2, 2018 in New York, NY, USA, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D80xp5IZWhc&t=2675s>.

recognize the reality of the brave struggle going on across the world.¹⁵⁴ Showing the “real theatre of war,” NBC played the documentary on their channel for the very Americans Martin was speaking to.¹⁵⁵ By spreading the news of the East Asian army base tour of the production on popular venues like *Life Magazine* and NBC, documentary at home served to remind Americans of their cultural superiority abroad and reinforce the ideals bound up in the plot of *Hello, Dolly!*, both of which contributed to fighting the threat of communism at home.

As the war in Vietnam began to escalate and tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union grew, the *Dolly!* incident—both in its role in US-Soviet diplomacy and later in its role in its government sponsored East Asian tours—highlights the importance of cultural propaganda in the Cold War conflict. Cultural products, in their ability to promote American cultural superiority and propagate American ideology, played an important diplomatic role. The use of *Hello, Dolly!* as this cultural propaganda speaks to the role that idealized conceptions of the American home and, thus, female domesticity, had in the global ideological conflict.

¹⁵⁴ “Mary Martin in “Dolly Around the World” - Complete,” YouTube Video.

¹⁵⁵ “Mary Martin in “Dolly Around the World” - Complete,” YouTube Video.

CONCLUSION

As the tensions of the early 1960s exploded into the revolutionary movements of 1968, *Hello, Dolly!* continued to draw crowds on Broadway and across the world as it toured. The original Broadway production played its final performance on December 27th, 1970, just as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and other feminists were throwing their weight into the campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment and anti-Vietnam War protests were growing increasingly militant. At the same time, a brewing conservative movement propelled by the earlier campaign of Barry Goldwater and supported by women like Phyllis Schlafly was gaining traction.¹⁵⁶ Throughout this cultural stratification, this 1964 production of *Hello, Dolly!* amassed fans from all sectors of American society—beloved by the likes of President Johnson and President Richard Nixon.¹⁵⁷ By mediating progressive elements of this 1960s feminist movement while also assuming tenets of 1950s Cold War traditionalism, this production of *Hello, Dolly!* reflected the evolving, complicated values of Americans at this pivotal moment of cultural change.

While the women of *Hello, Dolly!*, especially Dolly, herself, did push the boundaries of traditional domesticity by emphasizing their agency within the home, the overall focus on matrimony grounded *Hello, Dolly!* in traditional Cold War notions of the home and the family. In the contradictions of its female characters, *Dolly!* mediates the brewing feminist movement that had been recently animated by the massive success of *The Feminine Mystique* with earlier, deeply ingrained ideals for American society grounded in normative white, suburban, middle-class homelife.

¹⁵⁶ See Donald T. Critchlow's *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) for more on the popular rise of political and social conservatism in the 1960s and 70s.

¹⁵⁷ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, (New York: Schribner, 2008), 66. Johnson saw the production multiple times as did Nixon.

To answer the question I posed in my introduction: Dolly Levi is both. She is both an ideal feminist woman instilled with self-confident agency *and* an affirmation of traditional feminine domesticity. Dolly Levi is a negotiation of these two, seemingly opposite, female ideals.

Yet, as *Hello, Dolly!* became wrapped up in American Cold War cultural diplomacy efforts, the emphasis on the happy undertaking of traditionally feminine duties overtook the feminist agency of the female characters. While *Hello, Dolly!* did not single-handedly dictate the portrayal of “the American woman” in Cold War ideological arguments, it promoted an image of the American woman that would be used as ammunition against both domestic and international threats of communism. The wartime performances and government-sponsored propaganda tours drew out the feminine ideal of patriotism lauded in the plot of *Dolly!* The idealized, traditional world of *Hello, Dolly!* was promoted as part of the democratic ideal Americans should be fighting for. As reports on these performances were published in magazine articles and TV broadcasts at home, Americans saw the idealized world of *Hello, Dolly!*—and the gendered ideals promoted in this world—not only as a popular reflection of American values, but as a national construction of American ideals.

The ideal woman promoted in this national construction of American values happily sought out and supported *traditional* gender roles. The popularity of this construction of the ideal American woman foreshadows the popularity of icons of conservative traditionalism like Phyllis Schlafly more so than feminist figures like Gloria Steinem. Phyllis Schlafly built her anti-Equal Rights Amendment campaign on the argument of gendered patriotisms, arguing against the Amendment because for women it would mean that “the first thing is they'll have to sign up for

the draft like their brothers.”¹⁵⁸ Schlafly promoted and valorized the happy adoption of traditional gender roles, not unlike those celebrated in *Hello, Dolly!*

While the popularity of the ever-expanding Vietnam War continued to wane and the women’s movement became even more divisive, the popularity of *Dolly!* endured. *Hello, Dolly!* was revived a short five years after closing and then once again in 1978. The ongoing tours, international productions, film adaptation, and revived Broadway productions continued to thrive and grow. As the world carried on around her, the formidable Dolly Levi continued to rouse cheering crowds as she sashayed down her red velvet staircase. The popularity of *Hello, Dolly!* nationally promoted a Cold War ideal for the American woman that would be used in the international Cold War struggle. Studying this popular portrayal of the American woman helps to illuminate who exactly this elusive woman was supposed to be.

Both on Broadway and in army airport hangars, *Hello, Dolly!* upheld and celebrated an idealized image of traditional America. The performance of this idealized national identity relied on a performance of normative gender roles, albeit a progressive one. The musical served both to promote *and* to popularize an image of the American woman who patriotically *wanted* to be a housewife while also maintaining her agency. The performance of this image negotiated the revolutionary independence undertaken by women during second wave feminism and the conservative gender ideal that American authorities embraced as a Cold War weapon of propaganda.

¹⁵⁸ Tanya Ballard Brown, “Conservative Icon Phyllis Schlafly Dies At 92,” *National Public Radio*, September 5, 2016, accessed April 10, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/09/05/492748832/conservative-icon-phyllis-schlafly-dies-at-92>.

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