Composing the White Imaginary
Social Darwinism, Eugenics, Anglo-Saxonism, and Confederate Nostalgia in the American Music Department, 1880s-1940s

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Introduction

In 1936, the University of Virginia Glee Club performed a radio-broadcasted concert at the Hotel Plaza in New York City. This concert was the main event of their fiftieth anniversary tour, and the director of the ensemble, Harry Rogers Pratt, used it as an opportunity to bring the South to the liveliest musical scene in the United States. For Pratt, programming Virginia folk music in New York was a chance to broadcast this folk tradition and demonstrate the intrinsic value of amateur southern a capella singing in a city teeming with classically-trained virtuosi. He wanted to bring soul and tradition to the epicenter of the soulless burgeoning popular music song factory. Pratt spent over a year carefully designing the program. In April of 1936, Pratt wrote to his friend John Powell to invite him to a performance later that month and to ask for recommendations for Virginia folk song settings. Without this repertoire, he told his friend, the "trip north next year... would have no point."[1]

Powell was perhaps Virginia's most pre-eminent composer, having gained an international profile in Austria, Germany, and England while studying piano in Vienna with Theodor Leschetizky after graduating from the University of Virginia. Pratt knew that his imprint on the program would add legitimacy to the amateur singing group, and he ensured that it was aligned with Powell's campaign to promote what he called the "Anglo-Saxon folk music" from the state. Indeed, Pratt understood that Powell saw music programming as an extension of his activism in the 1920s as a co-founder of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. Powell's interest in

[1] Harry Rogers Pratt to John Powell. April 1935. JPP B38Fx.

promulgating a body of folk music that he believed proved America's cultural whiteness was the more palatable side of the racial integrity coin that also included pushing segregationist and antimiscegenist legislation through the state legislature. For those who followed Powell's Anglo-Saxon folkist beliefs, New York's social and musical pulse had both deteriorated into a meaningless, mixed, and modernist jumble. Pratt had indeed been teaching Powell's folk music theories in his music appreciation courses, and students were expected to recount Powell's ideas about the relationship between race, national identity and folk music on their final exams. This, as my dissertation will show, was one part of a broader movement spanning multiple institutions to turn research universities like the University of Virginia into production centers of white racial consciousness through music.

Powell believed that Anglo-Saxon folk music of Virginia was "the supreme expression of the soul of a people," and universities were the institutions best equipped to teach whites to appreciate this fact. With proper funding and a carefully-cultivated faculty, research universities could be recruited to awaken America's latent Anglo-Saxon consciousness and, in Powell's words, "bridge the unfortunate gulf between mere education and culture by relating acquired information to the accrued wisdom of one people."[2] In the eyes of Pratt, Powell, and other academic musical eugenicists, Anglo-Saxonists, and white nationalists examined in this dissertation, America was stuck and unable to move past the conflict between the agrarian South and industrial North. Their worldview is a window into an expansive effort to re-litigate the Civil War and Reconstruction by replacing the fragmented regionalized identity with a monolithic racial consciousness. This worldview spread underneath the shadow of discourse as a wishful fantasy across the white South and other regions that could trace themselves to Britain, such as the Northeast. Fueled by resentment towards racial minorities as well as whites who would not, or could not, attach themselves to this reactionary idea of national whiteness, Anglo-Saxonists

[2] From a set of informal pencilled notes to a lecture on folk music under the heading "What is Folk Music?" n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 28, Folder 7. Papers of John Powell, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va., United States.

used their positions in music departments at universities like the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina, Vanderbilt, Columbia, and elsewhere, to promulgate this desperate racial fantasy.

With this in mind, the New York concert wasn't just a rare opportunity to perform for a wider audience than a college glee club could usually expect to reach. It was a way to present white New Yorkers with the music of their heritage, to activate an unconscious ancestral memory of a time before white America became a house divided, to accept the musical birthright of all blue-blooded white Americans.

Current historical accounts of musicology in the United States tend to understate, and sometimes overlook entirely, the significance of music's presence in academia before the professionalization of musicology in the 1930s and 1940s. Typically, American musicology has been understood as a subject that was initially modelled after both French *musicologie* and German *Musikwissenschaft* before it took on a national character of its own. Joseph Kerman, for example, begins his monograph *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* by tracing the first usage of the term "musicology" in the United States to 1915 in a piece published in the *Musical Quarterly*.[3] The work done during the early years of American musicological self-consciousness, Kerman suggests, was more critical and experimental than what the discipline would become in the 1940s under the influence of primarily German-speaking music scholars who professionalized the discipline when they moved to America after fleeing Nazi Germany. If, as Hayden White observes, historians inevitably draw upon literary tropes as they create historical accounts out of discrete events and artifacts, then Kerman's history of musicology is a tragedy in which the critical spirit of early American musicology was lost and replaced with a positivist ethos that placed undue emphasis on cataloging scores and creating

[3] Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985), 11.

concrete timelines of musical events.[4] He calls on music scholars to acknowledge the epistemological trappings of positivism and embrace a new critical mode of musicological scholarship that would emphasize the experience of listening to music over the organization of musical facts.

Kerman's clarion call was both convincing and effective, and it helped establish his position among the loosely-organized cohort of New Musicologists alongside Lawrence Kramer, Susan McClary, Philip Brett, and Gary Tomlinson, among others, who opened the door for the application of postmodern, feminist, queer, and cultural theoretical frameworks to the study of music in the 1980s and 1990s. New Musicology unequivocally enriched and modernized the discipline by allowing musicologists to enter into conversation with scholarship in other humanistic disciplines such as anthropology, literature, and history that had by then already embraced these theoretical frameworks. They offered musicologists a critical vocabulary that allowed them to contribute to interdisciplinary conversations about power, identity, and resistance.

Yet this critical framework does not provide a critical apparatus for interrogating the ideas about national and racial identity that were attached to the University of Virginia Glee Club concert. In fact, paying attention to the academic discourses on music that proliferated in the years before musicology suggests that the New Musicologists' emphasis on criticism and musical subjectivity was not so much a reinvention as a reconfigured return to the primary mode of music scholarship that flourished during the time of Pratt, Powell, and others featured on the program. This unregulated critical approach to writing about music is why music academia became a breeding ground for eugenicist, neo-Confederate, and Anglo-Saxonist fantasies of racial wholeness. This fact should give pause to musicologists inclined either to romanticize the formative years of American musicology or to dismiss the positivist interventions of music

[4] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination In Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

scholars who bore witness to the misuse of music criticism by the race nationalists who had driven them out of Germany.

As Leo Treitler points out in his review of Kerman's book aptly titled "The Power of Positivist Thinking," what Kerman identifies as positivism's naive belief in objectivity is actually a healthy skepticism towards the unbridled celebration of musical subjectivity. It can be dangerous to detach subjective musical criticism from rigorous textual and historical analysis, as this "provides security against the loss of control in the struggle between reason and sensibility that is threatened by any opening to subjectivity and intuition."[5] If there is a repressive quality to positivist musicology's apparent obsession with classifying, ordering, and cataloguing musical works, it is worth asking what it represses and why.

This is the question driving my dissertation. Although I do not advocate for anything like a return to objectivity or positivism in musicology, I suggest that its anti-subjective quality was a function of a dangerous reactionary fantasy that it was built to repress. There is a madness within the method that has yet to be excavated; until it is, American musicology will remain poorly equipped to develop a meaningful understanding of itself.

This dissertation tells the story of how an Anglo-Saxon nationalist fantasy embedded itself within white universities via music departments in the United States from the 1880s-1940s. It considers the institutionalization of music departments in the decades between Reconstruction and World War II in relation to the proliferation of white supremacist discourses such as eugenics, Anglo-Saxonism, and post-Confederate nostalgia at research universities like the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina, Vanderbilt University, and Columbia. Examining three institutional scenes – the music appreciation course, the folk music institute, and research on Antebellum hymnody – it argues that music departments helped shape the imaginary register of whiteness. Putting Jacques Lacan's theories of discourse and fantasy in

[5] Leo Treitler, "The Power of Positivist Thinking," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 2 (No. 2, 1989): 401.

conversation with an assemblage of Black studies theorists such as Fred Moten, Saidiya Hartman, and Alexander Weheliye, it maintains that music departments composed a fantasy of white national subjectivity that could be defined without reference to its historical relation to blackness. These departments aspired to teach white students to listen, appreciate, create, and imagine as white national and musical subjects that could only ever exist as a hallucination of discourse.

Musicology before Musicology

Pratt's final concert program gives insight on how musical subjectivity was understood in the decades before musicology's repressive positivist turn. It is an artifact of a critical musical discourse that understood racial subjectivity as the product of an exchange; it manufactured white musical subjectivity by delegitimizing musical blackness.

The program mostly consists of compositions by some of Powell and Pratt's personal friends and professional collaborators. For example, it included an arrangement of the song "Poor Wayfaring Stranger" arranged by the Vanderbilt philologist George Pullen Jackson. The title bears an asterisk with a note explaining that the song was a "white spiritual," a term that Jackson had recently invented to refer to the repertoire sung at Methodist camp meetings during the Second Great Awakening in the South. He argued in his manuscript *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1931) that it was possible to trace the evolution of tunes contained in shape note hymnals such as the *Sacred Harp* to prove that the music of white masters in the South was "the camp-meeting *tune ancestry* [of] the Negro spiritual *tune progeny.*"[6] In doing so, Jackson offers a soundscape for the reconstructed image of a noble Confederacy that was being created by his colleagues known as the Vanderbilt Agrarians.[7] If Anglo-American ballads

[6] George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 274.
[7] I discuss the Vanderbilt Agrarians extensively in Chapter 3.

like “Babara Allen” and “Pretty Sally” were object lessons on the refined genius of the Anglo-Saxon race in isolation, as I argue in Chapter 3, white spirituals such as “What Wondrous Love Is This” and “Poor Wayfaring Stranger” demonstrated this genius while also calling the originality of African-American creativity into question.

Pratt highlighted the tune’s characteristic Anglo-Saxon elegance by placing two minstrelized spiritual tunes by Stephen Foster, “Oh, Susanna” and “Massa’s in de Cold, Cold Ground” immediately after it.[8] Programming a white spiritual against Stephen Foster was likely inspired by the argument Jackson made that year that Stephen Foster owed an “unconscious debt” to the white spiritual as the inspiration for his sentimental minstrel music.[9] Further claiming that the Negro spiritual tradition that Foster explicitly named as his inspiration was itself a copy of the white spiritual tradition, Jackson’s argument was part of a larger discourse that sought to undermine Antonin Dvorak’s famous claim that “the future of this country must be founded upon what are called the Negro melodies.”[10] John Powell had indeed already argued in a lecture at the Rice Institute in 1923 that Dvorak had in fact drawn inspiration from Stephen Foster’s music rather than any authentic African American musical tradition.[11] The composer Lamar Stringfield who had established the Institute for Folk Music at the University of North Carolina with Powell’s support made a similar claim in his pamphlet “America and Her Music.” According to Stringfield, Dvorak’s Symphony No. 9 “From a New World” was “a Bohemian’s impression of the American Negro” and claimed that the principle English horn melody of the second movement based on “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” was in fact originally based in “the old song books of the white

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[8] Program for University of Virginia Glee Club Fiftieth Anniversary Tour Plaza Hotel Concert. February 28, 1936. Official records of the University of Virginia Glee Club, Dr. Stephen Tuttle, Director, including correspondence programs, list of members, notices of tours, checks, and other activities, 1930-1947, Accession #RG-23/8, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

[9] George Pullen Jackson, “Stephen Foster’s Debt to American Folk-Song.” *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 22 (No. 2, April 1936): 154-169.

[10] “Real Value of Negro Melodies” in *New York Herald* (May 21, 1893): 28. See Beth E. Levy’s discussion of the “Dvorak Debates” in *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

[11] Powell, “Music and the Nation”

people."[12] Jackson's 1936 article legitimated Powell and Stringfield's suggestion by identifying the melodic source of Stephen Foster's music within an antebellum white Southern musical tradition. And Pratt's glee club recital staged this argument to an northern urban audience that had already accepted the notion that American music – and American national identity by extension – was miscegenated beyond the possibility of racial purification.

The Glee Club program also included a composition by the New Yorker Daniel Gregory Mason, a friend and confidant of both Powell and Pratt. Mason was a composer and music department head at Columbia University and was perhaps best known as the author of music appreciation textbooks and critical examinations of Romantic-era composers. Like Powell, Jackson, Pratt, Stringfield, and other musical academics examined in this dissertation, Mason was concerned that American identity had become too racially-diluted and believed that it was necessary to purge the influence of both African Americans and Jews on its music. Pratt placed his song "Ode To Big Business" which satirized the base materialism of the Gilded Age with Latin translations of popular advertising slogans in the first half of the program. The pessimistic humor of "Ode to Big Business" was a reflection of Mason's reactionary critique of American democracy, the hollowed-out inversion of the feudal system that once allowed pre-revolutionary European nations to cultivate strong musical identities.[13]

Mason distanced himself from Powell's Anglo-Saxon folk project soon after this concert in his 1938 memoir *Music in My Time* where he characterized Powell as "violently prejudiced, sometimes to the point of riding hobbies into downright fanaticism." Yet he nevertheless intimated that "however wild were John's exaggerations you could never hold them against him," and identified two qualities as the basis of their "long fellowship": "disbelief in the fads and fallacies of what he called 'these turgid times', and a belief in our native American music."[14] The

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[12] Lamar Stringfield. "America and Her Music: An Outline for Music Clubs." University of North Carolina Extension Bulletin Vol. X (No. 7, March 1931), 26.
[13] Daniel Gregory Mason, "Democracy and Music" in *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 3 (no. 3, 1917): 641-657.
[14] Daniel Gregory Mason, *Music In My Time: And Other Reminiscences* (New York: The Macmilan Co, 1938).

influence of Powell's racial ideology on Mason's thought can in fact be seen as early as 1921, when Mason contrasted "the insidiousness of the Jewish menace to our artistic integrity" in the fourth volume of his *Appreciation of Music* textbook series with "the Anglo-Saxon group of qualities, the Anglo-Saxon point of view" that formed the "vital nucleus of the American temper."[15] This passage notably caught the attention of automobile manufacturer Henry Ford as he was in the midst of funding the burgeoning Nazi movement in Germany. Ford reproduced it without attribution in his virulently anti-semitic essay "Jewish Jazz Becomes Our National Music" to support the claim that Russian-born Jews had invaded the music industry and, in collaboration with black musicians, "unleashed waves and waves of musical slush that invade decent parlors and set the young people of this generation imitating the drivel of morons."[16] Ford's solution to this problem was to encourage the promulgation of Anglo-Saxon folk music and culture by sponsoring a folk dance revival in the United States.[17] Though Mason himself doubted the efficacy of creating an American school of composition based on Anglo-Saxon folk music and he regarded the industrial mode of capitalism that Ford helped create as symptomatic of the decay in America's potential for cultural greatness, he nevertheless considered Ford to be a paragon of integrity and national greatness. He went so far as to opine in one essay that "Bach acted on Ford's principle" because "he did not wait for the man in the street to like his fugues."[18] As I will suggest in Chapter One, Mason's own ideal for teaching music appreciation at a mass-yet-selective scale via universities indeed has parallels to Ford's techniques of mass production.

With this in mind, Harry Rogers Pratt's program is marked by the influence of a discourse network of academics who helped define music's purpose within higher education in

[15] Daniel Gregory Mason, *The Appreciation of Music Vol. IV: Music as a Humanity and Other Essays* (New York: Novello and Company, 1921), 112-113.
[16] Henry Ford, *The International Jew* vol. III, 65. Ironically, he contrasts the popular songs of the day with 19th-century sentimental parlor songs by Jewish songwriters who had adopted Anglicized names such as Harry Von Tilzer and Charles K. Harris.
[17] Henry Ford, *Good Morning: After a Sleep of Twenty-Five Years Old-Fashioned Dancing Is Being Revived by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford* (Dearborn, Michigan: The Dearborn Publishing Company, 1926), 30.
[18] Daniel Gregory Mason "The Depreciation of Music," *The Musical Quarterly* vol. 15 (no. 1, 1929): 6-15.

the decades before the professionalization of musicology as a discipline in the 1940s. HArry Rogers Pratt, John Powell, George Pullen Jackson, Daniel Gregory Mason, and other figures examined in this dissertation focused on reforming music's place within the research university in order to repair, redefine, and reaffirm what they believed was the fundamentally white identity of the United States of America. Conservative white research universities like the University of Virginia lent institutional power to musicians who felt alienated by music's place within mass culture.

Bringing these figures together on his 1936 Glee Club program in New York reveals Pratt's conscious but private ambition of creating a university-based school of composition that would assert America's white musical identity. As he would write to the composer Randall Thompson in a successful bid to recruit him to UVa's music faculty 1941:

> What with the music in them there mountains for you to browse in and the almost 100% anglo-saxon (sic) population, this is the place for you as a composer. You could make yourself famous in an autochthonous sense and make us famous too.
>
> [...]
>
> Dan Mason wants to come here. J. Powell is doing some remarkable work. I would like to be the Balakireff who put American composers to work. Considering Jefferson and All, the University is the place from which we should sound off.[19]

The placement of these same figures alongside one another on the same program thus alludes to a fantasy of the university as a bulwark against the musical excesses of biracial American modernity. Harry Rogers Pratt articulated such an understanding when he applied to be a music professor at the University of Virginia in 1922, explaining to President Edwin Alderman that he had decided not to renew his contract as the director of the Lake Placid Club orchestra because "it has been utterly impossible to work with the powers that be up here, and the final culmination has been their insistence that I play Jazz (sic) for the holiday dances, which shows about as

[19] Harry Rogers Pratt to Randall Thompson, Feb. 28, 1941. Material collected by Harry Rogers Pratt on the theater and music, Accession #2708, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

superb an ignorance of social, professional, not to say muscular proprieties as one could well imagine."[20] Notably, the Lake Placid Club was a segregated elite social club founded by the Columbia University librarian Melvil Dewey with a charter that explicitly excluded "guests against whom there is any reasonable moral, social, race or physical objections" and did not admit either African Americans or Jews until 1976.[21] Even this environment was too permissive for Pratt, and he turned to the university because he believed that it would provide even more protection from miscegenated musical influence. Universities like UVA, Columbia, and Vanderbilt where Pratt, Mason, and Jackson worked, respectively, offered the ability to regulate discourse at a time while mass culture moved according to the desires of listeners who cared more about pursuing pleasure than protecting the coherence of national identity.

Though these music scholars all attached distinct agendas, desires, and anxieties to music, they shared a sense that America's musical identity had become hopelessly muddled by the same forces of modernity that had split whiteness in two following the Civil War. Northern industrialism obliterated the traditions that flourished in the agricultural South. The decadence of popular culture diverted the attention of young people away from the folk culture rooted in the soil. And, most disturbingly, the codification of biracial citizenship in the United States undermined white peoples' ability to regard themselves as the rightful inheritors of the agrarian democracy envisioned by Thomas Jefferson. These fears all reflect a loss of control over the meaning and experience of American whiteness. The various case studies that make up dissertation collectively trace how music studies answered this sense of subjective lack with monstrous fantasies of a white America that knew what it meant to be white. Educators like Mason, Powell, Jackson, and Pratt taught white Americans to hear their racial history in the Western classical canon. They encouraged whites to think of Anglo-American folk music as the

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[20] Harry Rogers Pratt to Edwin Alderman, Dec. 17, 1922. Papers of the president, Accession # RG-2/1/2.472 subseries VI, Box 3, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

[21] See David Ackerman, *Lake Placid Club. An Illustrated History* (Lake Placid, New York: Lake Placid Education Foundation), 1988.

raw material for a nascent musical tradition that whites would instantly recognize as their own on an unconscious, cellular level. They invited them to overcome the guilt of association with slavery by listening to (or even simply imagining themselves listening to) music that brought them back to a time before the peculiar institution split American whiteness in two. American music studies, then, is the discursive product of a frenetic dance between dread and desire, between fears of insignificance and fantasies of becoming whole again.

Method I: Foreclosure and Discourse in the University

This dissertation contains three case studies that each illuminate a different aspect of the reactionary discourse network of music academics that began to form after the Civil War and reached its peak in the 1930s before being largely subsumed by professional musicology in the mid- to late-1940s. Methodologically, it straddles the line between intellectual history and discourse analysis. These case studies taken together tell a story about the formation and eventual dispersion of a decentralized network of eugenicists, Anglo-Saxonists, anti-democratic feudalists, and neo-Confederates who believed that it would be possible to unify American whiteness through musical scholarship. It aims to do two things: give a history of this white American racio-musical fantasy, and outline the topography of the discourse network that formed as this fantasy took shape.

Its historical narrative spans the 1870s through the 1950s and covers two co-inciding historical trajectories. The first trajectory is that of the rise and fall of a type of academic music criticism that was founded in social Darwinism and was preoccupied with determining America's place within the civilizational and racial consciousness of Western Europe. Music was one of many disciplines that took root within the new type of American research university that emerged after the Civil War including sociology, history, psychology, anthropology, law, political science, and other fields that self-consciously contributed to research in the arts and

humanities. Music became part of the academy's response to the problem of the evolution of human consciousness that originally perplexed Charles Darwin in his *Descent of Man*, where he wrote that "it would be useless to attempt discussing [the] high faculties" of self-consciousness, individuality, abstraction, and reasoning in an evolutionary framework before questioning whether "the hard-working wife of a degraded Australian savage, who used very few abstract words, and cannot count above four" could "exert her self-consciousness, or reflect on the nature of her own existence."[22] As Darwin's ideas along with the 'social Darwinist' writings of philosopher Herbert Spencer took root in the United States, a discourse on music as a signifier of the highly-evolved and racialized consciousness of white Americans emerged alongside eugenics and other new techniques for reconstructing white supremacy after the Civil War.

I also situate the early history of music in the American academy within the context of the segregationist racial regime that began to establish itself in the United States during and after Reconstruction. This new regime was a response to manumission shattering one of the key pillars of American white supremacy and introduced the concept of biracial citizenship within the United States. Without a set of absolute and exclusive rights that unequivocally sanctioned performances of supremacy, it became necessary to find new ways to convince both whites and non-whites to believe that whites were indeed the superior race. In other words, the abolition of slavery in the United States made it so that whites increasingly had to prove, rather than simply assert, white supremacy. The fact that the United States had largely failed to develop an internationally-recognized compositional style was argued to be a symptom of the nation's increasingly incoherent racial identity. White Americans, they asserted, did not know how to appreciate Western art music because they were simply not conscious enough of their racial heritage. In response, music scholars worked to clarify America's white national identity in at least two ways. They began teaching courses in music history and appreciation that emphasized America's place within the nationalist concert music traditions of Western European

[22] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1871), 62.

countries. At the same time, they produced scholarship about the value of underappreciated white musical traditions in the United States such as Anglo-American balladry and the 'white spirituals' that made up the hymnody accompanying the Second Great Awakening in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In these contexts, the object of this strand of music scholarship was a new construction of eugenic whiteness to replace the paternalist mode that was destabilized after the Civil War. This eugenic mode of whiteness had a more tenuous relationship with the law. And the codification of biracial citizenship meant that it had to take on an oppositional stance even though it maintained institutional and cultural hegemony. Further, the substantive loss of its legal grounding meant that it had to construct itself atop of new scientific and cultural discourses. As these new discourses were both unstable and transparently imaginary, eugenic white supremacy was always in a self-conscious state of crisis about the danger posed by 'deficient' or noncompliant whites. The reproductive violence that sustained it often subjected even white bodies to violent discipline that included sterilization, institutionalization, and reeducation. This dissertation asserts that music scholarship should be recognized as a part of a new discursive regime of post-Reconstruction white universities.

To help me grapple with this question, I put two theoretical frameworks in conversation with one another. First, I use psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's critiques of subjectivity, discourse, and fantasy to interrogate how discourse about music in universities helped white nationalists imagine the idealized white subject of their desires into existence. At the same time, I make the case for recognizing a structural impasse in Lacan's thinking when it comes to thinking about racial subjectivity. In order to both make this impasse legible and navigate around it, I also borrow from a broad and cross-generational group of theorists working in the tradition of Black Studies including W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Sylvia Wynter, Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Cedric Robinson, Katherine McKittrick, Fred Moten, and Alexander Weheliye, among others in order to make the case for thinking about the structural differences and inseparability

between white and black postbellum subjectivities. In doing so, I make the case for thinking about white subjectivity in terms of foreclosure to the networked and future-oriented character of postbellum black subjectivity that was necessarily conscious of the violent 'cut' that is the condition of becoming a subject. In other words, putting these theoretical discourses in conversation with one another lets me think of how an anxiety over the ruptures within whiteness was related to the loss of control over the production of black American subjectivity.

To say that music helped repair and reinvent the white American subject, then, is to say that music was a tool for imagining whiteness as something other than a signifier of the loss of the ability to produce racialized subjects. The movement to manufacture white nationalist musical identity through the university was at least in part a response to witnessing the ease in which black and Afro-diasporic music was able to shape American mass culture and influence the desires of unself-conscious whites. White music studies was simultaneously a movement to manufacture an affirmative white national identity and an institutionalized refusal, repudiation, or foreclosure of the possibilities of black life to exceed the limits that antebellum whites originally placed upon it.[23]

I am especially interested in how Lacan undermines the often assumed privileged position of the subject insofar as Lacan defines the subject as intrinsically lacking sovereignty as "the subject is a subject only by virtue of his subjection to the field of the Other" or the object form of the transcendental organizing principle of the symbolic order that reveals itself as the law, the state, the divine, or language.[24] For Lacan, there is a cost to having one's identity

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[23] Lacan identifies foreclosure as one of the three possible responses to castration along with repression and disavowal that shapes a subject's desires upon being brought into the symbolic order of the father. Lacan associates foreclosure with the refusal or failure to adopt the language and rationality of the Name-of-the-Father, producing a psychotic structure within the subject as well as hallucinations or delusions. To say that post-Reconstruction white national musical subjectivity is structured upon the foreclosure of black life is to relate the emergence of black life to the 'castration' or loss of imagined sovereignty that postbellum whiteness aimed to overcome. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book III. The Psychoses, 1955-56*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 1993). See note 48 for a discussion of disavowal.

[24] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar II*: *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-55*. Trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: Norton; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 188.

recognized over others. To become a subject, one must align their desire with the will of the Other and to sacrifice the parts of the self that exist outside of the Other's gaze. Recognition is thus a type of injury as it represents the loss of the ability to experience the enjoyment of being undefined (*jouissance*). In exchange for this mark, the subject gains the right to be a privileged instrument of the Other (*Objet A*) and with this, they can reproduce acts of both psychic and physical violence upon others (*objet petit a*) in order to either incorporate them into the Other's symbolic order or to exclude them from it.

One way of understanding the whiteness of the white subject is as a mark of subjection interpreted as a mark of distinction. As Saidiya Hartman explains, chattel slavery was not primarily an institution for extracting labor, but a stage where master subjects exercised their right to extract pleasure from fungible commodity objects.[25] Though this ability to interpret whiteness as a signifier of master subjectivity was destabilized after the Civil War, the university became a site for articulating the distinction signified by white skin. Scientists reinscribed white supremacy as an effect of 'natural law,' historians reinterpreted the disgrace of slavery as a tragedy and replaced slave ownership with 'English heritage' as the source of the white South's essential whiteness, and the humanities helped redefine whiteness as a signifier of a subject's attachment to the illustrious civilizational consciousness of Europe.[26] Additionally, the university itself took on a more active role in solving the so-called 'Negro Problem' and staving off the degenerating effects of speculative capitalism and mass culture by cultivating social Darwinism, eugenics, and other paradigms that helped justify Jim Crow. Notably, almost none of this work was aimed towards restoring race slavery. The project of making whiteness a mark of the right to own others again was essentially inarticulable within the academy; instead of producing fantasies about a future of white slave ownership, the university discourse instead decentered

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[25] See Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making In Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[26] See for example Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Robert V. Guthrie and William H. Grier, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology* 2nd ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2004).

slavery from the memory of the antebellum South while producing new explanations for the significance of whiteness. The white subject within the discourse of slavery was distinct from the white subject within the discourse of the white, segregated university. What unites them, however, was the ability to interpret whiteness as a mark of distinction and privilege rather than mere difference, much less as a mark of shame.

In Lacan's seminar of 1969, he reworks Hegel's master-slave dialect while identifying the 'university discourse' as one of two discourses along with the 'hysterical discourse' to emerge upon the collapse of the 'master discourse' of slavery.[27] As I will elaborate more explicitly in Chapter Three, Lacan suggests that the university discourse responds to the loss of mastery over others by producing new master discourses such as the discourse of science. These discourses give it the power to create new marked subjects through the production of scholarship and by awarding and withholding credits and degrees. In doing so, both of these discourses are built upon the same contradictions that originally made slavery an unsustainable institution and are built into the term 'master subject': Since all subjects are produced through a violent encounter with the Other, a subject is by definition not a sovereign master.

Put another way, the (in)significance of the mark of distinction that distinguishes the individuated, rights-bearing 'master subject' from the undifferentiated "battery of signifiers" that he believes he has the right and ability to regulate others is assigned to the subject at the moment he enters the symbolic field of the Other.[28] As with Hegel, Lacan identifies the master-slave relationship as being fraught with contradictions that inevitably produce a crisis that undermines the master's ability to maintain absolute authority over the other. But where Hegel interprets the crisis as a deadly struggle between two unequal consciousnesses, Lacan focuses on the transformation which occurs purely with the subject that struggles to reconcile his failure. This failure to regulate the other creates a desire to bypass the contradiction

[27] Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 2007).
[28] Ibid., 31.

contained within the term ‘master subject.’ In the context of American chattel slavery, non-white racialized subjectivity is the product of the master subject’s desire to imagine himself as the Other through performances of subjectifying violence and terror.

Though Lacan himself does not relate these insights to the production of race within discourse, his understanding of the dialectical relationship between the discourse of slavery and the discourse of the university is useful for thinking about the emergence of the modern research university in the United States after Reconstruction. The notion that the master discourse and university discourses are operations for producing and regulating subjects is a valuable way for thinking of music as one of many white nationalist discourses that proliferated within the university after Reconstruction.

At the same time, there is a fundamental impasse within Lacan’s theory of the subject of discourse that this project aims to both elucidate and reframe. This impasse is most easily seen in the disappearance of the undistinguished network of slaves from discourse at the moment that their inappropriable surplus forces the master to face the limited and conditional quality of his sovereignty. If slaves are subjects (S_2) of the subject (S_1) that wants to believe that it is the Other, what becomes of these other subjects when the master either becomes the impotent hysterical subject fixated on his failure ($\$$) or joins the university to assert his mastery in new ways? Even if, as Gayatri Spivak posits, the subaltern cannot speak and is rendered mute within the discourse of the master, the persistent rearticulations of race within modern discourse makes it clear that there is an afterlife to slavery that Lacan either does not see or does not deem significant enough to acknowledge.[29]

Nowhere is this more evident than within the field of music. As a nervous discourse tried to convince white subjects that they had a music of their own began to form within the American university from the first courses on music appreciation and history in the 1870s through at least

[29] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993): 66-111.

the 1940s, a confluence of musical genres and styles that can be traced back to slavery but took on radically new articulations afterwards effortlessly took root and flourished within American society. It did not take much to convince white Americans and cosmopolitan Europeans that the pathos of spirituals even when translated into the Euro-American classical language of Antonin Dvorak or Stephen Foster was Black. Even when the band was all white, the syncopations of jazz were easily recognized as a signifier of America's fundamentally bi-racial national identity. As Alexander Weheliye suggests, the explosion of black music that took place both in the United States and internationally after the advent of the phonograph is evidence of a decentralized, technologically-networked counterdiscourse to the master narrative of Euro-American modernity.[30] That the university discourse of white national music was a reaction to this flourishing of black music outside the university shows that the master-slave dialectic has a discursive afterlife that Lacan does not account for.

On its surface, this dissertation tells the story of how music attached itself to the university on the promise that it could help restore faith in the existence of white mastery by producing new white subjects. Universities are institutions where privileged subjects work to both produce new subjects and deny recognition to others. I want to suggest that many of the profound transformations that took place within the American research university after the Civil War were a response to the loss of bundle of *de jure* and *de facto* racialized rights that supported the institution of slavery and gave even whites in the North the ability to imagine themselves as privileged subjects with the right to be the master of other human beings. Rather than existing to actually restore chattel slavery, it functioned to both create new white national subjects and justify excluding non-whites from enjoying the privileges of citizenship. It is notable that although John Powell, Daniel Gregory Mason, Lamar Springfield, and to a lesser extent George Pullen Jackson were professional composers, they all pivoted away from the concert

[30] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves In Sonic Afro-modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

hall in order to ensure music's place within the modern American research university. They saw within the university the possibility to become engineers of the university's dual function of both producing white subjects and refusing full subjecthood to African Americans.

Chapter by Chapter Outline: Fantasies in White and Black

One of the key ways that music scholarship contributed to eugenic white supremacy was that it helped produce fantasies about racialized musical performance, listening, and subjectivity in lieu of actually providing a racializing musical experience. John Powell, whose intensely neurotic personality I will examine in Chapter Two, made the fantasy character of music scholarship especially clear when he wrote that "if you have a drop of English blood in your veins," listening to an authentic Morris dance "will give you a thrill nothing else can give: some deep racial memory will stir."[31] Though this claim is absurd on its face, it speaks to the notion that the purpose of a white musical education was to encourage white to *imagine* themselves experiencing music racially. They did this by learning to rid themselves of the musical desires of the masses and instead desire musical experiences that would help them recognize themselves as privileged white subjects.

The case studies that make up this dissertation are marked by the insistent repetition of the idea that a national white musical consciousness existed externally to most white Americans who did not yet know how to imagine themselves as white. Figures like Pratt, Powell, Mason, and Jackson each sought to figure out how music could help make white Anglo-Saxon Americans aware of this essential hidden truth about themselves. Whether this involved reshaping the way they listened to concert music, introducing them to the folk music they didn't even now was theirs, or encouraging them to reimagine the soundscape of an invented lily white Antebellum South, they each operated on the belief that America's white identity would surface if white Americans only learned to become conscious of it. In this regard, the white unconscious

[31] John Powell, "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music: How the Southern State Was Led to Discover and Revive Its Traditional Tunes of the People." *Musical Courier* Vol. 104 (Issue 17, April 23, 1932): 6-7, 10.

that ties together the case studies contained in this dissertation references the irreconcilable contradiction at the heart of the white American university discourse. It was the university's object of desire and frustration that was cyclically reiterated within new and modernized disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and music before it either slipped away and was forgotten or proliferated as a plague of white nationalist fantasies infecting a fragmented discourse network that has persisted in the present day.

In thinking of music as one part of a recuperative university discourse that took place both within and across individual universities, I pay particular attention to how each project that I examine in this dissertation attached itself to other, often more established, racially subjectifying university programs. In Chapter One, I account for the Spencerian social Darwinist evolutionary framework of music appreciation courses by considering the friendship between Harvard music professor John Knowles Paine who created what was perhaps the first college level music history course and the Spencerian philosopher John Fiske. I also read the racial evolutionary framework the Edward MacDowell used in his music history lectures at Columbia University *vis a vis* the work of political scientist John Burgess who led the committee that hired MacDowell.[32] Chapter Two considers the movement to institutionalize 'Anglo-Saxon folk music' within universities such as the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina in relation to the work of folk music scholars at their respective universities. Chapter Three contextualizes the work of George Pullen Jackson in relation to the more-scrutinized work of the Vanderbilt Fugitives, a group of poets at Vanderbilt University whose poetry and polemical writing was aimed at restoring dignity to the memory of the Confederate South.[33] In each case, I suggest that the significance of each of these projects can only be understood as one part of a more

[32] See Jessica Blatt, "'The White Man's Mission': John W. Burgess and the Columbia School of Political Science" in *Race and the Making of American Political Science* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
[33] See Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

comprehensive university discourse by articulating them to a concrete set of relations across campuses, disciplines, and outside interests.

There is also a second account of music studies in this dissertation as a white musical reaction against a black musical revolution that represented "a sustained and prolonged attempt to reinvent the black as human."[34] Daniel Gregory Mason's music appreciation textbooks (Chapter One), John Powell's attempt at establishing a folk music department chair (Chapter Two), and George Pullen Jackson's concept of the 'white spiritual' (Chapter Three) had a doubly-repressive quality. First, they attempted to create white subjects by attaching them to a constructed history of white music. They offered and unfulfilled promise of mastery that ultimately did little but to colonize their desires, fantasies, and imaginary worlds with a yearning to have their skin color recognized as a mark of social and political distinction. Secondly, they shielded the white subject from the music of the black other by locating it well outside music's historical evolution and relating this apparent rootlessness to the shallowness of modernity and the cacophony of the popular music industry. The ideal white musical subject produced by the university not only knew his own racial history, but also had no desire to listen to the dangerous music of the other. To do so risked introducing unsanctioned fantasies of miscegenated humanity and the desire to experience other configurations of citizenship into the subject who experienced their whiteness as a barrier of entry rather than a mark of prestige.

In spite of all this, the black musical other continued to exist as an absent presence within each project. Mason argued that music appreciation courses were necessary because otherwise the white youth would surely succumb to the seductive allure of syncopated jazz on the radio, the goal of Powell's Anglo-Saxon folk music campaign was informed by his sense of jealous admiration towards African Americans' ability to derive collective enjoyment from the music of their race, and Jackson's 'white spiritual' thesis was an attempt at delegitimizing the

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[34] Sylvia Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis*, 248. Quoted in Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 158.

popular Negro spiritual tradition by arguing that it was derivative of the music that slaves learned from their masters. As each of these music scholars sought to define American whiteness on its own musical terms, they consistently were forced to grapple with a black other that seemed to be thriving even without the institutional backing that kept their own extreme white nationalist ideologies on life support.

Though I largely rely on Lacan's theories of discourse, subjectivity, and fantasy to perform this critique, I also want to use these case studies to suggest ways that Lacan's theory of discourse can be expanded. To be fair to Lacan, I find his reinterpretation of Hegel's dialectical framework productive in several important ways. First, it intervenes on the teleological tendency of Hegelian dialectics by thinking of discourse as a rotating series of strategies that are reiterated rather than overcome. In doing so, dialectical change is understood as a series of failures by the subject within a shifting field of relations to reimagine itself and form new desires without reference to mastery. Thinking of the persistence white American identity after slavery as the residue of this original failure helps make sense of the purpose that drove each of the white musical subjects in this dissertation. It also helps provide a framework for thinking about how music courses can reproduce a desire for racial and musical wholeness up to the present day even if this is not the instructor's intent.

Second, his understanding of the slave's 'surplus' (*a*) that the master fails to appropriate both in terms of labor production and in terms of enjoyment (*jouissance*) resonates with Saidiya Hartman's pivotal reading of the subjectifying terror of slavery in "mundane and quotidian" scenes such as "slaves dancing in the quarters, the outrageous darky antics of the minstrel stage, the constitution of humanity in slave law, and the fashioning of the self-possessed individual."[35] Lacan's understanding of the master's inevitable failure to make the production, the knowledge, *and* the pleasure of the slave his own is consistent with Hartman's focus on the "fungibility of the slave commodity" as opposed to the slave as a mere unit of labor power in

[35] Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 4.

order to think of slavery as “the imaginative surface upon which the master and the nation came to understand themselves.”[36]

My critique of Lacan, then, is of his failure to account for how what Hartman recognizes as “the vexed genealogy of freedom” or the “the complicity of slavery and freedom” that saw “slavery transforming and extending itself in the limits and subjection of freedom” alongside the genealogy of failed mastery.[37] Fortunately, this impasse within Lacan’s thought is the starting point for an important body of theoretical critique on Black music and subjectivity by black intellectuals including Hartman, Sylvia Wytner, Fred Moten, Alexander Weheliye, Katherine McKittrick, and many others. Putting these two critiques in dialogue with one another makes it clear that there is a separate genealogy of discourse for the networked and deindividuated subject that Lacan identifies as the slave subject (S_2) within the original master discourse. Since these discourses continue to form both the limits and the conditions of possibility for the other, any analysis of the white university discourse that fails to recognize this risks reproducing the removal of difference from white supremacist discourse and thought.

For this reason, I also attempt to account for how the white nationalist music projects I explore in this dissertation were connected to other sets of black musical discourses that took place both within and outside of the university. In Chapter One, I think of the repressive teleological historical framework of music appreciation courses in relation to the seemingly unregulated ahistorical explosion of black popular music in the 1920s through 1940s. Chapter Two turns away from the superstructure of music appreciation to interrogate the individual by considering how John Powell’s humiliation at attempting to regulate the inconsistently-segregated seating at the African American Hampton Institute in Virginia along with a clearly-articulated envious fascination at the apparent ability of African Americans to racially respond to ‘their’ music spurred his interest in turning UVA into the premiere music

[36] Ibid., 7.
[37] Ibid., 115.

school for collecting and disseminating Anglo-Saxon folk music in the state. Chapter Three takes a slightly wider frame by focusing on how Jackson and the Fugitive poet Donald Davidson attempted to sterilize the memory of the Antebellum South by repossessing the Negro spiritual from African Americans for white Southerners. In each instance, it is impossible to separate the desire for white musical identity from the interruption and repression of ongoing musical performances of blackness.

The black musical other haunts, taunts, and signifies against the university discourse in each chapter. Mason argued that music appreciation courses were necessary because otherwise the white youth would surely succumb to the seductive allure of syncopated jazz on the radio, the goal of Powell's Anglo-Saxon folk music campaign was informed by his sense of jealous admiration towards African Americans' ability to derive collective enjoyment from the music of their race, and Jackson's 'white spiritual' thesis was an attempt at delegitimizing the popular Negro spiritual tradition by arguing that it was derivative of the music that slaves learned from their masters. As each of these music scholars sought to define American whiteness on its own musical terms, they consistently were forced to grapple with a black other that seemed to be thriving even without the institutional backing that kept their own extreme white nationalist ideologies on life support.

As Fred Moten explains, black cultural aesthetics is the product of a recursive cycle that can be traced back to the terror of slavery in which "shriek turns speech turns song."[38] White violence is the original and sustained condition of possibility for black life and culture. Moten presents his theory of the "anoriginality of black performances" as a performance of a recurring motif within black studies. It is at the heart of, for example, Hortense Spillers's "hermeneutics of the flesh" that serve as a "primary narrative" for black life, Saidiya Hartman's analysis of the coercion to perform that fueled the political economy of slavery, Katherine McKittrick's

[38] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 22.

understanding of the relationship between black geographies and histories of domination, and in W.E.B. Du Bois's description of Negro spirituals as "sorrow songs" that preserved a circumscribed memory of life before slavery across generations while also expressing a fugitive argument for abolition to listeners.[39]

Black performance is a mirror for white musical nationalism insofar as both are caught in a recursive struggle of overcoming the other. At the same time, there are profound differences between these two discursive fields. Most importantly, the white musical nationalists discussed in this project all maintained belief in the possibility of defining American white national identity on its own terms without referencing its black other or the violence that produced it. Unlike the 'anoriginality' of black performances within Moten's work, a desire to assert the originality of white national identity without acknowledging the originary white violence that produced race in America is a current that runs through every chapter of this dissertation. Against the white university discourse is another set of discourses that, I argue most explicitly in Chapter Three, includes what Fred Moten and Stephano Harvey call the "fugitive planning" of the "undercommons," Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls the practice of "signifying," Alexander Wehilye identifies as the "fleshy surplus that simultaneously sustains and disfigures" the brutality that produced it, and what Saidiya Hartman calls the "chorus" of voices that make up the black radical tradition that "is the vehicle for another kind of story, not of the great man or the tragic hero, but one in which all modalities play a part, where the headless group incites change."[40]

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[39] Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* vol. 17 (no. 2, 1987): 65-82; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co, 1904).

[40] Fred Moten and Stephano Harvey, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, New York: Minor Compositions, 2013); Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014)*, 1; Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019), 348.

Method II: Disavowal, Repetition, and Archival Impressions

My argument in many ways hinges on the notion that academic 'subjects' such as musicology are constituted by desires, fantasies, anxieties, and drives in the same way that human subjects are. Even when they present themselves as apparatuses for the dispassionate production of critical insight and knowledge, their legibility depends on using the language and rationality that gave rise to them in the first place. The residue of this influence is particularly apparent in the gap between what musicologists know and the knowledge that they reproduce through teaching. Musicologists often reiterate their disbelief in the superstructural stylistic period framework as they participate in hiring committees that eliminate candidates seemingly unqualified to teach the required undergraduate survey on Baroque music. They might disavow nationalism but then construct a syllabus that exclusively studies composers who are remembered as national heroes. They may be wary of teleological notions of progress, but design a survey on Romanticism that culminates in the music of Richard Wagner. The musicologist may hear the fascist refrain in the trumpeting of Western aesthetic superiority, but nevertheless spend hours revising their class listening lists to remove repertoire and performances that are ugly, unusual, gaudy, cheap, or irregular. Our reiteration of the schema that we disavow speaks to our attachment to the scene of musicology's creation.[41] Though we may not believe everything that we teach, we accept our role in turning students into musicologists. And it is difficult to imagine a professional musicologist who has never learned the names and nationalities of the composer heroes belonging to each major musical period, or who is unable to evaluate the quality of a performance of a canonical work. As such, these

[41] In Lacan's seminar on object relations he identifies disavowal as one of three possible responses along with repression and foreclosure to the castration scene that the subject into the symbolic order of the father. Disavowal stands for the simultaneous recognition and denial of the castration scene. This produces the so-called 'perverse' subject who seeks to replace the phallus with an object that both demonstrates and obscures that lack is the source of desire. See Jacques Lacan, *The Object Relation: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IV* trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (Cambridge: Polity, 2022). See note 21 for a discussion of foreclosure.

schema pierce through the distinctions between the subject of musicology, the professional musicologist, and the music student alike.

I do not say this to accuse musicologists of hypocrisy or to suggest that their articulated beliefs are insincere. Rather, our tendency to repeat inherited schema while disavowing their structuring logic speaks to the difficulty of shaking off the language and rationality that we have inherited in order to create significance on our own terms. Lacan suggests in his seminar on discourse that "what is repeated cannot be anything other, in relation to what it repeats, than a loss… in repetition itself there is a reduction in *jouissance*."[42] Indeed, we repeat frameworks and ideas that may frustrate us because of the frightful alternative of becoming detached and unrecognizable. Repetition shapes and gives structure to subjects of discourse in much the same way that it structures individual subjectivity. In both instances, repetition speaks to our inability to reinvent language and restructure thought. We repeat what we disavow because being a (human, academic) subject means refusing to sacrifice legibility for self-determination. And what we repeat is an artifact of the alienation we experience at the subjectifying moment – the 'castration scene' – where we are brought into the signifying order of the Other where acts and words have been chained together and their significance determined long before we arrived. The Other's desire becomes our unconscious and we repeat ourselves even when we know better. If the things we repeat but disavow are artifacts of the violence behind the process of becoming subjects; they are records of our past that we reproduce as we shape the future.

This divided temporality of repetition, according to Jacques Derrida, takes on an object form within archives. In his deconstruction of the archives of Sigmund Freud, Derrida observes that archives are born out of a "fever," a "radical evil" in which the compulsion to repeat that Sigmund Freud associated with the anhistorical death drive is externalized and given the power to shape the future for others.[43] He suggests that this dual function of recording the past to

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[42] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 52.
[43] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 20.

condition the future is located within an 'impression' – a thumb print, a "Freudian signature," a remainder of a founding promise – from their creation that "inflects archive desire or fever, their opening on the future, their dependency with respect to what will come, in short, all that ties knowledge and memory to the promise."[44] As such, the "archivization produces as much as it records the event" and the way that it is able to shape the future is determined in part by the form that the archive takes.[45] In the case of a university subject like musicology, the archive takes on its most literal shape as university-housed special collections containing written correspondences, newspaper clippings, drafts of essays and speeches, financial records, and syllabi and other course material. As Derrida suggests, these documents don't just tell the story of the discipline, if they can be said to do that in the first place. They are all haunted by an imprint that compels us to repeat ourselves in spite of ourselves.

This dissertation uses a broad range of archival material from several university collections to give an account of the imprint, which I locate in the decades between the Civil War and the formal emergence of musicology as a professional university discipline. It gives a non-continuous history of the discipline that centers on the discourse network of white nationalist musicians that most prominently featured John Powell, Daniel Gregory Mason, and George Pullen Jackson in the 1920s through the early 1940, though its timeline technically goes from the appointment of John Knowles Paine as Assistant Professor of Music at Harvard in 1870 through the staging of the folk opera *Singin' Billy* at Vanderbilt University in 1954. Rather than provide a progressive or sequential historical account of the discipline, this project aims to identify the persistence of anxieties about race, national identity, and the future of American music that repeated themselves across various contexts and gave rise to pedagogical schema and conceptual frameworks that continue to shape the language of musicology. Even though the ideological intent behind these schema have largely been dropped from today's musicological

[44] Ibid., 30.
[45] Ibid., 16.

discourse (no musicologist could say that we teach music history to connect our students to their racial heritage), this dissertation encourages readers to consider whether and to what extent today's musicological subject continues to reproduce the impression of white nationalism that haunts its archive.

Appreciation as Evolution

Music Appreciation, White Consciousness, and the Idea of Progress In the American University

One of the first courses offered at the University of Virginia's School of Music after its establishment in 1921 was the upper-level Music C5 "Musical Criticism: Appreciation and Analysis." Its description in the 1925 course catalog articulates a theory of history, progressive development, and race:

> Study of the lives and works of the pioneers only. The recurring "Modernistic" movements from early times to the ultra modern music of to-day with the continually developing harmonic consciousness of the race. The great religious composers. The development and analysis of the sonata, symphony, and other forms. Tendencies of modern music.[46]

This description reflects the university's obsession with progress and modernity, with variations of the word 'modern' appearing three times and variations of 'development' appearing twice. It rhetorically evokes both Manifest Destiny with an evocative reference to composers as 'pioneers.' It presents modernity as a governing principle of all music history by suggesting that it is punctuated by "recurring 'Modernistic' movements." Using language drawn from both science and philosophical idealism, it suggests that the course would use analysis of form and "the continually developing harmonic consciousness of the race" as methods for yielding insight into the principle of modernistic recurrence governing music history.

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[46] The University of Virginia Record v. 11 (1925/26). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x004169704&view=1up&seq=266&q1>.

This language put Music C5 in correspondence with a number of other courses offered across a range of disciplines that year using evolutionary theory to study racial difference. The description for "Biology C1: Evolution and Heredity," taught by Dean of Students Ivey F. Lewis promised to go over "the principles of heredity and their application to social questions."[47] George Oscar Ferguson's course in the Department of Education "Education S C 6-III: Individual Differences" billed itself as "A study of the nature and amount of differences among individuals due to such factors as race, sex, heredity." Ferguson's course "Education C6/Psychology C2: Mental Tests and Their Applications" taught how IQ tests could be used to measure inherent intellectual differences between whites and African Americans.[48] The two-semester course "Development and Evolution in Man" taught by Robert B. Bean in the medical school included a unit on "the Primary stocks of man, their dispersal, differentiation and subsequent mixture" followed by one on "the Present Races, their characteristics and their formation from the Primary Stocks."[49]

These courses all had a part in realizing the vision of UVA's president Edwin Alderman to have the university one day "command the southern gateway of the Republic" and "issue into the mighty national stream the values of old Americanism and the best inheritances of the English consciousness."[50] Academic eugenics and scientific racism had indeed been cultivated within northern universities such as Columbia and Harvard for decades before Alderman had transformed Tulane University and the University of Virginia into the first southern universities

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[47] Gregory Michael Dorr writes that Ivey Lewis's Biology C1 course "attempted to link evolution, heredity, and eugenics together as a scientific method for social improvement." Gregory Michael Dorr, "Assuring America's Place in the Sun: Ivey Foreman Lewis and the Teaching of Eugenics at the University of Virginia, 1915-1953." *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 66 (No. 2, 2000): 277.
[48] This research was the basis for articles including "The Intelligence of Negroes at Camp Lee, Virginia," *School and Society* vol. 9 (No. 233, 1919): 721-726; "The Mental Status of the American Negro," *Scientific Monthly* Vol. XII (No. 6, 1921): 533-543.
[49] The University of Virginia Record v. 11 (1925/26): 59.
[50] Edwin Alderman, "A Centennial Address," *Alumni Bulletin Published by the University of Virginia* Vol. XIV (No. 3, 1921): 10-11.

that could match the rigor and research capacity of their northern counterparts.[51] By using eugenics as a framework for modernizing the University of Virginia during his tenure from 1904-1931, Alderman made the school respectable to northern onlookers while producing research and offering courses that justified the racial order of the Jim Crow South.[52] Though northern academics influenced by racial evolutionary theory like Louis Agassiz, John Fiske, and John W. Burgess rarely spoke favorably about the South's inhuman treatment of African Americans, the fact that they shared an understanding that evolution proved the inherent inequality of races allowed them to develop a shared vocabulary for theorizing white supremacy without invoking sectional antagonisms.

I argue in this chapter that music appreciation courses made a unique contribution to the development of this shared racial vocabulary for rationalizing white supremacy and nationalizing white American identity. I make the case that the racial evolutionary framework for studying music alluded to in UVA's Music C5 course was in fact a logical extension of music appreciation's intellectual roots in Victorian evolutionary theory and its institutional history in the United States. As was the case with disciplines associated with eugenics such as psychology, sociology, education, and biology, music as a scholarly discipline accompanied the conceptualization of the American research university in the decades following the Civil War. And it justified its necessity by promising to produce an idealized white citizenry to guarantee the nation's future. Though music appreciation today is associated with dillitentism and is undertheorized compared to courses geared towards music majors and minors, interrogating the history of music appreciation courses is a vehicle for interrogating the intellectual and institutional foundations of the American university music department.

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[51] Edwin Alderman was president of Tulane University before he came to the University of Virginia, and transformed both schools into powerful research institutions. See Dumas Malone, *Edwin Alderman: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1930).

[52] For further reading into eugenics at the University of Virginia under Alderman's direction, see Gregory Michael Dorr, *Segregation's Science: Eugenics and Society In Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008) and J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship In Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

My usage of the term ‘music appreciation’ is adopted from Oberlin music history professor Edward Dickinson’s “loose phraseology” for “discriminat[ing] between ‘practical’ and ‘cultural’ courses, or, as the latter are sometimes called, ‘courses in appreciation.’”[53] As Dickinson’s definition suggests, the term ‘music appreciation’ was only starting to become standardized by 1915 in reference to any type of music course focused on music history, criticism, and literature. Though the term ‘appreciation’ carries associations with unrigorous and subjective critique today, it also implies the process of appraising its objective value and the recognition of its function. In this chapter, I show how the idea of music as something appreciable emerged as part of a significant shift in the understanding of music as a phenomenological object of perception. Learning to appreciate music implies a state prior to being consciously recognized as music, opening up questions about where did our ability to make and recognize music come from, what biological and psychological faculties are involved in perceiving and evaluating music, and what makes one better or worse at appreciating music compared to others. It also implies the existence of unappreciable music unworthy of being designated as such. In this regard, music appreciation set the stage for the study of music as a proxy for the study of human evolution and difference.

Music appreciation courses were often the first non-practical course in music offered by fledgling music departments. They played a sizable role in transforming the study of music from an effete aristocratic pastime to a part of the average American’s cultural education. In teaching a non-specialist audience how to distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ music by learning how to place music in its historical and national context, they facilitated a profound shift in the terms of musical nationalism by highlighting the intelligence of a nation’s concert-going audience rather than its capability of producing master composers and performers. Writing in 1917 of the proliferation of music appreciation within American universities, John Lawrence Erb of the University of Illinois explained that “the aim of this sort of course is two-fold: first to acquaint

[53] Edward Dickinson, *Music and the Higher Education* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915): 13.

members of the masses with musical literature, and second to supply a historical and critical basis for the understanding of the compositions and incidentally to awaken the analytical and critical faculties of the students."[54] Teaching young white men "of a certain class" to discriminate between good and bad music and help select the music their communities were exposed to would lead to the emergence of a new musical "American Aristocracy" with the power to finally "make America a musical nation."[55] Music appreciation textbook author Daniel Gregory Mason was even more explicit in associating music appreciation with anti-democratic aristocratic values when he wrote that same year of the deleterious effect of the French Revolution on musical taste and, by extension, musical progress. With democratization came "the invasion of concert-halls by masses of child-like listeners" who "were unprepared to appreciate [music's] more intrinsic beauties."[56] Music appreciation courses in this regard protected America from democratic decline by reminding citizens that "real democracy never forgets that the majority are always inferior, and its aim music be to give the superior minority a chance to make their influence felt."[57]

These statements articulate a theory of social, political, and artistic progress achieved through the selective exclusion of bad music and proliferation of good music. I suggest in this chapter that this logic of progress-via-exclusion is deeply rooted in an understanding that appreciating music was the vehicle that facilitated its transformation from unconscious to conscious experience. This musical self-consciousness gave music a history, making it possible to consciously elaborate and develop it. Just as prehistoric and present-day 'primitive' men were incapable of conscious musical experience, a nation without a class of leaders able to intelligently ascertain the value of music risked descending into democratic decay. Standardizing music appreciation with mass-produced textbooks in this regard involved also defining good

[54] J. Lawrence Erb, "Music in the American University." *Musical Quarterly* vol. 3 (No. 1, 1917): 29.
[55] Ibid., 33.
[56] Daniel Gregory Mason, "Democracy and Music," *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 3 (No. 4, 1917): 642.
[57] Ibid., 653.

music's inappreciable opposite that posed a danger to societal progress. For Mason, bad music primarily took the form of popular tunes and modernist art music whose rhythmic vigor overwhelmed the nervous system and created an unconscious "craving for violent stimuli" that contributed to the diffuse shallowness of modern industrial life.[58] Music appreciation in this regard provided a justification for establishing academic music departments within modernizing universities guided by the progressive principle that education should contribute to the health of society. Interrogating music appreciation is therefore a way to interrogate the conditions that gave rise to the professionalized fields of musicology, ethnomusicology, folk and popular music studies, and music theory in the decades after the 1930s.

This discourse about improving society through selective processes put music appreciation in the same rhetorical terrain as other disciplines influenced by evolutionary theory and more easily associated with eugenics such as psychology, sociology, and political science.[59] As was the case with propaganda for these other disciplines, optimistic promises about the value of music appreciation masked an anxiety about the incoherence of America's racial identity. The popular and rhythmic music that was music appreciation's opposite was a rhetorical proxy for the influence of African Americans and Jewish emigres on white youth. In its place, music appreciation referred to evolutionary theory to teach students that true music value was based on how rooted it was in the development of a race or nation's sense of itself. Appreciable music was part of a continuum linking the present to the dawn of human and racial consciousness. According to one of the first music history textbooks published in the U.S., studying music academically required starting with "the origin and development of Music, and the means by which it took shape." Doing so reveals that music is the product of "a constant

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[58] Ibid., 650.

[59] Other examples of critical disciplinary histories include Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Tukufu Zuberi, *Thicker Than Blood: How Racial Statistics Lie* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

action and reaction of the various racial streams of power such as the Aryan on the Semitic, East upon the West, Latin upon the Teuton, Folk-music upon the Scholastic."[60]

19th- and early 20th-century evolutionary theorists who wrote on music like Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Richard Wallaschek were preoccupied with debating the origin of music as a phenomenon of human consciousness. Music appreciation, in turn, distinguished itself from applied music courses by utilizing an historical framework derived from these competing evolutionary theories. Though Darwin, Spencer, and other participants in this 19th-century evolutionary discourse could not agree on the precise set of evolutionary phenomena that made it possible for humans to make and appreciate music, they collectively provided a framework for thinking of appreciation as a faculty that had its roots in the evolution of the human nervous system and human consciousness. As a so-called 'social Darwinist' framework derived mostly from Spencer's theory of universal progress took hold in the humanities and social sciences at the end of the 19th century, music appreciation courses began to assert that musical complexity in fact expressed the psychology of the race or nationality of a composer and the audiences who could experience that music intuitively. The ability to appreciate the music of one's race signified his or her racial belonging. Conversely, an inability to appreciate music indicated either an institutional or personal failure to keep pace with the progressive cultural evolution of the race. The poet and cellist Robert Haven Schauffler expressed such a sentiment in an essay published in *The Outlook* in 1911, where he cited the evolutionary theorist and embryologist Ernst Haeckel when he wrote:

> Just as — in [Ernst] Haeckel's view — each adult of us has illustrated in the course of his growth every successive period in the evolution of the race, so the lover of good music has developed his love only by passing through every successive stage of musical enthusiasm from supreme delight in the rattle solo to supreme delight in, say, the 'Choral Symphony.' Grown-ups who have never reached the latter stage are simply examples of arrested musical development.[61]

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[60] W.J. Baltzell (ed.), *A Complete History of Music for Schools, Clubs, and Private Reading* (Philadelphia, Theodore Presser: 1905), 17-18.
[61] Robert Haven Schauffler, "The Evolution of a Musical Amateur," *The Outlook* Vol. 99 (Iss. 7, Oct. 14, 1911): 375.

Schauffler's statement demonstrates how theories of evolutionary consciousness provided a vocabulary for thinking about the phenomenology of music, race, civilization, and nationhood. Ernst Haeckel, who believed that consciousness was a property of all atomic matter, articulated a consensus among philosophers in his and Herbert Spencer's school of evolutionary theory when he reserved "that highest stage of consciousness" for civilized men and suggested that the lower consciousness their ancestors had risen from was "illustrated to-day in the case of uncivilized races."[62] To appreciate a phenomenon meant becoming conscious of it and thus contributing to the development of one's own consciousness. According to Haeckel, "the higher the conceptual faculty advances in thoughtful civilized man, the more qualified he is to detect common features amid a multitude of details, and embody them in general concepts, and so much the clearer and deeper does his consciousness become."[63]

I argue in this chapter that music appreciation's theory of evolving racial consciousness allowed it to contribute to the production of white national identity within universities. music appreciation responded to the dissatisfaction and dread of whites who experienced Reconstruction as an injury with a method for reconstructing and repairing whiteness. Further, its theory of racial consciousness corrected a flaw in the purely biostatistical understanding of race espoused by eugenics. As Sylvia Wynter suggests with her concept of 'sociogenics,' purely-biological explanations of race fail to account for the "phenomenology of subjective experience" that accompanies being a member of a race. We do not come to know ourselves as racial subjects by experiencing our genes. Rather, racial identity is grounded in an "*experience* of what *feels* good *to* the organism and what *feels* bad to it, and thereby of what it feels like to *be* that organism *(the only entity for which these specific feelings exist)"* (italics in original).[64]

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[62] Ernst Haeckel, *The Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* trans. Joseph McCabe (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1905), 187.
[63] Ibid., 188.
[64] Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience and What It Is Like to be Black." In *National Identity and Sociopolitical Change: Latin America Between*

Music appreciation taught that music was the product of an historic racial consciousness and that white humanity was uniquely capable of producing and experiencing great lasting art music. As America could not become a white nation if it was populated by whites who were unable to experience and contribute to white music, music appreciation enriched the eugenic production of whiteness by offering to teach white people to listen, interpret, and think, and otherwise experience the world as members of their race.

I consider how music appreciation contributed to academic theories of racial difference and lent ideological support for what Cedric Robinson identifies as the establishment of the post-Reconstruction 'racial regime' that emerged gradually in the decades following the South's defeat in the Civil War.[65] This regime distinguished itself from its legally-grounded antebellum counterpart insofar as it relied upon knowledge-producing institutions to rationalize white supremacy. In this framework, the invigorated academic interest in eugenics, scientific racism, and ethnology was a response to the weakening of the symbolic authority of whiteness as newly-emancipated African Americans gained citizenship rights and the ability to participate openly in the market. As anthropologist Lee Baker demonstrates, academic theories of racial difference and white supremacy grounded in 'natural law' gave lawmakers and the courts new rationales for tempering the rights of non-whites.[66] Antonio Viego similarly argues that academic psychology became institutionalized within white research universities at the turn of the century because it offered a way to calculate, account for, and compare the intrinsic differences of racialized subjectivities.[67]

Marginalization and Integration, ed. Mercedes Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999): 30-66. Though Wynter adapted this borrows this concept from Franz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks* to think about Black identity without relying on the language of eugenics and genetics, white sociogenic identity enriched, rather than subverted, eugenics.

[65] Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks and the Regimes of Race in American Theater and Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

[66] Lee D. Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[67] Antonio Viego, *Dead Subjects: Toward a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Although there was a broad spectrum of approaches to structuring a music appreciation course by 1915, they shared a common purpose of satisfying "an expression of a need which they feel as Americans who have a destiny that is peculiarly their own."[68] Composer Daniel Gregory Mason wrote in a music appreciation textbook that these courses imparted students with "the power to discriminate between what is excellent and what is less than excellent."[69] For Lawrence J. Erb, music appreciation courses would help produce an "American Aristocracy" of intelligent listeners each of whom would serve as "a propagandist for good music and a power in his community for musical uplift."[70] In other words, music appreciation was able to take hold in the American academy precisely because it taught students to discriminate between what was valuable and what was damaging to the national and racial body politic. It promised to help white Americans become conscious of the significance of the Western classical tradition so they could shape America's future in its image.

The Origin of Music (Appreciation) in 19th-Century British Evolutionary Thought

The idea of a singular "history of music" stretching from the very origin of humanity to the present day was a mid-19th century invention promulgated by several of the most preeminent evolutionary thinkers of the time. A final exam for Harry Rogers Pratt's *Music B1 - History and Appreciation* given on December 14th, 1940 at the University of Virginia demonstrates the influence of this originary debate on music appreciation's progressive historical framework (Image 1). It begins with an open-ended and tripartite question labeled "PRIMITIVE MUSIC." The first subdivision asks students to write on "theories about the original purpose." The names "Darwin, Spencer, Wallaschek" scribbled thereafter.

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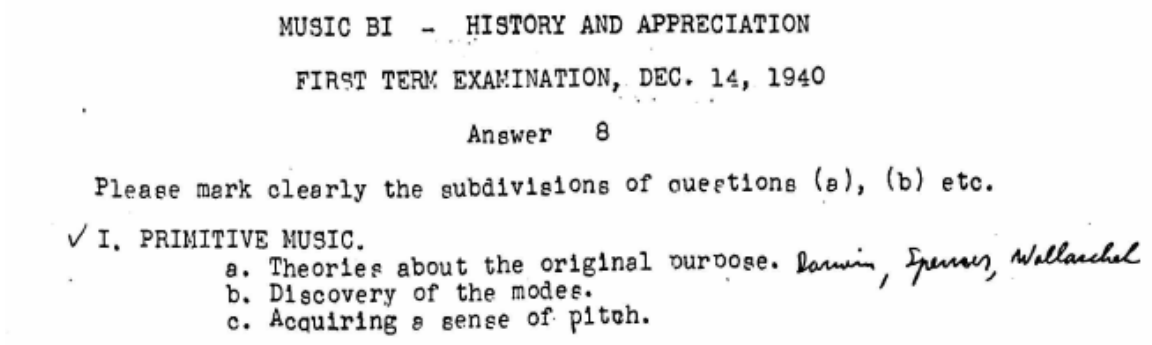
[68] Dickinson, *Music and the Higher Education*, 13.
[69] Daniel Gregory Mason, *Music as a Humanity, and Other Essays* (New York: The H.W. Gray Company, 1921): 19.
[70] Ibid., 33.



MUSIC BI - HISTORY AND APPRECIATION

FIRST TERM EXAMINATION, DEC. 14, 1940

Answer 8

Please mark clearly the subdivisions of questions (a), (b) etc.

✓ I. PRIMITIVE MUSIC.
a. Theories about the original purpose. Darwin, Spencer, Wallaschek
b. Discovery of the modes.
c. Acquiring a sense of pitch.

Image 1. The first question of a Music Appreciation final exam given at the University of Virginia.[71]

This question's emphasis on origins and prehistoric formation of a musical theoretical system helps contextualize much of the language in the *Music C5* description which opens this chapter. I make the case in this section for thinking of this as music appreciation's originary discourse that established music appreciation as the study of music as an evolutionary phenomenon. Evolutionary theory made it so that studying music was a way to think about racial difference, racial subjectivity, and the relationship between evolutionarily-advanced white Western selves and primitive racialized others.

The inclusion of the two Victorian-era evolutionary philosophers Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer alongside the younger Richard Wallaschek allude to a debate on the origin of music spanning the entire second half of the nineteenth century between these evolutionary theorists. All three agreed that if evolutionary law governed humanity's development, it had to be able to account for the emergence of an immaterial human phenomenon like music. However, the three came to different conclusions as to whether music was itself an evolving progressive phenomenon, what more fundamental biological or physiological processes made musical expression and interpretation possible, the significance of the distinction between conscious and unconscious musical experience, and even whether music was in fact a particularly human

[71] Student exams, 19uu-19uu, n.d. RG-22/1/2.041, Box 3, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, VA.

phenomenon. Herbert Spencer was the first to weigh in on this question with the essay "On the Origin and Function of Music" within his *Illustrations of Progress* (1857), two years before Darwin published the *Origin of Species*.[72] Though Darwin's notebooks from his time on *The Beagle* in the 1830s show that he was interested in reconciling the problem of linguistic development and biological evolution early in his career, he only publicly weighed in on the evolution of music in *The Descent of Man* (1871), where he explicitly rejected Spencer's theory of music's origin.[73] Spencer was offended by Darwin's critique, and published a defense of his original essay in the Foreword to a republication in the psychology journal *Mind* in 1890.[74] The publication of this article brought renewed attention to Spencer's essay, eliciting the Viennese psychologist and musicologist Richard Wallaschek to publish an article in the same journal titled "On the Origin of Music" where he referred to his research on 'primitive music' and modern psychology to reformulate Spencer's original theory.[75]

This debate put music at the center of these thinkers' different, and in many ways incompatible, theories on the nature of development, progress, and evolutionary change.[76] Spencer was influenced by German philosophical idealism, naming Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Christian Wolff, and Karl Ernst von Baer as especially important influences. Spencer referred to the work of these German intellectuals as he articulated his theory of the universal progress of all phenomena in the first essay in his *Illustrations of Progress* (1857) where he wrote that "the series of changes gone through during the development of a seed into a tree, or an ovum into an animal, constitute an advance from homogeneity of structure to heterogeneity

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[72] Herbert Spencer "On the Origin and Function of Music" in *Illustrations of Universal Progress: A Series of Discussions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878).
[73] Charles Darwin, *The Works of Charles Darwin: Volume 22, the Descent of Man, and Selection In Relation to Sex. Part Two.* Edited by Barrett, Paul H. and Freeman, R. B. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016).
[74] Herbert Spencer, "The Origin of Music," *Mind* 15, no. 60 (1890): 449–68.
[75] Richard Wallaschek and James McKeen Cattell, "On the Origin of Music." *Mind* 16, no. 63 (1891): 375–88.
[76] For a comprehensive intellectual history of evolutionary theory's influence on the arts that contextualizes this debate, see Thomas Munro, *Evolution in the Arts and Other Theories of Cultural History* (New York: The Cleveland Museum of Art, n.d.).

of structure."[77] He applied his theory of universal progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity to music in an essay contained in this book titled "The Origin and Function of Music," where he theorized that music originated in the unconscious pitched exclamations many animals make in response to emotional stimuli including the tonal inflections accompanying emotional speech. Music as an organized art for Spencer was an extension of the conscious reflection upon this unconscious *reflex action,* a law that "lies deep in the nature of animal organization" in which "feeling is a stimulus to muscular action."[78]

Though Darwin's theory of sexual selection was nearly as far reaching as Spencer's theory of universal progress, he did not conceive of evolution teleologically and it distinguished between biological and non-biological phenomena. Even if, as Robert J. Richards and Charles Morris Lansley have shown, Darwin's theory of nature was also marked by an organicism adapted from German Romantic philosophy, he was still skeptical that music could be itself a progressive phenomenon to evolutionary processes. Though Darwin agreed with Spencer that a complete evolutionary theory had to be able to account for non-biological phenomena like music and language, he explicitly rejected Spencer's account of music's origins in *The Descent of Man* (1871), writing that "Mr. Spencer comes to an exactly opposite conclusion to that at which I arrived." Where Spencer believed that music developed from the unconscious emotional qualities of primitive speech, Darwin believed that there was nothing particularly human about musical instinct and suggested that it likely evolved at some point "low down in the animal series" to accompany mating rituals.[79] Where Spencer proposed a clarifying framework that made music but one expression of a transcendental law of progress governing all phenomena, Darwin believed that sexual selection simply endowed humans with the psychological and physiological equipment to make and interpret music. The fact that music pre-dated the

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[77] Herbert Spencer, *Illustrations of Universal Progress: A Series of Discussions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878): 2.
[78] Spencer "On the Origin and Function of Music," 220.
[79] Darwin, *The Descent of Man,* 572.

evolution of our linguistic capabilities accounted for the inarticulability and sensuousness of musical experience. “The sensations and ideas thus excited in us by music,” Darwin suggested, “appear from their vagueness, yet depth, like mental reversions to the emotions and thoughts of a long-past age.”[80]

Richard Wallaschek inserted himself into the debated between Spencer and Darwin as he was writing his manuscript *Primitive Music* (1893), a foundational book for German comparative musicology that was based on the premise that the rhythmically-driven music of geographically-distinct non-white and uncivilized peoples could provide insight on the origins and development of European art music and civilizational consciousness.[81] And though Spencer interpreted this article as a wholesale attack on his theory by yet another uninformed critic, Wallaschek’s response in fact applied a framework derived from Spencer’s writings on the origins of play and art to rearticulate the origin of music.[82] Wallaschek’s theory was derived by replacing Spencer’s understanding of *reflex-action* with the principle of *Spieltrieb* (play-impulse), which, he explains in a footnote, was understood by German theorists to have originated in Spencer’s writings.[83] *Spieltrieb* referred to the idea that primitive art was an expression of a biomechanical compulsion to exercise and expend stores of excess energy, or “to bring about bodily fatigue through the manifestation of energy in a perpetually-increasing ratio up to the last degree of lassitude.” Wallachek explained the significance of his conceptual inversion of Spencer’s formulation when he wrote that “men do not come to music by way of tones, but they come to tones and tunes by way of the rhythmical impulse.” According to this theory, unpitched percussive music was a manifestation of our unconscious drives, and the development of pitched music accompanied a people’s mastery of their instincts. Intervals could only be

[80] Ibid., 572.
[81] Richard Wallaschek, *Primitive Music: An Inquiry Into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races* (London and New York: Longmans, Green, and co, 1893).
[82] Spencer responded to Wallaschek in an article titled “On the Origin of Music” in *Mind* 16, no. 64 (1891): 535–37. This prompted Wallaschek to respond in turn in “The Origin of Music” in *Mind* 1, no. 1 (1892): 155–56.
[83] Wallaschek, “On the Origin of Music,” 376.

discovered after reflecting upon the impression left by variously-pitched drums. Melodic, and by extension harmonic music, emerges as "we get accustomed to the interval as such, and appreciate it more than the rhythm as such, the former being the more impressive experience."[84]

Wallaschek's use of the word 'appreciation' speaks to the significance of the act of appreciation in all three thinkers' accounts. Wallaschek and Spencer both considered appreciation to be the intellectual act that generated artistic progress. The increasing complexity of Western art music and the gradual 'discovery' of pitches, intervals, scales, polyphony, harmony, and timbre were all expressions of a gradually-developing civilizational consciousness that traced Western humanity's capacity to liberate itself from its instincts through self-reflection. Though Spencer began his teleological account of music with the discovery of pitches and timbral variety rather than within ritual exercise, he still supposed that the art of music emerged as "more sonorous tones, greater extremes of pitch, and wider intervals were gradually introduced" as humans discovered the evocative power of intervallic, rhythmic, and timbral relations.[85] In this regard, appreciation of reflexive music experience made it possible to consciously produce musical art. Appreciation and consciousness were linked dialectically – music only became appreciable as our consciousness evolved to apprehend it, and appreciating music helped spur the evolution of consciousness. Darwin, on the other hand, opened his discussion of music in *The Descent of Man* with the observation that "the capacity and love for singing or music" is likely rooted in the fact that "the vocal organs were primarily used and perfected in relation to the propagation of the species."[86] Instead of being a faculty of only highly-developed peoples, the "want of continuity of such vibrations" was an instinct humans shared with animals even "low down on the evolutionary scale" like alligators, spiders, and crustaceans.[87]

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[84] Ibid., 378
[85] Ibid., 228.
[86] Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 566.
[87] Ibid., 568.

Though Darwin, Spencer, and Wallaschek all had distinct theories of musical appreciation in relation to its origins and development, they agreed that understanding the nature of our faculty for appreciating music was key for understanding the nature of music itself. These different theories of musical appreciation also spoke to their respective understandings of racial difference and the relationship between evolution, language, the mind, and civilization. Spencer argued that the content of language was an expression of the conscious mind while its delivery reflected the state of one's sensory organs. Music was the isolation of this surplus expressive content of speech, and it functioned to develop and refine a distinct "language of sympathetic intercourse," which was "only second in importance to the language of the intellect." By this accord, musical analysis could provide information on the particular unconscious expressive characteristics of different racial groups. This allowed him to argue that differences in national musical styles spoke to the different evolutionary trajectories of the various European races. The melodic sophistication of Italian music, for example, spoke to how long ago the ancestors of Italians began cultivating their music while also facilitating the "expressive inflections and cadences" accompanying Italian speech. The "limited range of musical expression" in Scottish airs, on the other hand, had produced a population "unusually monotonous in the intervals and modulations of their speech."[88]

As Darwin developed his theories of language and music, however, he inverted many of the prevailing assumptions in Victorian philosophy. Rather than regarding language as a reflection of the mind, he proposed that language was in fact constitutive of the mind. Language made it possible to organize the complex thoughts that our brains had evolved to become capable of producing. Darwin had in fact been considering this relationship as early as 1837 after his research voyage of the *Beagle*. On the very first page of his notebook, he wrote "We cannot doubt that language is an altering element, we see words invented – we see their origin in names of people – Sounds of words." Elsewhere, he asked: "Did our language commence

[88] Herbert Spencer, "On the Origin and Function of Music," 235.

with singing?"[89] By the time he published *The Descent of Man* over thirty years later, he argued that musical instincts were in fact constitutive of language rather than its product. As musical instinct far preceded the evolution of humanity, he discounted the significance of racial and class differences in musical taste. According to him, even "the savage races of man" had the "capacity for high musical development" and warned that the unintelligibility of 'savage' music to Europeans was in fact mutual. "So different is the taste of the several races," he explained, "that our music gives no pleasure to the savages, and their music is to us in most cases hideous and unmeaning."[90]

British music scholars tended to align themselves with either Spencer or Darwin as they attempted to use evolutionary theory to modernize musicology and reform their university music curricula. The British composer and music professor Hubert Parry, for example, adopted Spencer's teleological framework when he proposed a new scientifically-informed method for studying music history at the 1884 meeting of the Royal Musical Association. Music, Parry explained, was an evolutionary phenomenon in a chain of phenomena that tethered music of the present to the very formation of the universe. This assertion was rooted in Spencer's elaboration on the theory of evolutionary recapitulation into a law of universal progress from homogeneity to heterogeneity which governed all material and ideal phenomena. According to the theory of capitulation, embryonic development of advanced organisms represented the rapid progression through all of its prior evolutionary stages beginning with the single fertilized egg cell. Spencer took this theory one step further in *Illustrations of Progress* when he suggested that single-celled organisms were themselves extensions of a series of prior phenomena and that:

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[89] Quoted in Robert J. Richards, "The Linguistic Creation of Man: Charles Darwin, August Schleicher, Ernst Haeckel, and the Missing Link in Nineteenth-Century Evolutionary Theory." In *Experimenting in Tongues: Studies in Science and Language* ed. Matthias Dörries (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 21.
[90] Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 571.

> …this law of organic progress is the law of all progress. Whether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of Life upon its surface, the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, or Language, Literature, Science, Art, this same evolution of the simple into the complex, through a process of continuous differentiation, holds throughout. From the earliest traceable cosmical changes down to the latest results of civilization, we shall find that the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous, is that in which all Progress essentially consists.[91]

For Parry, it was only logical to think of music within Spencer's all-encompassing progressive paradigm, though he did not foreground Spencer's particular theory of music's origin. Spencer's general influence could be felt when Parry stated that, in fact, "there is scarcely anything… which is more suitable to be studied in its historical development than music."[92]

Through Spencer, Parry explained that music's history ran parallel to the development of human thought and consciousness, and suggested that the complexity of Western classical music demonstrated the sophistication of Western subjectivity. Despite its advanced state, however, Western music and consciousness of the present retained aspects of their original form and function still embodied in the art and minds of primitive tribesmen described by ethnographers. He applied these assertions in *The Evolution of the Art of Music* (1893) where he suggests that the relatively superficial differences between European national styles of music expressed "the tendency to revert to primitive conditions" that distinguished, for example, the Teutons from the Gauls. Both had evolved among the various "special races" endowed with "an advanced state of intellectuality" who were capable of "pay[ing] any attention to the relations of notes to one another."[93] In contrast, he observed that the "savages" of the present "hardly ever succeed in making orderly and well-balanced tunes" and instead "either express themselves in a kind of vague wail or howl, which is on the borderland between music and informal expression

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[91] Herbert Spencer, *Illustrations of Progress*, 4.
[92] C. Hubert Parry, "On Some Bearings of the Historical Method Upon Music." *Proceedings of the Musical Association,* 1884-1885, 11st Sess. (1884-1885), 1-2.
[93] C. Hubert Parry, *Evolution of the Art of Music* (London: Kagan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1897): 10. He goes on to suggest that differences in Italian and French music demonstrate that "dreamers and sentimentalists tend to lose their hold upon rhythmic energy; while men of energetic and vigorous habits of mind set little store by expressive cantabile."

of feeling, or else contrive little fragmentary figures of two or three notes which they reiterate incessantly over and over again."[94]

Though Parry was perhaps the first British musicologist to endorse an explicitly evolutionary approach to studying music history in 1884, the theoretical psychologist Edmund Gurney had already applied a Darwinian framework to theorize musical perception and appreciation in an incendiary essay published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1876 and in an eclectic monograph, *The Power of Sound* (1880). In his essay, Gurney agreed with Darwin that the pleasure received from listening to music was instinctive, though he deviated from the natural scientist when he reasoned that the ability to appreciate sophisticated music must require "keener or more developed sense."[95] Gurney used Darwin to rationalize the superiority of the British aristocracy's discerning tastes by distinguishing between the instinctive 'enjoyment' of music that was common among humans and musical 'appreciation,' which required the proper disposition along with cultivation and refinement. "Education is necessary for appreciation," he explained "and it is only the especially gifted among the uneducated whose instincts can be relied on."[96]

Gurney's developed this understanding of 'appreciation' in *The Power of Sound*, where he used Darwin to propose an alternative to the Kantian phenomenology undergirding Hermann von Helmholtz's theory of musical acoustics in *Tonempfindugen* (On the Sensations of Tone, 1863).[97] Helmholtz approached musical 'sensation' as something akin to how Kant approached numbers as the sensory objects of the transcendental properties of mathematics, and Gurney rejected his account of music as a phenomenon experienced intellectually with the mind rather

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[94] Ibid., 6.
[95] Edmund Gurney, "On Some Disputed Points in Music." *The Fortnightly Review* New Series Vol. XX. New Series (1876): 128.
[96] Ibid., 130.
[97] For more on Helmholtz's Kantian phenomenology, see David Hyder, *The Determinate World: Kant and Helmholtz on the Physical Meaning of Geometry* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Michel Meulders, *Helmholtz: From Enlightenment to Neuroscience* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010); and Lydia Patton, "Helmholtz's Physiological Psychology," in *Philosophy of Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, S. Lapointe (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2018).

than subjectively with our sensory organs that had evolved through natural and sexual selection.[98] Using 'appreciation' to stand for this sensuous experience, Gurney explained that Helmholtz's "detailed knowledge of the necessary structure of works of art" was not "helpful as regards to appreciation, any more than a knowledge of anatomy and organic chemistry is helpful for the appreciation of human beauty."[99] In this regard, Gurney laid the conceptual groundwork for music appreciation as the study of musical phenomena in a speculative evolutionary, rather than mathematical, framework.

Gurney spends much of *The Power of Sound* considering the problem of how appreciation for music is cultivated within individuals. One of his central concerns is distinguishing between superficial appreciation of musical fragments and a deeper appreciation of musical form. In one passage, he suggests that "the powers of comprehension and appreciation" in very young children is initially limited to an affinity for "simple snatches" or pleasing fragments of tunes before developing an appreciation whereby "it is not just the *sound* but the actual *form* which pleases them."[100] In another passage, he uses this understanding of how the faculty for appreciation itself develops over time to create a thought experiment to distinguish the lack of musical appreciation among members of the rude British underclass and among ethnographic 'savages.' He imagines a "set of East End roughs" who could at least recognize the difference between "a perfectly beautiful and a moderately good soprano voice" and then expresses doubt that hypothetical "savages" would be able to do the same, referring to the latter's "mere love of violent stimulation" that predisposed them to enjoying "hideous noises."[101] In this regard, Gurney leaves open the possibility of refining the tastes of lower class

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[98] Gurney's critique of Helmholtz could indeed have been levied at Kant, as Helmholtz's phenomenology of sound was consistent with Kant's understanding of *phenomena* as sensuous "empirical objects" that allow a judging subject to make transcendental objects cognizable. If, as Kant writes, "*understanding* and *sensibility*, with us, can determine objects only in *conjuction,*" Helmholtz's theory of music is that it is a phenomenon that allows us to understand the empirical properties of acoustics through sensuous – and thus empirical – experience. Music, in other words, is for Helmholtz a phenomenon that lets us sense abstract acoustical properties.

[99] Edmund Gurney, *The Power of Sound* (London: Smith, Elder, & co, 1880), 40.

[100] Ibid., 102.

[101] Ibid., 31.

whites and forecloses it for non-whites who lack a disposition for appreciating even beautiful sound. He inferred that this was both an intellectual and physiological lack as "the perception of beautiful quality of tone… is entirely a matter of the more delicate and differentiated part of the ear."[102]

Gurney and Parry applied evolutionary theory to the study of music in different ways, though they collectively facilitated a profound shift within music studies in both Britain and the United States. Bennett Zon explains that evolutionary theory appealed to British music scholars because it gave them a way to respond to criticisms that the English lacked a significant musical culture.[103] Indeed, Parry's application of Spencer's theories to music history and Gurney's Darwinian meditation on the psychology of musical enjoyment and refinement both made it possible to believe that it would be possible to cultivate a British musical consciousness and manufacture a robust musical culture through educational reform. Parry would become a leader in what Cambridge musicologist Edward J. Dent described in 1917 as a "musical *renaissance* in England" that was initiated by curricular reforms at Oxford and Cambridge. These universities had recently imposed residency and coursework requirements upon the Bachelors of Music resembling that of the Bachelor of Arts degree and treating music as an academic discipline equivalent to any other humanistic or literary discipline. These changes happened despite protests that they would only deprofessionalize music and encourage dillitentism because, according to Dent, they were guided by the principle that "the musical ability of a nation is not to be judged by the number of great composers it has produced in the past… but by the general standard of musical appreciation shown throughout the country."[104]

Though the differences between the evolutionary accounts of Darwin, Spencer, and Wallaschek were fundamentally at odds with one another, they collectively helped create a consensus that music was subject to evolutionary principles even if it was not clear just how to

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[102] Ibid., 32.
[103] Bennett Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[104] Edward J. Dent, "Music in University Education" *Musical Quarterly* Vol. 3 (No. 4, 1917), 607 and 619.

articulate precisely in what way. When the University of Virginia music appreciation exam asked students to write about "theories of the original purpose" of music in 1940, it tested their understanding of the competing evolutionary theories that set the conceptual foundation for a course in musical appreciation. Columbia University professor Charles Farnsworth's *Syllabus of a Course of Study on Musical Art* (1908) includes Richard Wallaschek's *Primitive Music* on its list of recommended readings along with Edmund Gurney's *The Power of Sound*.[105] Waldo E. Pratt's "Class Notes in Music History" accompanying his *History of Music* (1908) includes Hubert Parry's *The Evolution of the Art of Music* on its reading list alongside W. J. Baltzell's Aryanist *The History of Music*. These influences contextualize Pratt's opening statement that the field of music history can be divided into "two large sections – the one including all the music of primitive or semi-civilized peoples (those standing historically apart from us), and the other covering the whole development to which our modern music belongs."[106] The notes for the third lecture titled "The Folk Song" Boston University music professor John P. Marshall's *Syllabus and Note Book for a Course in the Appreciation of Music* (1913) includes topics such as "The Evolution of the Folk-Song from Primitive Music" and "Successive Stages of Civilization and Racial Characteristics clearly Reflected in Folk Songs."[107]

Musicologist Rachel Mundy has traced the embrace and subsequent rejection of biological metaphors in musicological accounts of style over the course of the 20th century to suggest that evolutionary theory has historically "been a way for musicians and scholars to explore changing concepts of human difference."[108] Mundy identifies the rise of Nazism and World War II as a turning point that exposed the consequences of studying music as an evolutionary phenomenon, encouraging music academics to focus on studying 'the music itself'

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[105] Charles Hubert Farnsworth, *Syllabus of a Course of Study on Musical Art* (New York City: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1908).
[106] Waldo Selden Pratt, *Class Notes in Music History: General Course* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1908), 5.
[107] John P. Marshall, *Syllabus and Note Book for a Course in the Appreciation of Music* (Boston: Charles W. Homeyer & Co., 1913).
[108] Rachel Mundy, "Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* Vol. 67 (No. 3, 2014): 735.

by the mid 1940s. The exam was administered at the precipice of the United States' entry into World War II, representing the culmination of nearly a century of evolutionary theory's dominance on proto-musicological thought.

Subsequent questions on the 1940 music appreciation exam also tested students' understanding of the nature of musical progress over musical analysis. A question on "John (sic) Sebastian Bach" asks students to write on "his place in the evolution of composition;" another labeled "Opera" asks of "Its origin – when and where" and then asks students to write on the prompt "Do you think that opera has any future in this country and, if so, in what form will it probably by developed?"; the final question titled "Haydn" asks "Why is he called the 'father of the symphony'?" These questions, along with ones titled "Greece," "Middle Ages," "The Netherlands School and Its Influence Throughout Europe," "Palestrina and His Contemporaries," and "England" are certainly less jarring than the one on "Primitive Music" and might appear in modified form on a contemporary music appreciation or music history exam. They nevertheless follow a conceptual throughline that began with a telling of evolutionary theorists' speculative accounts of music's original purpose. Darwin, Spencer, and Wallaschek – along with Gurney and Parry, and the American music history pedagogues they influenced – helped establish a method for studying music as a vehicle for teaching students about the nature of progress itself and its relation to human difference. As late as the 1940s when America was at the brink of joining the theater of war, music appreciation courses were places where students could be made to grapple with and ultimately validate the same theories about racial difference and transcendental musical progress that fueled Nazi ideology.

Before Music Appreciation - Harvard and Columbia, 1870-1904

By the mid-1930s, professional musicological societies like the American Musicological Association had already begun delegitimizing new scholarship grounded in speculative evolutionary theory. The first scholarly musicology journal in the United States *The Musical Quarterly* (est. 1915) regularly published articles deploying an explicitly evolutionary developmental framework between its establishment and the mid-1930s including Edgar Istel's "A Genetic Study of the Aida Libretto" (1917), Edward J. Dent's "The Relation of Music to Human Progress" (1928), Walter Dahms's "The Biology of Music (1925), and Erwin Felber's unwieldy "New Approaches to Primitive Music: The Music of Infants; Neurasthenics and Paranoiacs; Drunkards and Deafmutes" (1933). This was, however, no longer the case by the end of the 1930s, when this and other scholarly music journals began targeting a newly professionalized readership that was already skeptical of the applicability of biological and evolutionary metaphors to music.[109]

Music appreciation courses, however, were resistant to professionalization as they were often designed by the first generation of music academics whose qualifications were necessarily based on their reputations as composers, performers, and conductors rather than their possession of an advanced degree. American music scholars who shaped academic music standards between the establishment of the first music departments in the 1870s and the professionalization of musicology in the 1930s has been largely ignored by critical musicologists since the rise of New Musicology in the 1980s. Joseph Kerman's important *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (1985), for example, focuses his criticism against the positivist and anti-critical methodologies of the first generation of professional musicologists in the United

[109] There has been a recent resurgence of interest in using evolutionary theory to theorize the origin of music. Work in this vein has generally been influenced by advances in neuroscience and are conscientious about navigating evolutionary theory's past relationship with race. Though this work remains outside the scope of this discussion, I believe that it is worth considering how this wave of speculative evolutionary musicology interacts with new, deracinated theories of humanity. Some important examples of this include Steven J. Mithen's *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Gary Tomlinson's *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity* (Zone Books, 2014). More recent examples include Steven Jan's *Music In Evolution and Evolution In Music.* (S.l.: Open Book Publishers, 2022) and Alan R. Harvey's *Music, Evolution, and the Harmony of the Souls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

States.[110] This has changed recently, with Tamara Levitz, Loren Kajikawa, and Philip Ewell having pushed for a re-examination of the pre-professionalized foundations of music scholarship.[111]

I want to join this cohort of self-critical music scholars by considering how British evolutionary theory helped the first generation of American music academics develop a template for the first non-practical music courses. In this section, I show how Spencer's theories in particular influenced the lectures and courses of music professors at Harvard and Columbia during the last three decades of the 19th century. This was a period that saw the American research university take on a distinct form as private colleges remodelled their curricula to resemble the established university models of Britain, Germany, and France. Rudolph Frederick explains that college administrators responded to low enrollment after the Civil War by emphasizing that universities were not simply places to study a subject, but were places for "friendships, social development, fraternity houses, good sportsmanship, athletic teams."[112] Universities began introducing the elective system and offering courses in new subjects like music, literary criticism, and art that previously were part of the extracurricular life of students. Although few among the first generation of faculty in these new subjects held graduate degrees in any subject, they were nevertheless tasked with fitting their subjects within academic frameworks. Evolutionary theory was an especially popular tool for infusing courses on the arts with a scientific veneer, as it helped reframe subjects such as music that carried associations with effete aristocratic dillitentism within a grand narrative of growth, conquest, and Euro-American supremacy.

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[110] Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).
[111] Tamara Levitz, "The Musicological Elite," *Current Musicology* 102 (2018): 10-80; Loren Kajikawa, "The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music." In *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across Disciplines* edited by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, Luke Charles Harris, Daniel Martinez-HoSang & George Lipsitz (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019); Philip Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame" in *Music Theory Online* 26 (no. 2, 2020): <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.20.26.2/mto.20.26.2.ewell.html>.
[112] Rudolph, Frederick. *The American College and University: A History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 288.

The most famous spokesman of the elective system was Charles William Eliot, who hired the organist and composition instructor John Paine as Assistant Professor as one of his first tasks after being elected as the first non-clergy president of Harvard in 1870.[113] Eliot aspired to transform the provincial college into a university with a national reputation by rejecting the "antagonism between literature and science" and programming public lecture series featuring academics from a broad range of disciplines.[114] Paine was given a ten-lecture series on the history of music as well as broad discretion to establish what was perhaps the first academic school of music. Under Paine's direction, Harvard's music courses were initially restricted to students who were competent at piano or organ, with some exceptions made for accomplished orchestral instrumentalists. By 1895, however, Paine began advocating to expand the influence of the music department, which had grown from 11 students in 1871 to a peak of 111 in 1884, by opening his music history course to "to all students able to read music well."[115]

Notably, Paine soon began basing his history of music upon an evolutionary framework adapted from Herbert Spencer's "On the Origin and Function of Music." A book based on his lectures, *The History of Music to the Death of Schubert* (1907), opens by drawing a fundamental racial distinction between Euro-Americans whose music has a discernable history and "uncivilized men" whose "rude unaccompanied singing was as spontaneous as speech."[116] Though he does not cite Spencer by name, he adopts Spencer's central thesis that "the earliest music was undoubtedly vocal," even if "the rhythmical element in music soon aroused the attention of primitive men" causing them to lose their connection to the vocal foundation of music.[117] Paine, who was born in Maine and educated in Berlin, was among the first group of

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[113] For a more detailed history of the early years of the Harvard music department, see Elliot Forbes, *A History of Music At Harvard to 1972* (Cambridge, Mass: Dept. of Music, Harvard University, 1988) and Walter Raymond Spalding, *Music At Harvard: A Historical Review of Men and Events* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1935).
[114] Quoted in Rudolph, *The American College and University*, 292.
[115] Cited in Elliot Forbes, *A History of Music at Harvard*. Appendix A.
[116] John Knowles Paine and Albert Andrew Howard (ed), *The History of Music to the Death of Schubert* (Boston: Ginn, 1907), 3.
[117] Ibid., 4.

American intellectual elites to be influenced by Spencer's theories. And for at least two decades between the 1870s and early 1890s, he and his students exerted much control on the national discourse on music's place within higher education.

Paine's music history lectures helped lay the conceptual groundwork for music appreciation courses by teaching music history from a social Darwinist perspective. Though it is unclear exactly when Paine was introduced to Spencer's essay on the origin of music, he had likely became acquainted with Spencer's essay through his friendship with the philosopher and educational reformer John Fiske, whom Eliot also hired onto the Harvard faculty as one of his first acts as President of the University. Whereas Spencer's influence upon Paine's history course was relatively superficial and seemingly limited to his thesis about the origin of music, Fiske had been lecturing on Spencer's ideas at Harvard as early as 1869, citing Spencer's "unified doctrine of the Cosmos" as the primary influence upon his own "cosmic philosophy."[118] There is no doubt about Paine and Fiske's mutual admiration and friendship. The two dedicated a number of works to one another, including Paine's *Piano Trio in D minor*, op. 22 (1874) and the first volume of Fiske's *Old Virginia and Her Neighbors* (1897). In the Introduction to the 1902 reprint of Spencer's *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, the younger Spencerian philosopher Josiah Royce describes meeting Fiske for the first time in the summer of 1877 at his house accompanied by Paine.[119]

Fiske was profoundly influenced by Spencer's theories of racial difference. Soon after publishing his manuscript on cosmic philosophy, he began offering a course on "America's Place in History" where he predicted that the white American race would colonize the world until "four fifths of the human race will trace its pedigree to English forefathers, as four fifths of the

[118] John Fiske and Josiah Royce, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy, Based On the Doctrine of Evolution: With Criticisms On the Positive Philosophy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1902), xii.
[119] Ibid., cxvi.

white people in the United States trace their pedigree today."[120] He occasionally included brief discussions about music in his lectures and essays about race. In a passage about the racial inferiority of Aboriginal Australians in the essay "The Progress from Brute to Man" (1873), for example, he alludes to a racial faculty for music appreciation when he writes:

> If the emotions of the German and his intellectual perceptions of the fitness of harmonious sounds for expressing emotion are so deep and subtle and varied… the crude emotions of the Australian, on the other hand, are quite adequately expressed by the discordant yells and howls which constitute the sole kind of music appreciable by his undeveloped ears.[121]

Such ideas about music as a marker of racial superiority influenced a generation of students at Harvard as they advocated for expanding music's academic presence within universities. The music critic Philip Goepp, a Harvard music graduate who studied under Paine, demonstrated this influence in a paper he read at the 1911 Music Teachers National Association titled "Musical Appreciation in America as a National Asset" in which he portrayed the United States as a nation with a growing musical culture which had outpaced the public's cultural education. Because it lacked a requisite understanding of how to listen to classical music properly, the American public was, according to Goepp, "still in a state of barbarism."[122] His solution was to "follow the example of Teutonic races" and begin teaching about music scientifically instead of subjectively. He concluded by evoking Fiske's ideas, stating that "in America we are in a splendid way to realize a high destiny in our art. By some admixture of inheritance we seem perhaps to have a higher capacity than our English cousins." Even the lack of a single coherent folk song strain spoke to the fact that "we are heir to all the strains of

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[120] John Fiske, "The Manifest Destiny of the English Race." Quoted in Barry Werth, *Banquet at Delmonico's: Great Minds, the Gilded Age, and the Triumph of Evolution in America* (Random House: New York, 2009), 210.
[121] John Fiske, "The Progress from Brute to Man," *The North American Review* No. CCXLI (1873): 254.
[122] Philip H. Goepp, "Musical Appreciation in America as a National Asset," *Papers and Proceedings of the Music Teachers' National Association at Its Thirty-Second Annual Meeting* (December 27-30), 31.

folksong of the civilized world" such that "it seems to be our destiny to lead in the glorious merging of them all."[123]

If John K. Paine influenced the circulation of Spencer's musical evolutionary thought in the United States, Edward MacDowell helped create an interest in establishing music appreciation courses in universities across the nation while applying a more eclectic combination of evolutionary theories to the history of music in his lectures and courses. MacDowell was hired as the first chair of Columbia University's new music department in 1896 as part of an ambitious expansion effort led by the political scientist John W. Burgess, who also headed MacDowell's hiring committee. Influenced by the research-driven German university model as well as Johns Hopkins's emphasis on graduate education, Burgess hired MacDowell to join a new faculty of philosophy that would be responsible for advanced and graduate-level instruction in literature, philosophy, and philology.[124] MacDowell was tasked with elevating music into a bonafide research discipline, though he was not himself a researcher. He subsequently turned, as Paine did, to the increasingly widespread evolutionary theories of his professorial peers.

Unlike Paine, who primarily used the distinction between 'civilized' and 'primitive' humanity as a framing device to center the narrative on Western art music, however, MacDowell suggested that the development of music traced the formation of a race's self-consciousness. Writing that "music is the very first sign of the dawn of civilization," he proposed that humanity's supposed first instrument, the drum, functioned as a vehicle for early man to "feel himself something apart from the world, and to look at it objectively instead of subjectively."[125] MacDowell called this the 'rhythm stage' of humanity, drawing from Edward Burnett Tylor's anthropological theory that humanity progresses through fixed 'stages' of cultural and

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[123] Ibid., 35.
[124] See John William Burgess and Nicholas Murray Butler, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar: The Beginnings of Columbia University* (New York: Columbia university press, 1934).
[125] Edward MacDowell and W.J. Baltzell (ed), *Critical and Historical Essays: Lectures Delivered At Columbia University* (Boston: A.P. Schmidt, 1912), 4.

civilizational development.[126] He goes on to cite a broad array of ethnographies on 'primitives' living on nearly every continent to suggest that none of them had progressed to develop music capable of more than this most basic musical and emotional expression. The music of Tierra del Fuegans, Andaman Islanders, and the 'Weggas' of Sri Lanka was fundamentally percussive, and they had "but one sound to represent emotion, namely, a cry to express joy" because they had yet to even develop emotional subjectivity.[127] From the rhythm stage, MacDowell proposed that the next instrument primeval man discovered would have been the pipe shortly after reaching the "'hut' stage of civilization" which accompanied the development of "the second strongest emotion of the race… love." From here, humanity had discovered the basic musical subdivision between rhythm and melody.[128]

MacDowell's evolutionary theory reflects the general intellectual environment at Columbia in the 1890s and early 1900s rather than the influence of a particular 19th-century philosopher. It modernized music coursework by using an ethnographic racial framework inflected by scientific racism, eugenics, and social Darwinism. This framework resembled the one used by John W. Burgess in his two-volume magnum opus, *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law* (1890). In the very first chapter, Burgess identifies the relative capacity of various races to self-govern, with European Aryans showing the greatest and its Teutonic subset "dominat[ing]... by his superior political genius."[129] If Burgess's comparative analysis was based on the assumption that the "peculiar political institution" which each race had produced was "expressive of its innermost political life in all the periods of its developments," MacDowell's history of musical consciousness helped give an account of how the racial consciousness of groups developed distinctly from one another.[130] Following the

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[126] See Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches Into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom* Second Edition (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1883).
[127] Ibid., 6.
[128] Ibid., 14.
[129] John W. Burgess, *Political Science and Comparative Constitutional Law* (Boston: Ginn, 1890), 4.
[130] Ibid., 30.

'discovery' of melody, man eventually 'discovered' polyphony and harmony; as these discoveries followed the progressive evolution of human consciousness, complex music was an indication of the impressive minds of Anglo-Saxon whites.

MacDowell's tenure at Columbia was ultimately short-lived. He had a very public falling out with Columbia's President Nicholas Murray Butler in 1904, eliciting what was likely the first national discourse about the value of general education music coursework within university curricula. MacDowell disagreed with Butler's decision to relegate the Music Department to a mere 'Division' of fine arts in the Teachers College while he was on sabbatical in 1902-03.[131] Offended at the indignity of being relocated to a school he described as having "somewhat the nature of a coeducational department store," he resigned in protest the following year.[132] The insurmountable difference at the heart of this conflict, according MacDowell, was that Butler was a cold materialist who could not recognize the value of MacDowell's musical and pedagogical idealism.[133]

On February 14th the *New York Times* published a symposium titled "The Proper Place of Musical Study in Universities and Colleges" which included contributions from college music chairs including John Paine, Yale's Horatio Parker, and Vassar's George Gow, in addition to MacDowell.[134] A consensus between the four was that a college music department's most important responsibility was to impart upon students a knowledge of music history, rather than composition or technical theory. For his contribution, MacDowell explained that the purpose of university music education was to leave students with "some knowledge of and some feeling for

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[131] See Michael Rosenthal, *Nicholas Miraculous: The Amazing Career of the Redoubtable Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).
[132] This statement is recounted by Upton Sinclair in *The Goose-Step* (Pasadena, Calif: The author, 1923) where he states was "contained in a confidential statement sent by Professor Cattell to some of the Columbia faculty" upon MacDowell's departure (56).
[133] See Michael Joiner, "MacDowell vs. Butler: The 'Idealist' Professor and the Administrator of 'Materialism'." In *"Very Good for an American": Essays on Edward MacDowell*. Edited by E. Douglas Bomberger. (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2017).
[134] Colloquy, "The Proper Place of Musical Study in Universities and Colleges," *New York Times* (Feb. 14, 1904): 22. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1904/02/14/101386702.html?pageNumber=22.

the ideal suggestion of the fine arts, without which higher education is not complete." Paine used his contribution to take credit for leading "the movement now on foot to promote the higher study of music" that was by then taking root within white and mostly-private universities such as "Yale, Columbia, Princeton, the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern University, Brown, Tufts, Amherst, and the University of California." Parker wrote that music courses should "excite and encourage a general interest in the subject" and ensure that "students may be able to form an independent judgement as to what is good and what is bad in art." Gow compared music departments to English and German departments to point out that neither had any pretensions of being responsible for producing great authors. Though it was important to offer some technical instruction in music devoted to learning the "language" of music, it was necessary to offer courses that provided "a general survey of the field of music to the appreciative listener, parallel to those which may be offered in art." In short, these composers and academic chairs responded to MacDowell's departure from Columbia by affirming his position that music's place within universities was to cultivate a general student body's appreciation of music. They encouraged other universities to follow the example of MacDowell's idealism.

Music Appreciation, Efficiency, and Waste - Daniel Gregory Mason's Essays and Textbooks

The distinction MacDowell drew between his 'idealism' and Butler's 'materialism' helped set the stage for an unprecedented discourse about the value of non-specialist music coursework within academia. While the participants in the *New York Times*' symposium sided with MacDowell's idealism, a more ambivalent and recuperative position soon emerged. Edward Dickinson described this middle ground in *Music and the Higher Education* using MacDowell's original distinction, writing that those endorsing "the idea of work for the conquest of the material

world" had been reacting "against the old idealism" to transform the very concept and purpose of academia and education. Against both of these camps, he endorsed a 'new idealism' that used culture to mediate the needs of the psychic life of the individual with the needs of the political economy of the state. MacDowell's idealism was simply inefficient and costly even if there was real value in musical literacy. Dickinson proposed that music courses should instead aim to encourage "the development of individual efficiency in order to avoid waste of energy."[135] The products of this balancing act, he explained, were thoroughly modern, efficient, and idealistic "courses in appreciation" that could efficiently produce musical literacy at a mass scale.[136]

The composer and music critic Daniel Gregory Mason similarly intervened upon the "unprecedented flow of printer's ink in the service of various opinions on the teaching of music in colleges" shortly after MacDowell's resignation.[137] Mason took issue with the vague idealism invoked by MacDowell and his supporters and reframed the discourse on music history's value in economic terms. He concurs with the Harvard music alumnus Thomas Surette to suggest that the primary benefit of general education music courses was that they eliminated the "great economic waste" involved in the process of becoming musically literate. Whereas one only had to study the language of his or her mother tongue to read and appreciate literary masterworks, countless hours were needed to learn to read music and play an instrument well enough to develop an intelligent perspective on music. This was a joyless task that dissuaded many potential music lovers. Mason imagined that there must have been "hundreds or thousands of young women… sitting in front of pianos" at that very moment struggling to learn the instrument with "little of deep pleasure or genuine cultivation."

Mason believed that the first generation of music academics had failed to see the inefficiency and unscaleability of traditional methods for transmitting musical literacy. Paine's

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[135] Edward Dickinson, *Music and the Higher Education*, 12.
[136] Ibid., 13.
[137] Daniel Gregory Mason, "Music in the Colleges." *The Outlook* (April 23, 1904), 76, 16.

model in particular, which required students to know how to read musical notation before enrolling in his history courses, would soon be outmoded within industrial society. In fact, the greatest benefit of music history and aesthetics courses was that they streamlined the acquisition of music literacy. They only required a single skilled pianist in the room, or even a phonograph. Mason synthesizes the best aspects of general music courses to describe the ideals underpinning the music appreciation courses that would soon become widespread:

> [They] would consist of courses of lectures, taking up music much as the literary lectures now universally adopted in colleges take up literature…. They should explain the general motives and methods of art, the constituents of artistic effect, the principles of evolution as illustrated in art; they should trace general lines of development in the art of music, showing what impulses, and in comprehensible terms what technical methods, underlie various schools… In a word, they should in every possible way illuminate for the average man to whom they are addressing the objects of art which he is trying to enjoy and understand.[138]

Mason's rhetoric of industrial efficiency made music coursework legible to the materialist Nicholas Butler. When MacDowell resigned from Columbia, Butler was, according to the muckraker journalist Upton Sinclair, in the midst of transforming Columbia into a plutocracy run by a trustee board composed of "merchants and manufacturers and bankers."[139] Sinclair had taken one of MacDowell's music courses while he was a student at Columbia, and was highly sympathetic to his "beautiful dream of a center of musical education" that stood as the antithesis to Butler's "machine for the turning out of 'educational experts,' trained to see life as a battleground of money-ambition."[140] Summarizing the MacDowell-Butler conflict, Sinclair wrote simply that "MacDowell ran into Nicholas Murray Butler and was killed."[141]

Yet if MacDowell's dream was dead, Daniel Gregory Mason reanimated it by showing that it could in fact perfectly align with Butler's value-driven materialism. Mason was hired as a lecturer to teach at Columbia the following year as one of MacDowell's replacements, and

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[138] Ibid.
[139] Upton Sinclair, *The Goose-step* (Pasadena: The author, 1923).
[140] Ibid. 59.
[141] Ibid. 15.

Thomas Surette would join him as a lecturer in 1907. Soon after, Mason and Surette published the first of a popular four-volume series titled *The Appreciation of Music* (1907), simplifying and systematizing the progressive evolutionary framework taught by Paine and MacDowell for college students with no technical background in music.[142]

Mason was another one of John K. Paine's students at Harvard university, and his understanding of music history was in turn heavily influenced by Herbert Spencer's theory of universal progress. Like Parry a decade prior, Mason turned to Spencer with the explicit intention of revolutionizing scholars' understanding of music history. In the Introduction to *Beethoven and His Forerunners* (1904), Mason distinguished the evolutionarily-informed "modern view of history" from prior historical work that took the form of mere collections of facts about composers. Declaring that "facts were facts, and had no hidden significance, no mutual interaction, no cumulative force, momentum, or direction," he set out to propose a new methodology "inspired by the great doctrine of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of evolution."[143] He openly cited Spencer when he wrote of music's governance by a "general tendency from a low toward a high state of organization, with increase in definiteness, coherence, and heterogeneity, which readers of Herbert Spencer expect in any evolutionary series."[144] The passages that follow this statement, however, seem to bear the influence of John Fiske's ecclectic Cosmic Philosophy over Spencer's own thoughts on music.

Mason's method for studying music was comparable to a biologist's method for studying a complex organism. Instead of simply deferring to popular stereotypes about 'savage' humans as both Paine and MacDowell did, he sets up his account of 'primitive' music with a zoological metaphor. Primitive music was like a jellyfish "made up of thousands of but slightly differentiated cells, and without legs, arms, head, or any viscera worth mentioning except stomach" making it

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[142] Thomas Whitney Surette and Daniel Gregory Mason. *The Appreciation of Music* (New York: H.W. Gray : sole agents for Novello & co, 1907).
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 7.

"not [an animal] of pronounced individuality or solidarity." A "savage tribe," he suggests, similarly consists of "many human beings almost indistinguishable from one another" making it a "sort of social jellyfish." In contrast, "civilized communities" are more like vertebrates because "the variety of the atoms or molecules makes possible a great solidarity in the molar unit the compose, since the uniqueness and indissolubility of a structure is directly proportionate to the diversity of the elements that compose it."[145] This is why, he offered, the music of 'savage' tribes is made up of "vague, unlocated sounds, not combined with one another" whereas modern music of civilized society is a composite of "the various, clearly defined, and highly organized family of tones."[146] In other words, musical complexity was as much the product of evolution as a spinal cord, as both represented "an evolution from 'indefinite, incoherent homogeneity' to 'definite, coherent, heterogeneity.'"[147] If the study of music history for Mason required a method akin to dissecting an organism in order to study its nervous system, the study of an individual composer like Beethoven required borrowing from eugenicists. In a passage opening the first chapter on Beethoven himself, Mason explains that "it is always possible to concoct a given character, however striking or unusual, by a judicious selection of ancestral traits" and, after acknowledging that hereditary determinism had fallen into disfavor with "some students," he makes a case for why Beethoven "owed to his Flemish blood" is technical accuracy and delicacy as well as his superior intellect.[148]

Mason applied these Spencerian principles to his music appreciation books for the next two decades. In his contribution to a set of four music appreciation textbooks commissioned by the National Federation of Music Clubs in 1924, Mason echoed many of the same interventions he made to biography while defining and explaining the importance of music appreciation. He reiterated his critique of history as an accumulation of facts in a passage under the heading

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[145] Ibid., 11.
[146] Ibid., 12-13.
[147] Ibid., 15.
[148] Ibid., 252-254. Mason bases this discussion on Teodor de Wyzewa's biography of Beethoven in *Beethoven et Wagner: Essais D'Histoire et de Critique Musicales"* (Paris: Libraires-editeurs, 1898).

"Why Do We Study The 'Appreciation' of Music?" where he writes that "each student has to listen, compare, distinguish, judge, for himself. Mere facts are of little avail to him… Information, the accumulation of knowledge, must here give place to education, the 'leading out' or developing of faculties."[149] The music appreciator for Mason was open to having his subjectivity shaped and refined through critique unlike "snobs" who merely "appeal to authority" or pendants. He imagines a hypothetical listener comparing marches by Sousa and Beethoven who arrives at the conclusion that the Sousa march was superior after considering the impression both left on him and suggests that even such a crude opinion was preferable to a snobbish or pedantic one. "All he has to do," he suggested, "is refine his perceptions… up to the limit of his native capacity."[150]

As its title suggests, *From Song to Symphony* (like his other music appreciation textbooks) repackaged the teleological history of music he would have encountered in Thomas K. Paine's history course for a mass audience. Mason, however, was guided more profoundly by Spencer's universal theory of progress than his mentor, as he believed that musical development was tied to the growth of all other progressive phenomena from nationhood to an individual's subjectivity. The folk song was not just the historical kernel that developed into the great symphonic works of the romantic nationalist composers, but a tool for initiating a similar process within the minds of individual students. He explains that folk songs were "fitted to strengthen our musical feeling because they are spontaneous rather than sophisticated" and, "since they are primitive," they were the "natural beginning for a study which can lead only gradually to the more complex types of musical art."[151] He reiterates this theory of the equivalence between historical musical development and the development of an individual subjectivity while defining the process of learning to appreciate music as "a sort of climb,

[149] Daniel Gregory Mason, *From Song to Symphony" A Manual of Music Appreciation* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1924), 3.
[150] Ibid., 5.
[151] Ibid., 2.

laborious but exhilarating, up the mountain of art from the simplest and most primitive types like folksong to the most complex and elaborate… Each individual, in developing his taste, thus passes naturally 'From Song to Symphony.'"[152]

In this regard, Mason used a Spencerian approach to evolutionary theory to make music appreciation an apparatus for efficiently producing white musical citizens at an industrial scale. Music appreciation took advantage of the systematic nature of the modern elective system, which created a need for a non-specialist course which could accommodate any number of students at once. At the same time, an ambivalence towards mass production saturated Mason's writings about music appreciation. In an essay titled "The Depreciation of Music," for example, he denigrated the "standardized, wholesale, impersonal quality" of mass-produced music. This essay concludes by drawing from the vocabulary of eugenics to advocate for reserving access to musical knowledge to an elite class of college-educated whites:

> After all, in the nature of things, the appreciation of music can be only for the intelligent; all that the participation of the unintelligent is likely to bring about is the depreciation of music. Why not stop leading unthirsty horses to the water? They only muddy it.[153]

Though the content of music appreciation was designed to be accessible to students without any musical background whatsoever, it was still to be kept out of the hands of the unwashed democratic masses.

Mason associated mass-produced music with foreign, and especially Jewish influence, writing in the fourth volume of his *Appreciation of Music* series that music appreciation could protect America from "the Jewish menace to our artistic integrity" that "threaten[ed] to outrage and stultify" its Anglo-Saxon racial character.[154] Intrinsically Jewish qualities expressed in music such as "speciousness, the superficial charm and persuasiveness of Hebrew art, its brilliance, its violently juxtaposed extremes of passion, its poignant eroticism and pessimism," he explains,

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[152] Ibid., 6.
[153] Daniel Gregory Mason, "The Depreciation of Music." *The Musical Quarterly,* vol. 15 (no. 1, 1929): 15.
[154] Daniel Gregory Mason, *Music as a Humanity and Other Essays: The Appreciation of Music Vol. 4* (New York: The H.W. Gray Company, 1921), 113.

exploit the irrationality of listeners and undermine the "vital nucleus of the American temper."[155] Mason's popularity and the intensity of his anti-semitism in fact caught the attention of Henry Ford, who quoted extensively from this passage in his anti-semitic essay "Jewish Jazz Becomes Our National Music."[156]

Mason believed that music appreciation could protect the value of 'good' music, encourage the cultivation of an Anglo-Saxonist national musical style, and stave off the degenerating influence of popular, non-white, and foreign music. In the fourth volume of his *The Appreciation of Music* series, he writes that music appreciation cultivates "the appreciation of the intelligent minority" by teaching college men "the power to discriminate between what is excellent and what is less than excellent."[157] College music educators were like doctors who had the authority to identify overstimulating and irrational music and "cut [students] down to some musical bread-and-water."[158]

Conclusion - Appreciating Whiteness

By the time that white southern universities like the University of Virginia began establishing music departments and offering courses in music appreciation in the 1920s and 1930s, the idea that music appreciation could benefit society by producing a musical elite needed no defense. They carried the promise of responding to the problem that University of North Carolina's President Harry W. Chase described in 1925 as "a restlessness, a ferment, a sense of change… a strain, a tension at the center of things" that threatened to eradicate "southern habits and traditions."[159] UVA's President Alderman similarly advocated to increase Virginia's expenditure on higher education in 1929 by acknowledging the instability of the Jim

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[155] Ibid.
[156] Henry Ford, "Jewish Jazz Becomes Our National Music," *The International Jew*, 66-67.
[157] Mason, *Music as a Humanity, and Other Essays*, 10, 19.
[158] Ibid., 27.
[159] Henry Woodburn Chase, "Our Changing Educational Needs" in *The High School Journal* Vol. 12 (No. 1, 1929): 17-20.

Crow order and stating that “all civilization is a race between education and catastrophe.”[160] They helped repair the wounds within whiteness opened by the Civil War and exacerbated as the Jim Crow legal regime began facing serious challenges to its legitimacy by excluding African-Americans from the Anglo-Saxon cultural inheritance shared by both northern and southern whites.

It is important to recognize that music appreciation was part of what W.E.B. Du Bois called the “real frontal attack on Reconstruction” in the United States.[161] This “propaganda of history” cast doubt upon the ability of African-Americans to govern themselves while “paint[ing] perfect men and noble nations, but it does not tell the truth.”[162] Music appreciation traced the spread of this movement from its origins in private northern universities such as Columbia beginning in the 1870s to southern research universities such as Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Virginia and Louisiana by the 20th century.[163] It carried the imprint of the noxious racial theories of Herbert Spencer, John Fiske, and John W. Burgess through John K. Paine and Edward MacDowell, and its evolutionary historical framework fit cleanly within what Du Bois identified as Burgess’s belief in the “European idea of the duty of civilized races to impose their political sovereignty” upon “half civilized… races anywhere and everywhere in the world.”[164]

Acknowledging this history can help us think systematically about how much mainstream music appreciation courses have in fact changed. I believe that this process should start by recognizing that the very notion of artistic ‘appreciation’ links music to the same 19th-century evolutionary theories that disciplines like anthropology, literature, and psychology have more

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[160] Edwin Anderson Alderman, Virginia Educational Conference and Central Committee of the Institutions of Higher Education in Virginia. “The Present State of Higher Education In Virginia.” (Richmond: Central Committee, Institutions of Higher Education in Virginia, 1992).
[161] W.E.B Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 718.
[162] Ibid., 714.
[163] Ibid., 720.
[164] Ibid., 719

explicitly interrogated.[165] Doing so can allow us to ask fundamental questions about the purpose of teaching young adults to 'appreciate' the arts by refining their technical vocabulary, teaching a progressive and periodicized history of Western music, and introducing them to repertoire we assume they ought to know about.

[165] See, for example, George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Robert V. Guthrie and William H. Grier, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2004).

The Aristocratic Soul of White Folks

Folk Music Research in White Southern Universities in the 1930s

1929: Introduction

Samuel Niendorff wrote the one-act play *The Mountain Tragedy* in 1929 while a second year student in Harry Rogers Pratt's playwriting course at the University of Virginia. Set in an impoverished mountain community in Blue Ridge mountains of southwestern Virginia, it tells the story of a beautiful young woman named Sarah Taller who falls in love with an urbanized ballad collector named Cecil Hunter. Sarah wants to leave her home in the mountains to live with him in the city, and though Mr. Cecil admires her singing voice and offers to help her find a job and a place to live in the city, he rejects her romantic advances. After Sarah realizes that she had confused Mr. Cecil's desire to hear the old English ballads she learned as a child, she accepts her fate of poverty and decides to stay in her community. The play ends with Cecil leaving the town to chase a rumor about another ballad-rich mountain community while Sarah staring into the horizon "as though she were catching a glimpse of her future."[166] The curtains close upon Sarah sobbing quietly in despair.

I open this chapter with a discussion of this play because it serves as a window into the cultural education of a student at the University of Virginia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Niendorff in fact based the narrative and main themes on a flattened misinterpretation of the composer and eugenicist John Powell's ideas filtered through the more mainline interpretation of the relationship between Appalachian folk music and race most famously propounded by British

[166] Arthur Starr Niendorff, *The Mountain Tragedy* (New York: Samuel French, 1932).

folklorist Cecil Sharp. According to Cecil Sharp in his book *English Folk Songs in the Southern Appalachians* (1913) published after a number of tours across the Appalachians from 1916-1918, poor mountaineers living in small rural communities in the mountains of [Virginia, the Carolinas, Kentucky, and Tennessee] had kept alive the English ballad tradition from the Elizabethan era as an oral tradition even after it had all but disappeared on the British Isles.[167] He characterized the archetypal white mountaineer as "freer in his manner, more alert, and less articulate than his British prototype, and bears no trace of the obsequiousness of manner which, since the Enclosure Acts, robbed him of his economic independence and made of him a hired labourer." He would affirm theories of a shared racial 'folk consciousness' between white mountaineers and modern Britons, such as when he wrote to John C. Campbell that whatever may be the racial origin of the mountaineers, their predominant culture is "overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon" based on their "manners, habits, and customs" as well as "their physical characteristics."[168]

This admission by a well-regarded English folk music scholar of the superior purity of folk songs found in the Americas created a veritable explosion of both academic and popular interest in the folk music of the region that particularly excited Americans who were interested in rooting America's national identity within a Anglo-American racial and cultural nexus. American radical Anglo-Saxonists like Powell and his associates were certainly excited to be able to claim a kind of national parity or mutual dependence between American and British culture. This claim collapsed the temporal relationship between the younger, immature, and racially-incoherent American and the parent country. In this instance, Britain had to rely on America to appreciate its own roots.

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[167] Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians: Comprising 122 Songs and Ballads, and 23 Tunes* (New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1917): xii.
[168] Quoted in John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and his Homeland* (University Press of Kentucky, 2004 (1921)), 69-70.

In this chapter, I will consider how this idea of an Anglo-American folk nexus spurred the development of music departments within white American research universities, focusing on two schools in geographic proximity to the Appalachian regions such as the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina. Whereas in the last chapter I examined how music appreciation courses helped define the role that modern music departments would play in the post-Reconstruction academic project of manufacturing white consciousness at a national scale, this chapter adopts a narrower historical, regional, and racio-cultural lens. This chapter tells the story of how a small number of white Southern intellectuals with mostly non-academic professional careers took advantage of the relative lack of direction and poor funding of music departments at research universities in the early 1930s in order to create folk music research programs that were funded largely through private donations. With Anglo-Saxonist John Powell at its center, this movement used Sharp's theories of Anglo-American folk transmission and preservation to elicit funds from donors who were more interested in affirming the cultural integrity of their own racial heritage than indulging in the romance of Appalachian isolation and purity. Thus an important thread in this movement was a conceptual shift towards privileging the descendents of the wealthy and literate property owners rather than the mythic poor, illiterate, and propertyless white mountaineer whom Cecil Sharp privileged in his analysis.

The Mountain Tragedy speaks to the influence of Sharp's discovery on the cultural education of students at universities like the University of Virginia in the late 1920s. It is especially apparent in the name of the main character Cecil Hunter, a ballad collector who visits a small mountain town inhabited by Anglo-Saxons whose genetic racial and cultural purity existed in tension with their degenerate mannerisms and physical appearance. In Harry Rogers Pratt's introduction, he explains that the 'tragedy' of the 'mountain tragedy' was a fundamentally racial one. The members of the poor white mountain community visited by Hunter were living proof of the degeneracy that occurs "when a group belonging to a great race gets sidetracked

and becomes, as it were, introspective in the wilderness."[169] The tragedy of *the Mountain Tragedy*, Pratt makes clear, was racial. The poor white mountaineers represented by Sarah Taller and her community Sarah, he explains, has "a brief moment of aspiration" caused by her and Mr. Cecil's innate love of the music that she inherited from "unremembered forebears," a repertoire that was also Mr. Cecil's birthright as an Anglo-Saxon despite having been separated by his urban existence from the musical "thread of gold in homespun."[170] Paralleling the tragic reality that the carriers of the most authentic Anglo-Saxon cultural artifacts in the United States had degenerated in their isolation, Sarah's inability to realize her vision of leaving the mountain is due to the fact that she "lacks the character to take the step."[171] Pratt explains that Sarah's tragedy is in fact a national one, as "Ford cars and radios" were responsible for interrupting the cross-generational transference of these songs that had been taking place for centuries such that "the old are carrying with them to the grave a glorious, unrecorded inheritance" that could become the basis of "the idiom of the Tennysons and Beethovens of America for ages to come."[172]

After the play was published by Samuel French in 1932, Pratt sent a gratitude-filled letter to Powell for serving as the intellectual inspiration of the play, and to his wife Louise Burleigh Powell, a professional playwright who used her connections to get the student play published.[173] In the letter, Pratt prodded Powell to read his Foreword to the play while apologizing for not having asked the famous composer to write it. He indeed acknowledged Powell as an authority on the subject in the Foreword, but he misapprehended how grievous of an offense it would be to speak on behalf of Powell while failing to distinguish his ideas from Sharp's. When Powell began a campaign to establish a research chair in folk music at the

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[169] Niendorff, *The Mountain Tragedy*, 3.
[170] Ibid., 4.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid., 4-5.
[173] Harry Rogers Pratt to John Powell, April 10, 1932. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 7, Folder 4, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

University of Virginia music department to be occupied by violin instructor Winston Wilkinson, he did so partly in order to reign in Pratt's blithe reproduction of Sharp's thesis. In April of 1935, when Powell was close to finalizing the position which he had been working to generate funding for since 1931, he wrote to UVA's President John Lloyd Newcomb encouraging him to move swiftly on the project and immediately hire Wilkinson to fill the position over the summer. As Powell explained, Pratt had started teaching about folk music in his classes despite lacking the qualifications to do so. "These attempts of unqualified persons to cash in on the results of our activities," he intimated, "seem to me to increase the necessity for an authentic course in the Summer School, with or without academic credit."[174]

Powell had developed this rhetoric of breathless urgency over the previous decade as the public face of the white supremacist organization the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America and the antimiscenigist 1924 Virginia Racial Integrity Act.[175] Existing scholarship on Powell's musical-racial ideology tends to focus on his paranoia and antipathy he felt towards African Americans. Lester Feder's analysis of Powell's *Rhapsodie Nègre* (1918) and Symphony in A (1947) focuses on how these works demonstrate that he was "dedicated to the fabrication of racial difference as an absolute property of the human body that justifies and demands white supremacy" in both his political activism and his musical output, using the "musical tools of the Germanic symphonic tradition to proclaim the supremacy of whiteness and the inferiority of blackness."[176] Stephanie Doktor similarly argues that Powell "composed a sonic version of the Jim Crow hierarchy" in *Rhapsodie nègre*, which reveals an anxiety about black male sexuality that underscored his composition and eugenics activism of the 1920s.[177] Though I agree with

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[174] John Powell to John Lloyd Newcomb, April 4, 1935. Papers of the President of the University of Virginia, Office Administrative Files, Subseries II, Box 17, Accession #RG-2/1/2.491 Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[175] See Richard B. Sherman. "'The Last Stand': The Fight for Racial Integrity in Virginia in the 1920s." *The Journal of Southern History* vol. 54 (No. 1, 1988): 69–92.
[176] Lester Feder, "Unequal Temperament: The Somatic Acoustics of Racial Difference in the Symphonic Music of John Powell." *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 28 (No. 1, 2008): 17.
[177] Stephanie Doktor, "How a White Supremacist Became Famous for His Black Music: John Powell and *Rhapsodie nègre* (1918)." *American Music* vol. 38 (No. 4, 2020): 395-427.

both of these analyses, focusing on his writings about folk music in the 1930s suggests that Powell's thinking about whiteness and blackness was more ambivalent than previously recognized. While Powell certainly believed in the inferiority of blackness to whiteness, he also desired the fugitive pleasures he associated with black life and music.

This chapter adds to existing scholarship on the musical expression of Powell's racial integrity campaign through the lens of his Anglo-Saxon folk music campaign at the University of Virginia and his influence on the establishment of the Institute for Folk Music at the University of North Carolina. I make the case that the folk music campaign represents a pivot in his racial integrity project after Powell lost substantial public support following the campaign to pass the unpopular Racial Assemblage Act in 1926. The establishment of the Chair for Folk Music at the University of Virginia and the Institute for Folk Music at the University of North Carolina was an extension of Powell's Anglo-Saxonist racial integrity project insofar as both were grounded in the same anxieties about the fragility of white racial constitution. This anxiety, I argue, grew from the recognition of the relative non-existence of both whiteness and white music, which anti miscegenist and segregationist legislation as well as folk music helped to disavow.

The Mountain Tragedy dramatizes the racializing function of folk music which this chapter examines, but it does so in a tragic, rather than redemptive, mode. As a student at the University of Virginia in the late 1920s, Arthur Niendorff would have found himself having to grapple with two seemingly contradictory accounts of the racial heritage of white mountaineers in the state. On one side was a discourse among eugenicists about what to make of the poverty, ignorance, and physical unattractiveness of members of white mountain communities who were theoretically among the most genetically pure white people in the United States. A supposedly degenerate white 'hill family' was the subject of both Richard Dugdale's *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity* in 1877 and Arthur Estabrook's *The Jukes in 1915*, with the former attributing the unusually high rates of criminality and pauperism among members of the family to environmental effects while the latter argued that they were genetically

"unredeemable" and recommended sterilization.[178] On the other hand, some researchers like the University of Virginia anatomist Robert Bennet Bean and the Smithonian's Ales Hrdlicka used inhabitants of the Blue Ridge mountains as the basis of studies on the ideal physicality of the American subset of whites they referred t/o as the "old Virginian" or "old American" type.[179] While there was no consensus among eugenicists, white mountain communities of the southern lowlands in Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee would become an important fieldsite for eugenicists by the 1930s who were interested in considering the relationship between environmental conditions and heredity.[180]

Niendorff's eugenic education can be gleaned when Cecil Hunter explains to Sarah why he is so interested in her songs:

> Cecil: Listen now, I'll tell you something that maybe you didn't know. You mountain people's ancestors came over here nearly three hundred years ago and settled in these mountains. They were a part of a conquering race. They were a part of those people who made America what it is… You don't know what that means? Well, they were the finest people anywhere. They were robust, hardy, brave men…
>
> … you people here are the only true Americans left. But you've stayed here so long that you're isolated from everything good. [*Pause.*] Now do you see where those ballads came from? Your ancestors brought them over here from England. They've long disappeared over there, but you've kept them pure in this hallow of the mountains. You owe it to those old pioneers to get away from here. You owe it to them, Sarah!

Though it is possible to read this as a didactic commentary on Sharp's racial theory of folk music, Mr. Cecil's monologue also expresses the superficiality of his interest in Sarah. As Sarah

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[178] Richard Dugdale, "The Jukes: A Study of Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity" (1969). *Buck v Bell Documents.* Paper 1; Arthur H. Estabrook (1916), *The Jukes in 1915*, Carnegie Institution of Washington, Disability History Museum, www.disabilitymuseum.org.

[179] Robert Bennet Bean, "Stature in Old Virginians." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* Vol. 25 (No. 3, 1931): 355-419; Ales Hrdlicka, *The Old Americans* (Williams & Wilkins Company, 1925).

[180] Eugenic scholarship on mountaineers includes N.D.M. Hirsch, "An Experimental Study of the East Kentucky Mountaineers: A study in Heredity and Environment," *Genetic Psychology Monographs, 3* (1928): 183-244; Lester R. Wheeler, "A Comparative Study of the Intelligence of East Tennessee Mountain Children" *Journal of Educational Psychology* Vol. 33 (1932): 321-34; Jack Manne, "Mental Deficiency in a Closely Inbred Mountain Clan," *Mental Hygiene* Vol. 20 (1936): 269-279; and Lester Wheeler and Viola Wheeler "The Musical Ability of Mountain Children as Measured by the Seashore Test of Musical Talent," *The Pedagogical Seminary and Journal of Genetic Psychology* Vol. 43 (1933): 352-376.

would tell her mother, “he ain’t never had no ideer of marryin’ nobody. He come over here jest ter get them balllards.”[181] As Sarah was ready to move away with him to the city until she realizes that he expected her to live alone, his lofty ideals are juxtaposed with a fleeting indifference to her humanity. He is disappointed in Sarah’s decision to stay on the mountains, seemingly unaware that he left her broken-hearted and understandably afraid of moving to the city without a job.

Mr. Cecil engages in the eugenic debate over the genetic potential of mountaineers in a passage where he asks the wise Uncle Jed why the aryan beauty of young mountain children seems to inevitably fade as they age. Though Uncle Jed acknowledges that “Young ‘uns in these mountains are like kittens: they’re purty as long as they’re little,” he claims that the problem is neither hereditary nor environmental. The problem was a culture that discouraged ambition. Uncle Jed rationalizes that “us mountain folks don’t stick nothin’ out, hit looks ter me.”[182] Mr. Cecil’s ballad hunting represents one approach to solving this problem of wasted potential by taking the responsibility for managing such valuable but unrefined white cultural objects out of the hands of mountaineers and into the hands of trained professionals. Though the play ends with Sarah heartbroken upon realizing that she had misinterpreted Cecil Hunter’s interest in her songs as romantic attraction, and the community remains as poor as it was before Mr. Cecil went through, Uncle Jed regards the expropriation of ballads from the community as a necessary consequence of wasted potential. As he comforts the devastated Sarah, he mutters to himself “we might of been some good in these mountains once, but the blood’s all run out, the blood’s all run out.”[183]

The Mountain Tragedy thus articulates some of the themes in this chapter about how white folk music became a symbol of unreformed whiteness that could be used to reorient southern white identity in the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, its tragic framework

[181] Niendorff, *The Mountain Tragedy*, 37.
[182] Ibid., 24.
[183] Ibid., 34.

represents a conceptual problem which Powell and his cohort attempted to resolve by moving the mountaineers at the center of the Anglo-American folk transmission discourse to the margins. The grand mythic history of trans-Atlantic whiteness Mr. Cecil refers to as he tells Sarah “you people here are the only true Americans left” was a way to rationalize segregationist legislation that would preserve the ‘purity’ of whites without referencing the shameful history of slavery. Instead of positioning the powerful and aristocratic slave-owning class of whites as the archetype of American whiteness, white folk music centered impoverished whites who were imagined to have preserved the purity of their whiteness while remaining innocent from the sins of slavery.[184] Since this account of American whiteness as a subset of Anglo-Saxon whiteness was premised on the genetic purity of isolated whites, it could still be used to support segregationist Jim Crow policies and to insist upon recognizing America’s essential white character. It also had the benefit of preserving the political agency of white elites. Just as Mr. Cecil’s admiration of Sarah’s ballads was exposed to be paternalistic and dehumanizing, the theory of American folk whiteness assumed that the mountaineers were not trustworthy keepers of their valuable traditions. The class of elite racial reformers represented by Mr. Cecil was still needed to appraise the value of white folk traditions and represent the white folk to the nation. In exchange elite whites had to present their own racial identities as incomplete and acknowledge that white supremacy was no longer self-evidently justified in the United States. Where white supremacy was once grounded in the set of unambiguous legal entitlements whites had over blacks, to newly ground it in folk music meant insisting upon its unrecognized value and unrealized potential.

At the same time, *The Mountain Tragedy* foregrounds the pessimism implied in Sharp’s mountain preservation thesis. The same geographic isolation that made the region so

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[184] John Inscoe writes that “the illusion of an all-white, all-Anglo Saxon populace had much to do with Southern Appalachia’s appeal to northern philanthropists, educators, and missionaries in the post-Reconstruction era, after many of them had tired of the biracial complexities that had made rebuilding and reshaping the rest of the South so difficult and unsavory.” *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

stimulating to the Anglo-Saxonist imagination also made folk music into an inanimate object without an intrinsic futurity. Ballads and folk songs were like coal or unrefined ore mined from the mountains that needed to be processed before being usable, or even presentable as something beyond a curiosity to uninitiated audiences. They lacked broad appeal; the interest of folklorists like Cecil Hunter seemed to come from a place of aristocratic eccentricity rather than the genuine pleasure of listening that popular music promised. And unlike the classical concert music discussed in the previous chapter, there was no sense that the folk ballad had anything to say about the past, present, or future of the national body politic.

This chapter looks at how music departments at the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina redefined the purpose of collecting, appreciating, and composing with old English and new white American folk music. When the composer Lamar Stringfield led the establishment of the Institute for Folk Music Research at UNC in 1931, the school of music was small and had a reputation for being of low quality. Similarly, when composer John Powell turned to the Governor's budgetary commission in November that same year to request a $5,000 appropriation for a chair of folk music at UVA, the School of Music had only two full time faculty members, one of whom was Harry Rogers Pratt who divided his time by leading the glee club, teaching courses in drama, and directing the Virginia Players student drama troupe. He was also the instructor of the playwriting class for which Arthur Niendorff wrote *The Mountain Tragedy*. John Powell and Lamar Stringfield saw the lack of focus within these music departments as an opportunity to exert their influence on the largest and most powerful research universities in their states. Despite the fact that both composers lacked academic credentials and both were controversial figures associated with radical white supremacist activism, they were both able to exert significant influence on the agendas of their respective music departments.

These parallel case studies and this chapter's reevaluation of the meaning of Powell's racial integrity project together tell a story about the role music departments played in white

southern research universities as they were in the process of modernizing to contribute to what Cedric Robinson identifies as the post-Reconstruction racial regime. In *Forgeries of Memories and Meaning*, Robinson defines 'racial regimes' as such:

> Employing mythic discourses, racial regimes are commonly masqueraded as natural orderings, inevitable creations of collective anxieties prompted by threatening encounters with difference. Yet they are actually contrivances, designed and delegated by interested cultural and social powers with the wherewithal sufficient to commission their imaginings, manufacture, and maintenance.[185]

Racial regimes, in this regard, are hegemonic discursive structures that naturalize myths about racial difference in order to mask real relations of class power. To repair "the fracturing of the antebellum racial consensus," he explains, white elites including intellectuals occupying seats at prestigious research institutions began to refer to race science to repair "the fracturing of the antebellum racial consensus" by the late 19th century.[186] This chapter considers how music departments at white southern research universities contributed to this project of manufacturing and maintaining a new definition for whiteness through the lens of a prominent individual's efforts at using folk music to imbue white American identity with a coherency which it never had.

The 1880s-1920s: Anglo-Saxons in the Mountains

Both the terms Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon have been used to describe the ethnic and national character of mountaineers and mountain music since the turn of the century. Though these two terms resemble each other, they carry rather different connotations. The term 'Anglo-America' emphasizes the historical and linguistic connection between Britain and the United States, while 'Anglo-Saxon' refers to the founding ethnic myth of white Britons that became a capacious metaphor in the United States. According to the Anglo-Saxon origin myth,

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[185] Cedric Robinson, *Forgeries of Memory and Meaning: Blacks & The Regimes of Race in American Theater & Film Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007): xiii.
[186] Ibid., 70.

the Angles and Saxons were two pagan Germanic tribes that conquered Great Britain in the 5th century and lived peacefully alongside one another under the shared governance of locally-powerful earls who tempered the authority of the king. After centuries of peaceful and proto-democratic rule, they were subsequently subjugated under the Norman king William the Conqueror in 1066 who imposed autocratic feudal rule and introduced a foreign tongue upon the Anglo-Saxons. As historian Reginald Horsman demonstrates, the British, and American colonists by extension, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were enamoured with the myth and taught to think of themselves and their democratic institutions as inheritors of the legacy of the pre-conquest Anglo-Saxons. The Anglo-Saxon myth primed Americans to think that "they were a special, chosen people destined to change the world for the better" and that America was "an arena for the betterment of mankind… itself the idea of progress."[187]

When scientists like Charles Caldwell, Samuel Morton, and Louis Agassiz contributed to a particularly American iteration of race science in the mid-19th century, they used the term "Anglo-American" to refer to the modern day race that included both white Americans and Britons, while "Anglo-Saxon" referred to a common ancestor of two separate races. Both were often assigned the distinction of being among the most superior of the caucasian races as a subset of the nordic races. Morton would call Anglo-Saxons "inferior to no one of the Caucasian families in intellectual endowments" while stating that the "Anglo-American family" was "in no respect inferior to the parent stock."[188]

Shortly after the "discovery" of Appalachia by local color writers in the years following the Civil War who characterized the region as an area "in but not of America" and its denizens as cultural and moral deviants in need of outside help,[189] ethnographers began to suggest that the

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[187] Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-saxonism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), 84.
[188] Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana; or, A Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America. To Which is Prefixed and Essay on the Varieties of the Human Species* (Philadelphia, 1839), 4-6, 17.
[189] Henry D. Shapiro, *Appalachia On Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers In the American Consciousness, 1870-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), xiv.

isolated and culturally-backwards 'folk' inhabiting the Southern Appalachian region were in fact the most racially-pure Anglo-Saxons in the United States.[190] Barbara Ellen Smith explains that this "making of Appalachia" was profoundly influential in constructing whiteness during the Progressive Era, while Ian C. Hartman suggests that Southern Appalachia was a "discursive creation" imagined as a "reserve of 'pure American blood'" at a time characterized by anti-immigration hysteria.[191] Folk Anglo-Saxonists saw the cultural backwardness of denizens of impoverished Appalachian communities as an expression of a contradiction in American whiteness as a whole. Their language, music, games, and art were, like their ethnicity, enviably pure and uncorrupted by industrial modernization and mass culture. Indeed, a body of scholarship began to emerge by the 1910s claiming that Appalachian mountaineers in fact preserved Elizabethan-era cultural artifacts more authentically than anywhere else in the English-speaking world.[192] At the same time, their unrefined cultural practices and poverty expressed an uncultivated backwardness and reflected fears of the tendency for both race and culture to degenerate outside of civilization's cultivating touch.

Ellen Semple was among the first to write of the genuine value of Appalachian music in her influential essay "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountain: A Study in Anthropogeography" (1901). She describes the poverty and geographic isolation of the mountain communities as a shield from mass culture, allowing for genuine centuries-old English and Scottish ballads "known only to the musical antiquarian" to have been "handed down from lip to lip through generations" from the settlement of colonial Virginia and Carolina to the

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[190] Particularly influential was Ellen Churchill Semple's observation that the inhabitants of the isolated mountain communities were both "exponents of a retarded civilization" and members of a "stock as good as any in the country." "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains: A Study in Anthropogeography," *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 17 (No. 6, 1901): 592.

[191] Barbara Ellen Smith, "De-Gredations of Whiteness: Appalachia and the Complexities of Race," *Journal of Appalachian Studies* vol. 10 (Issue 1, 2004): 38-57; Ian C. Hartman, "Appalachian Anxiety: Race, Gender, and the Paradox of 'Purity' in an Age of Empire, 1873-1901," *American Nineteenth Century History* vol. 13 (No. 2, 2012): 230 (229-255).

[192] Josiah H. Combs, "Old, Early and Elizabethan English in the Southern Mountains," *Dialect Notes* 4 (1916), 27 and 37.

present.[193] The Kentuckian author Emma J. Miles was the first to write on the topic of Appalachian folk music in the popular press with her essay "Some Real American Music" in *Harper's Monthly* in 1904 which was reprinted in her popular book *The Spirit of the Mountains* a year later. This essay developed Semple's discussion by extending the idea of Appalachian folk music to include instrumental playing by comparing fiddlers to "the minstrels of feudal days."[194] She also critically anticipates the Anglo-Saxon folk music movement of the 1920s and 1930s by criticizing Antonin Dvorak's used of "negro themes and the aboriginal Indian music" in his *Symphony no. 9*, arguing that neither were authentic expressions of "American life and character" compared to the old English ballads and instrumental music of the Appalachian people.[195] After calling Appalachian music "folk-song of a high order," she inquires: "may it not one day give birth to a music that shall take a high place among the world's great schools of expression?"[196]

The first folkloric scholarship drawing attention to Anglo-American balladry geographically located ballads along the entire upper- and mid-Atlantic coast. Editor of the *Journal of the American Folk-Lore Society* William Newell's "Early American Ballads" (1899), for example, includes examples from New England, the eastern shore of Maryland, and the Blue Ridge mountains of the Carolinas and Tennessee.[197] Works such as those by Semple and Miles indeed helped narrow popular and academic interest on ballads to the southern Appalachians, but it was English folklorist and musicology Cecil Sharp's *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1917) that established the particular authenticity of mountain ballads over all others. As Henry Shapiro explains that this book completed a "process of legitimization" that saw Appalachia transform from a "strange land inhabited by a peculiar people" into a hearth of

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[193] Semple, "The Anglo-Saxons of the Kentucky Mountains," 622.
[194] Emma J. Miles, "Some Real American Music," *The Spirit of the Mountain* (New York: J. Pott, 1905), 147.
[195] Ibid., 146.
[196] Ibid., 171.
[197] William Newell, "Early American Ballads," *Journal of the American Folk-Lore Society* vol. 12 (no. 47, 1899): 241-254.

normative American whiteness, and it would become the most cited text in the academic Anglo-Saxon folk music movement.[198] Though Sharp spent only nine weeks traveling through Appalachian mountain communities guided by the American missionary and amateur folklorist Olive Dame Campbell, he claimed to have been able to collect a number of ballads that were documented by James Child's authoritative *English and Scottish Ballads* but were thought to have been long forgotten on the British Isles. Not only were the ballads he heard on his trip reasonably authentic - they were purer and well-preserved than could be found anywhere else in Britain.[199] Like Semple and Miles, he attributed this purity to the fact that mountaineers he encountered were "direct descendants of the original settlers" and that their geographic remoteness meant that they "have lived for a hundred years or more… completely isolated and cut off from all traffic with the rest of the world."[200]

The introduction to Sharp's book intervened upon ongoing American folkloric scholarship on Appalachian balladry in three ways that anticipated how folk Anglo-Saxonists would position themselves in relation to existing professional folklore scholarship. First, he accounts for the significance of the ballad with an expansive ethnographic evolutionary metaphor, writing that "its development has proceeded step by step with the progress of mankind from the savage to the cultivated being of the present day."[201] While evolutionary metaphors were common in folklore scholarship, being at the heart of the 19th century philological theories of the Grimm brothers and James Child and the ethnological theories of the American School of Anthropology, Sharp was unusually insistent that this evolutionary process was an explicitly racial one. Ballads, according to Sharp, should be thought of as a "racial inheritance" that many white Americans had been "rob[bed]... of that which is theirs by right of birth."[202] His second intervention was an

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[198] Shapiro, *Appalachia On My Mind*, 257.
[199] Cecil J. Sharp (comp), Olive D. Campbell and Maud Karpeles (ed). E*nglish Folk Songs From the Southern Appalachians* (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1932).
[200] Ibid., iv.
[201] Ibid., xiii.
[202] Ibid., xx.

extension of the first, stating that the academic folklorist had a responsibility to ensure that Anglo-American folk ballads become integrated into the general curriculum of young Americans. To not teach young whites this music was to "cut them off from the past."[203]

Sharp's final intervention was to insist that separating the music and text of a ballad was "to remove the gem from its setting," and this became the *raison d'etre* of the music department within Anglo-Saxon folk music in the United States.[204] Sharp criticized folk music scholars and "literary meddlers" for separating the music of ballads from their texts and compared the words of a ballad to the intellect of a people and the music to their emotions and psychology. It also decontextualized the ballad from its evolutionary context, as Sharp subscribed to a deterministic ethnological theory that all scales evolved from the monotone chants that comprised the music of primitive races and as such they could be analyzed to determine a race's intellectual development. Sharp observes that "there are many nations at the present day which have not yet advanced beyond the two-gapped or pentatonic scale," and identifies most Appalachian ballads as expressing an "experimental and transitional period" where a sixth note had begun to be added "speculatively and with hesitation" to certain songs.[205] In accordance with the significance of a ballad's musical content and its modality, Sharp includes a transcription of every song he includes and the pentatonic or heptatonic mode it was sung in according a chart he included in the Introduction, as well as its church modality (Image x.1).[206]

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[203] Ibid., xx. This argument mirrors the rhetoric he used during a successful campaign to integrate folk songs into the English public school curriculum during the first decade of the 20th century. A manual published by the British Board of Education in 1905 explains, for example, that "if children are to place a due value on their inheritance of the best music of the nation to which they belong, their progress in musical power should be in epitome that of the race, and this it cannot be if the old songs are ignored…" Great Britain. Board of Education, "Suggestions for the Consideration of Teachers and Others Concerned in the Work of Public Elementary Schools" (1905): 70.

[204] Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalchians*, xii.

[205] Ibid, xv.

[206] Sharp maintained an interest in the modal quality of old English folk songs throughout his career. He explains this fascination in more detail in a treatise he wrote a decade earlier, where he posited that the transition from monophony to homophony led to the 'extinction' of the church modes, thus severing a fundamental connection between the ancients and the modern West. Sharp used the disappearance of modes, which he insisted were "far superior to the scales that supplanted them" to criticize industrial modernity. Harmonizing modal melodies "robs them of all that is individual" and produces a "hybrid, which

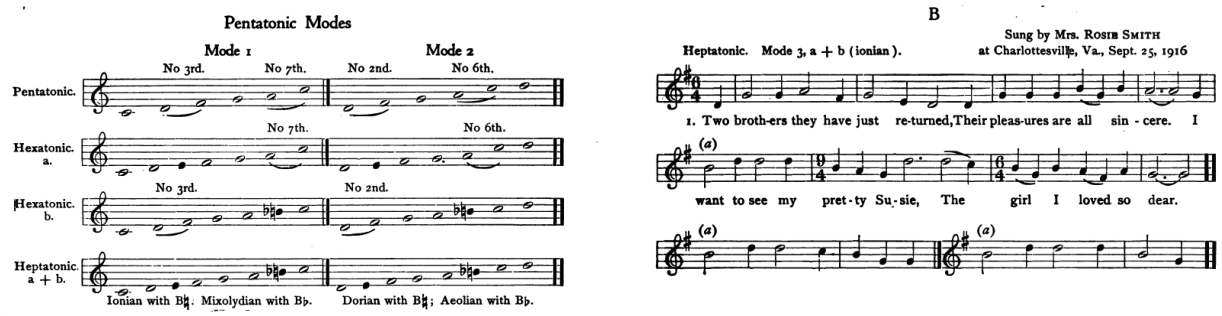

Image 1.1 - a chart of the pentatonic modes from the Introduction of *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* along with a transcription identifying the scale and modality of the ballad "Two Brothers" that Sharp collected in Charlottesville, Virginia.

These ideas informed John Powell's polemics on what he called "Anglo-Saxon folk music" beginning in the 1920s and also formed the basis of his legislative activism with the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. As early as 1920, Powell was telling audiences at his recitals of the "futility of the endeavor to ground a national musical art in the folk melodies of Indians, Negroes of those of any other people than the one from whom America has inherited its language and political creed."[207] In 1922 he performed a lecture recital titled "Americanism in Music" at Aeolian Hall and in Chataquana, NY sponsored by the Duo-Art record label. These lectures were so well-received that he was invited to give two distinguished lectures and a recital at the Rice Institute in Houston, where he declared that "if we desire a music characteristic of our racial psychology, it must be based upon Anglo-Saxon folk-song."[208] The stakes of doing so, he explained, were no less than the existence of the United States itself. In

is neither major, minor, nor modal" (47). Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk Song: Some Conclusions* (London: Simpkin & co., 1907).

[207] "Powell-Harris Recital," *Musical America* Vol. 31 (Iss. 22, 1920): 32.

[208] John Powell, "Music and the Nation," *Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies,* 10 (No. 3 1923): 154.

fact, the United States was “at present, not a nation” due to its incoherent musical and racial identity.[209] Its only hope for the future would be “the engrafting of our culture upon the fundamental Anglo-Saxon root” and assert its inherent folkish roots in the English identity of its colonizers in the 17th century.

Powell’s discourse on Anglo-Saxon music took part in a conversation in music criticism about the musical affordances and potential deficiencies of the Anglo-Saxon temperament. In the 19th century, European music critics often rationalized the styles of national composers and their reception abroad in terms of essential racial temperaments. The comparative lack of great national British composers and the British public’s apparent indifference to the excesses of Italian opera were often attributed to the Anglo-Saxons’ dispassionate and repressive character.

By the turn-of-the-century, a speculative discourse using this European racial nationalist framework regarding whether American composers could ever make a mark on the international stage began to emerge. When Theodore Roosevelt remarked to African American students at Manassas Industrial Institute in 1906 that “there are but two chances for the development of schools of American music and of American singing, and these will come, one from the colored people and one from the vanishing Indian folk, especially those of the Southwest,” the editors of *Musical America* responded with indignation. Although they agreed that American concert music would be expressive of the nation’s racial hybridity, this would be at the exclusion of non-white races. They retorted that “the music of America will come from the American himself – the man or woman in whose veins are blended the hot blood of the Latin races, the cooling strain of the Norse, with the vivaciousness of the Gallic temperament and the musicianly scholarship of the Teuton and Anglo-Saxon.”[210]

This reactionary defense of the color line would still offend some music critics who believed that America’s racial identity was fundamentally Anglo-Saxon and only superficially

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[209] Ibid., 145.
[210] *Musical America* Vol. 3 (Iss. 15, Feb. 24, 1906): 8.

multi-ethnic. In December, 1908, Polish composer Ignace Paderewski used a metaphor of diluting a mellowed aged wine with “a younger, coarser vintage” to warn that “unlimited immigration” in the United States risked “spoiling the pure, rich, Anglo-Saxon strain with a new vintage that comes from the waste products of the old world.”[211] A more liberal ethno nationalist discourse also took hold in American music criticism in the early 20th century, such as when the British soprano Mary Garden explained to the press that “singing in opera in English is an important experiment” that would reveal whether “it is possible for the Anglo-Saxon minds and temperament to produce really excellent music of the grand opera class” after she was contracted to appear in Victor Herbert’s English-language opera *Natoma* in 1910.[212] In light of this common racial framework within music criticism, it was not all that peculiar that a famous classical musician would be one of the co-founders of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America along with an ethnologist and a racial statistician. Powell committed himself to extending this discourse by self-consciously working to reconcile the musical Anglo-Saxonist framework with those in ethnology and eugenics.

1924-1926: The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America

John Powell is most known amongst historians as one of the co-founders of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America alongside ethnologist Earnest Sevier Cox and registrar of the Virginia Department of Vital Statistics Walter T. Plecker. On the role that each of these co-founders played shaping the ASCOA, Gregory Dorr writes “Cox provided the ideology, Powell’s fame attracted attention, while Plecker policed and enforced racial integrity through the

[211] “Paderewski Warns Us Against the Danger of Unlimited Immigration,” *Musical America* Vol. 9 (Iss. 4, Dec. 05, 1908): 12.
[212] “Mary Garden to Sing in New American Opera” in *Musical America* Vol. 11 (Iss. 11, Jan. 22, 1910): 10.

Bureau of Vital Statistics."[213] J. Douglas Smith, on the other hand, deemphasizes Powell's background in music, describing him as "a native of Richmond and a staple in elite social circles."[214] Though I agree with both Dorr and Smith's assessment as to the centrality Powell's influence on the group — of the co-founders, Powell became the public face of the ASCOA and the group was popularly regarded as Powell's personal legislative lobbying arm — Powell in many ways used the organization to circulate the Anglo-Saxonist discourse on American music to the mainstream. Indeed, Powell was alone among the co-founder as being already involved in Anglo-Saxonist discourse prior to 1922; both Cox and Plecker simply referred to 'whites' in their publications and speeches.[215]

By 1908, Powell was being hailed as one of the most promising American musical ambassadors by the international press. A write-up in American *The Musical Courier* in February 1908 titled "Makes the Masters Sit Up and Listen" captures the excitement of those paying attention to his successful debuts in Vienna, Berlin, and Paris when it states that "the piano playing of an American boy, John Powell, of Richmond, Va., has been setting the Continent on fire. He has taken three capitals by storm." It goes so far as to predict that Powell's own compositions, which he often included in his programs, "are of such exceptional force, truth and originality, and so thoroughly American in atmosphere, that he may be called the Founder of an American school of music."[216]

After returning to the United States and giving a successful New York debut in 1912, Powell had cemented his reputation as an American musical visionary which granted him an international platform to profess his reactionary and nationalistic viewpoints on music. This would especially be the case by the end of World War I due to Powell's pre-war reception as a

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[213] Gregory Michael Dorr, *Segregation's Science: Eugenics and Society In Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 144.
[214] J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship In Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 12.
[215] Earnest Sevier Cox, *White America* (Richmond, Va: White American Society), 1925.
[216] "Makes The Masters Sit Up And Listen." *The Musical Courier* Vol. 56 (Issue 8, Feb. 2, 1908), 8.

musical ambassador to Europe. In an interview published in the *Musical Courier* in 1918, Powell outlined publicly for perhaps the first time many of the themes that would recur in his writings on music and which Stringfield would rearticulate in *America and Her Music* twelve years later. "Music, like every other phenomenon," he explained, "does not result from acts of creation but evolution." Stating that a national idiom could only emerge "when it has become co-ordinated, stabilized, and equalized," he goes on to suggest that the future of American music would be elicited by purifying and clarifying the nation's racial identity, rather than embracing the chaos of multiracialism:

> … In the early days of the thirteen colonies our people were racially homogeneous and any musical development in America would have been the organic offshoot from the Anglo-Saxon musical route (sic), changed and influenced by the new environment… Since then there has been a steady inflow of people from all over the world, bringing with them all varieties of racial temperament and all modes of expression. Until these various elements coalesce, it is impossible for us to have a unified national consciousness which would make national music possible.[217]

Though the interviewer appears to have mistranscribed Powell's words, the intended agrarian metaphor of the United States being an "organic offshoot" of "the Anglo-Saxon [root]" would appear again in a speech he gave at the Rice Institute in 1923 titled "Music and the Nation" where he stated that "we have seen that our only hope for a nation in America lies in grafting the stock of our culture on the Anglo-Saxon root. Is it not equally evident that, if we desire a music characteristic of our racial psychology, it must be based upon Anglo-Saxon folk-song?"[218] The 1918 interview ends with Powell foreshadowing his upcoming role as the public face of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America as well as his work fostering Anglo-Saxon folk music in Virginia, stating "you know, composition is only one of my many interests. In time I hope to do my bit in helping to solve the race problem."[219]

The Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America would help Powell work on 'solving the race problem' by functioning as a lobbying arm for race-regulating legislation, and as an activist he was most

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[217] "John Powell Discusses American Composition." *Musical Courier* Vol. 76 (Issue 18, May 2, 1918): 10.
[218] John Powell, "Music and the Nation," 154.
[219] "John Powell Discusses American Composition." *Musical Courier* Vol. 76 (Issue 18, May 2, 1918): 10.

known for his advocacy of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 which required all Virginians to register their race, defining a white person as one without any trace of negro blood and less than one sixty-fourth American Indian blood. The idea of 'racial integrity' formed the backbone of Powell's activism, and its implication that the white race and civilization lacked integrity without legislative intervention was the source of a persistent anxiety which gave his racial activism urgency. The concept of 'racial integrity' was nearly as important to the formation of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America as the rhetoric of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. On October 18, 1922, *Roanoke World News* announced the formation of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America after the Atlanta Lodge of the Ku Klux Klan sought "to restrain the powers, privileges or rights" of the Richmond branch.[220] On June 5th, 1923, the *News Leader* in Richmond, Virginia, discussed the increasing popular awareness of the organization and its legislative efforts in a piece titled "The Price of Pollution" which stated that "the survival of civilization in America is dependent upon the preservation of racial integrity. The impossibility of an immediate final solution of the negro problem necessitated legislation which will insure us a breathing space pending the final solution. In all history, no case is recorded of races living in contact with each other without amalgamating. Also, no race has ever maintained its civilization when tainted even slightly with African blood."[221]

While he was engaged in this legislative activism, Powell continued programming Anglo-Saxon folk music in recitals in cities where he hoped to establish a new chapter of the ASCOA. Though some of the repertoire on these programs varied, they appear to have always included a set of folk-based compositions such as, variably, Beethoven's *Country Dances,* a Mazurka or Polonaise by Chopin, and a pairing of David Guion's *Turkey in the Straw* and his own "The Banjo Picker" from the piano suite *At the Fair*. Powell became known for his Barnumesque showmanship at these recitals, which primed the audience to interpret the

[220] "Says First Step to Break Up the Klan," *Roanoke World-News* vol. 40 (No. 94, 18 Oct. 1922): 12.
[221] "The Price of Pollution," *Richmond News Leader* (June 5, 1923): 10.

program as being part of his famous polemical discourses about the future of American music. According to a review in the Newport News *Daily Press*, concertgoers at a recital he gave at a local high school in Newport News November, 1924, were greeted at the door by ushers wearing colonial-era gowns and powdered wigs "giving a Jeffersonian air to the musical event."[222] The reviewer picked up on the folk music theme, writing that *Turkey in the Straw* was based on an original Anglo-Saxon melody rather than the popular minstrel tune, prompting the reviewer to state that the piece "proved conclusively that the American tunes are as good as those from foreign soil in delicacy, sentiment and brilliancy," and that "under Mr. Powell's touch the ancient folk song took on new qualities... [the audience] realized for the first time the tune of long ago may sleep but never die."

We do not know precisely what Powell said at these recitals, but the fact that reviewers seemed to easily pick up on the folk elements of the works while making declarative statements about the future of American composition suggests that he frequently spoke between pieces. He also developed a reputation for showmanship. Fellow Virginian composer Eugen Putnam, for example, criticized Powell for interrupting his recital to give a didactic speech on folk-based composition and to ask the audience "to say by their applause if they did think the American dance tunes were as good as the German."[223] As Putnam observed, however, it was hardly a neutral question, and it would have been a minor humiliation if the audience had not clapped loudest for him and Guion. A script from an episode of the Canadian Atwater Kent Radio Hour featuring Powell which ended with this folk set gives some insight into how he might have framed this repertoire. When introducing "the Banjo Picker," the announcer explained that it was "based on two old Anglo-Saxon folk dances, widely popular during the last century" one of

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[222] The following discussion is drawn from two articles published on November 8, 1924 in the *Daily Press*, "Powell Enthralls Large Audience with Masterly Performance on the Piano" and "Powell to Speak Here This Evening: Famous Pianist will Talk on 'Racial Integrity' at the Chamber Hall." Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Folder 16. Papers of John Powell, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va., United States.

[223] Eugen Putnam, "Why Modern Composers Do Not Write Inspired Music." *Musical Courier* Vol. 97 (Issue 3, July 19, 1928): 8.

which, “Mississippi Sawyer” was “known and loved through all the South for its gaiety.” On “Turkey in the Straw,” the announcer invoked one of Powell’s most-repeated talking points on folk music to state that “it is absurd to say that a people is unmusical whose folk songs and folk dances possess the beauty and nobility that ours do.”[224]

The Racial Integrity Act of 1924 easily passed the Virginia legislature, though it soon faced judicial hurdles based on the infeasibility of issuing racial identification cards and the difficulty of having registrars reliably trace everyone’s racial heritage back at least six generations before issuing marriage certificates.[225] It was only after Powell and the ASCOA tried to pass a follow-up law called the Public Assemblages Act the following year that he faced major public backlash. Though this bill, which required even private black-owned venues and churches to enforce racially-segregated seating, is less often discussed by musicologists who write on Powell than the 1924 Racial Integrity Act, it represents Powell’s first major attempt at regulating the transmission and reception of music at universities. Its impetus was a recital at the African-American Hampton Institute by the all-white dance troupe of the Denishawn School of Dance in Los Angeles for a desegregated audience. This bill would become known by its detractors as the Anti-Hampton bill and elicited much more controversy than the previous law largely due to the fact that it attracted the attention of the African American press after W.E.B. Du Bois mocked “this newest Virginia pother” in *The Crisis*, reporting that “a group of haughty ‘Anglo-Saxons’ stood during the performance and glared at the comfortable Negroes and the empty benches beside them.”[226]

The public image of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs hit its nadir after a white mob burned a cross on Hampton’s campus and warned the school’s Commandant to leave town within ten days,

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[224] Script for Atwater Kent Radio Hour, January 27, 1927. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 29, Folder 5, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

[225] See J. Douglas Smith, “The Campaign for Racial Purity and the Erosion of Paternalism in Virginia, 1922-1930: ‘Nominally White, Biologically Mixed, and Legally Negro.’” *The Journal of Southern History* 68 (No. 1, 2002): 65–106.

[226] “The Anglo-Saxon At Bay,” in *The Crisis*, vol. 30 no. 1 (May 1925): 10-11.

undermining the ASCOA's attempt at distinguishing themselves from the KKK. In a report published in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, John Powell was named as one of the "leading spirits" in this attack, speculating that he became involved in the Anti-Hampton movement because he "was not successful in his own efforts to stage a number of musical events of similar character" to the Denishawn dancers performance.[227] Though the paper initially supposed that the attack was organized by the Klan, it issued a front-page retraction the next week stating that there was in fact "absolutely no foundation for the rumors" that they were involved and they had joined in the growing number of white outlets in being "opposed to the Anglo-Saxon Purity League (sic) in the agitation the league is carrying on to have special seats reserved for whites in public exercises at Hampton Institute chapel."[228] Though it is unclear whether Powell was involved in organizing the cross-burning at Hampton, his prior attempts at presenting the Anglo-Saxon Clubs as a moderate alternative to the Ku Klux Klan had begun to backfire.

Local Black newspapers would subsequently hone their critical gaze on Powell and the ASCOA. On July 17th, for example, the Norfolk *New Journal and Guide* named Powell first in a list of the men who were most active "in this strange, organized movement to wreck amicable race relations in Virginia and in the South," and suggested that "John Powell and his misguided followers" study the example that Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson set in valuing and maintaining friendly relations between whites and blacks.[229] In December, the same paper published a front-page report about a meeting between Powell and Hampton's Principal, James Gregg, which proved that Powell was in fact the central agent in the agitation campaign. As the paper reports, Powell had traveled to Atlanta to visit the incarcerated Marcus Garvey to have the leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association promise to offer his organization's support if Dr. Gregg acceded to instituting a set of new policies. Based on this meeting, the *New*

[227] Carl Murphy, "Alleged Ku Klux Klan Attack on Hampton Reminder of Demonstration at Tuskegee." *Afro-American* Jan. 2, 1926.
[228] "Ku Klux Klan Now With Hampton. *Afro-American*, Jan. 9, 1926. Page 1.
[229] "Virginia's Isolation," *New Journal and Guide* (Jul. 18, 1925).

Guide and Journal determined that the "real motive" behind the campaign was to "remove the white faculty and administrative officers from the schools."[230] In response to this report, the UNIA's paper *The Negro World* issued a statement accusing Powell of disorting Garvey's ideals and making it unquestionably clear that they did not support the Anti-Hampton campaign.[231] Though he claims to have ignored the previous articles as "puerile and unworthy of notice," this piece seems to have especially wounded Powell, as he in fact earnestly identified as an ally of Garvey due to their overlapping ideals of race separatism.[232] He responded with a letter to the editor of the *Negro World* attempting to clarify matters by accusing the *New Journal and Guide* of distorting his words and maintaining his continued support of Garvey and the U.N.I.A.'s goal of colonizing Liberia and expatriating African Americans, though this letter was never published.

The most searing attack against Powell's character took place in a set of two articles by the mixed-race journalist J.A. Rogers covering the legislative hearings of the "Anti-Hampton Bill" in the February 27th issue of the Baltimore *Afro-American* newspaper along with a followup interview the next week. Rogers had a particular talent for exposing the hypocrisy and unsound reasoning of the white southern elite. He depicts the bill as if it were nothing more than a legislative temper tantrum by white men who were scandalized to see nearly-nude white dancers performing in front of a mixed-race audience. He then sarcastically proposes that he was moved by the hearing to support the bill because it "would affect the whites most as it might mean the closing of Ogden Hall where they have been attending shows at about a quarter of the ordinary price."[233] The interview published the following week was even more pointed in its criticism. Rogers calls Powell and Ernest Cox the "worst enemies of the human race" with Powell being "the devil himself." He accuses Powell of "agitating chiefly for personal gain" with a

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[230] "Want More Laws to Separate Races," *New Journal and Guide* (December 05, 1925), Page 1.
[231] "Mr. Garvey and White American Society," *The Negro World* (1925-08-15), page 4.
[232] John Powell to Marcus Garvey Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 39, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[233] J.A. Rogers, "Rogers Writes of Hearings on Anti Hampton Bill in Virginia Legislation," *Afro-American* Feb 27, 1926. Page 2.

"swollen ego," and alleges that he was only involved in the campaign because he was annoyed that Hampton's musical director Nathaniel Dett was chosen to give a piano recital instead of him. He paints Powell as "the zealot" among the other founding members of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs, and mentions that Powell was interested in working on even more radical legislation to outlaw "sex relations between the so-called races." Rogers concludes with another sarcastic endorsement of the Clubs' work, writing that "they are proving what we colored folk have long asserted, namely, that the people of the South are so mixed that perhaps only God Almighty knows who is of white and who is of Negro ancestry, thereby breaking down everything they are trying to erect."[234]

Though the bill would pass the legislature with only three dissenting votes, Powell was left feeling humiliated and resentful. In the aftermath of the bill's passage, the white humor columnist of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* the second-largest paper in the state*,* Father Byrd quipped:

> White squirrels have been mingling for several weeks with the gray colony in Capitol Square, and John Powell hasn't lodged a protest. Racial integrity is threatened. Can it be that Mr. Powell has not been reading the news of the day?[235]

Even if Powell was largely indifferent to criticism from the Black press, he was easily wounded by such mockery from white journals. This would be the last time that Powell took on a central role in passing racial legislation in Virginia, but his subsequent Anglo-Saxon folk music activism would incorporate aspects of the Anti-Hampton campaign by focusing on delegitimizing Hampton's musical scholarship and building up the University of Virginia's music department so that it would be recognized as the state's premiere institution for music research. In this regard, Powell's turn to Anglo-Saxon folk music activism was fueled by the same feelings of animus, envy, and desire towards blackness, and the same post-Confederate segregationist ideology,

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[234] J.A. Rogers, "Powell and Cox, Virginia Propagandists Are Worst Enemies of Human Race," *Afro-American* March 6, 1926. Page 2.
[235] Father Byrd, "Letters From Father Byrd." *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, May 27, 1926, 6.

that motivated the Public Assemblages Act. Hampton would remain unnamed as he raised funds for a Folk Music Chair at the University of Virginia, possibly in order to avoid drawing renewed attention to himself from the African American press; nevertheless, its emphasis on academic folk music research as a tool for building a racial identity drew from Hampton's long-standing contribution to African American folk research. And just as music at Hampton became a national symbol of African American institutions acquiring the influence to undermine Jim Crow segregation, building the music department at the University of Virginia would be a way to actualize the post-Confederate and eugenicist values of the state's flagship university.

1931: Two Folk Institutes

After the implosion of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America following the successful, but nevertheless humiliating, campaign to pass the Racial Assemblage Act in 1926, John Powell retreated from public racial activism. After only a few years, however, he concocted with a scheme to fund a department chair within the University of Virginia's music department devoted to studying 'Anglo-Saxon folk music.' At 9:30 in the evening on Nov 5th of 1931, Powell and a "large and representative group of Virginians" including musicians, politicians, businessmen, educators, and public figures gathered in Richmond, Virginia to make an appeal for a $5000 appropriation from Governor John Pollard's budget advisory commission to pay for a position that would delay what they claimed as the irretrievable loss of folk tunes "that constitute one of the greatest intangible forms of wealth that the State and the Anglo-Saxon race possess."[236]

Though this hearing ostensibly represented a turn away from controversial 'racial integrity' legislative activism, its aim was undoubtedly to restore coherence to America's racial identity. This was well understood by the proponents of Powell's folk chair funding campaign. Prior to the hearing, historian and editor of the *Richmond News Leader* Douglas Southall

[236] "Director of Budget Hears Plea To Form Chair of Folk Music" *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Nov. 6, 1931.

Freeman wrote to Powell apologizing for being unable to attend in person. He followed his apology with a passage that explicitly articulates this connection:

> We are beginning to realize that our Virginia forefathers had other ideals than those of political liberty. They brought with them from England a part of the great heritage of the Renaissance. They were Elizabethans, close to Shakespeare and born of the same stock. They brought with them to America the music, the art and the religious traditions of the English forebears, and the singular Providence that kept their blood from being mingled with that of other races, they retained their English traditions longer perhaps than any other people in America. We know now that from just such soil as this spring the great creations of art.
>
> We could do nothing, in my opinion, that would more surely foster creative music in Virginia than to provide a school for the preservation, diffusion and appreciation of the folk music of our ancestors.[237]

This statement ties together several strands of white supremacist thought that constituted Powell's idea of 'racial integrity.' Freeman conceives of culture in terms of eugenics and antimiscegenist ideology by referencing "the singular Providence that kept their blood from being mingled with that of other races." He also evokes the Anglo-Saxon civilizational imaginary by describing the folk song as a nexus between the English Elizabethan Renaissance and modern white Virginia. The Anglo-American folk song in this perspective was not just an object to be appreciated – it was a vehicle for reimagining the entire history of white American identity. The folk chair would help white Virginians escape the burden of regarding themselves as descendents of mercantilists or slave owners. The settlers of colonial Virginia were not mere laborers who toiled and starved as charges of the London Company. The progeny of these American Shakespeareans may have become tobacco farmers who participated in the unforgivable practice of owning and trading slaves, but the essence of their identity remained rooted in the culture of the Elizabethan Renaissance. Modern white Virginians were just as

[237] Correspondence from Douglas Southall Freeman to John Powell, 29th October, 1931. In Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

capable as their European counterparts of producing “the great creations of art” as long as they could be taught to remember this great inheritance and maintain their racial purity.

Freeman also reframes racial integrity through a rhetoric of value and investment. Whereas Powell’s previous legislative activism positioned racial integrity as the product of effectively regulating and restricting desire and enjoyment of cross-racial identification, the Anglo-Saxon folk music movement inverted this formula by thinking of racial integrity as something to invest in and enjoy. The folk music campaign thus represents a new theory of racial integrity that was less disciplinary or managerial than scholars who narrowly focus on his legislative work recognize. Where J. Douglas Smith, for example, considers how Powell’s racial integrity legislation participated in the project of ‘managing white supremacy’ in Virginia, the Anglo-Saxon folk project represents an attempt at investing in whiteness.[238] This recognition may help explain why Powell shifted his attention away from lobbying for disciplinary legislation and began focusing on fundraising for institutions of higher learning. Southern research universities like the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina had already begun using a rhetoric of racial and civilizational integrity to advocate for state and private funding in the 1920s. The University of Virginia’s President Edwin Alderman, for example, stated in 1925 that “all civilization is a race between education and catastrophe” in a speech where he called for increased funding for scientific research in the South.[239] President Harry W. Chase of the University of North Carolina similarly discussed a “a restlessness, a ferment, a sense of change… a strain, a tension at the center of things” that threatened to eradicate “southern habits and traditions” if not met with proper funding.[240] As such language suggests, southern

[238] J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*: *Race, Politics, and Citizenship In Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).
[239] Edwin Alderman, "The Present State of Higher Education in Virginia.” An address delivered before the Virginia Educational Council at Norfolk. Nov. 25, 1925.
[240] Henry Woodburn Chase, “Our Changing Educational Needs” in *The High School Journal* Vol. 12 (No. 1, 1929): 17-20.

white supremacy was not just something to be managed and maintained; it was something that was liable to collapse entirely if it continued to be undervalued.

Powell and his allies presented Anglo-Saxon folk music as a body of raw material with intrinsic worth that could stabilize the value of white supremacy. And the folk chair campaign proposed that the cost of doing so was a humble $5,000. Though Governor John Garland Pollard was sympathetic to Powell's cause, he felt the pressure of the Great Depression to reduce the budget. Earlier that same day, Pollard responded to a delegation representing the State Association of School Trustees asking for an appropriation to prevent the shortening of school terms and cutting of teachers salaries that it may become necessary to dissolve counties as governing units if they could not become more financially self-sufficient.[241] In light of this severe budgetary crisis, an appropriation to support and indulgence such as a folk music chair would seem out of hand. Further, it was unusual for the state to direct colleges to use appropriations to fund specific positions within a department at the university. Though Powell was not successful in this endeavor, he faced almost no criticism on ideological grounds. Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon folk music campaign largely translated the racial grievances of racial integrity rhetoric into statements of economic value and worth and it recast language of the necessity of policing of black humanity into a rhetoric against popular music and jazz. Opposition to the chair was put in similar terms. One opponent of the chair wrote to the *Times-Dispatch* that "there has never been a time when economy in State expenditures was more essential than it is now" and asserted that "under these conditions, nothing could be more inopportune than the proposal to establish a chain of folk music… and to appropriate $5.000 to pay the salary of a professor to search for folk songs."[242]

This failure speaks to a tension between the management of white supremacy and the investment in the value of whiteness. It also put the economic reality of the Great Depression in

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[241] "State Aid Seen Threat to Life of Counties" *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (Nov. 6, 1931): 1, 3.
[242] *Richmond Times Dispatch* (Richmond, Virginia), November 9, 1931: 6.

relief to the existential value Powell and his collaborators ascribed to white folk music. Powell referred to the price of funding the chair as a necessary cost that had only loose relationship with the intrinsic value of the musical folk object. The Anglo-American ballad was on the one hand discussed as if it were a precious metal that needed to be mined and then refined before its true value became apparent. At the same time, there was never a sense that its worth would one day translate into exchange value. Its value was pure surplus, simultaneously intangible and clearly in excess of the requested $5,000. This rhetoric of white folk music's immaterial value only intensified as Powell pivoted towards funding the folk chair through private donations from wealthy individual philanthropists. His ability to fund the chair relied on stoking a sense among wealthy whites that their material wealth was evidence of the intrinsic value of their pedigree. The folk chair project promised to ground the symbolic value of racial integrity within musical objects that were both extrinsic to the individual identities of wealthy white philanthropists and an inalienable inheritance right from their ancestors.

Powell would eventually rethink his strategy and pivot towards collecting private donations from philanthropists. But this would take several years, and it interrupted Powell's grand design of forming a series of folk music programs at white universities in the region. Roughly one month prior to the appropriations hearing, Powell's friend and fellow composer Lamar Stringfield established the Institute for Research in Folk-Music Development at the University of North Carolina. Stringfield kept in touch with Powell through the process, and Powell was given a seat on the Institute's Advisory Board upon its formation. He also became one of Powell's most reliable advocates in his own attempt at establishing folk music research at the University of Virginia. He testified at the November 5th Budget meeting and offered to speak to officials at the University of Virginia. Shortly after the unsuccessful budget meeting, he

consoled Powell in a friendly letter saying that “if you can put on another show during the legislature as you did on Nov. 5th, I believe something will happen.”[243]

The plan to create a folk music department at the University of North Carolina was likely hatched during a series of private conversations between Lamar Stringfield and John Powell that began in the summer of 1930 after Lamar Stringfield left his post as the conductor of the Asheville Symphony and moved to Chapel Hill in order to collaborate with the famed playwright Paul Green.[244] Stringfield was at the time recovering from a serious injury he sustained after being hit by a car, and was desperate for a permanent job. He was able to scrape together a wage with occasional conducting jobs and flute recitals despite his injuries, but he struggled to get his compositions published. Even his 1928 Pulitzer Prize-winning *From the Southern Mountains* was unpublished until Carl Fisher added it to their catalog in 1930. On June 30, 1930, Stringfield wrote to his wife Caroline telling her of a four-hour meeting he had with John Powell the night before in preparation for a meeting with the Theodore Presser music publishing company. Stringfield credited Powell for giving him “a lot of good points” and told his wife that he would “use them to good advantage tomorrow with the Presser people.”[245] While Stringfield was vague about his agenda with Presser in his correspondences with his wife, it seems to have been more ambitious and far-reaching than pitching a work to be published. On July 2nd, Caroline Stringfield wrote to Lamar that she hoped that Presser was “vitally impressed” and would “clamp down on the chance to be its backers.”[246] It seems likely that these plans, and his meeting with Powell, were related to the publication of a pamphlet titled *America and Her Music*

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[243] Lamar Stringfield to John Powell, November, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

[244] Stringfield alludes to this meeting in a letter he sent to John Powell on March 13, 1931 where he expresses doubts as to whether the university could finance “a department as we outlined last summer.” Lamar Stringfield to John Powell, March 19, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

[245] Correspondence from Lamar Stringfield to My Own Sweet Girl, June 30, 1930. In Lamar Stringfield Papers, 1917-1959, Special Collections, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

[246] Correspondence from Caroline Stringfield to Lamar Stringfield, July 2, 1930. In Lamar Stringfield Papers, 1917-1959, Special Collections, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

with the University of North Carolina Extension Division, which would outline the principles which the Institute for Folk Music would be based upon.[247]

Powell's influence on Stringfield can be seen in this pamphlet, which was published several months before he officially began his campaign. Encouraging the formation of local music clubs devoted to understanding and cultivating an American musical identity, the pamphlet takes the form of a guide for discussions on topics that such a club might discuss such as "Purpose of Music Clubs" (Chapter II), "Musical America" (Chapter IV), and "American Nationalism in Music" (Chapter XIV). Several chapters explicitly address topics related to racial difference such as Chapters VII and VIII, "Origin of American Negro Music" and "Negro in American Music," and Chapter X, "Indian in American Music." The question of the racial character of America's musical future, however, is a current that runs through the entire pamphlet. As Stringfield explains in Chapter II, "Social Use of American Folk Music," "music of the white people, who are Americans in life and habit, has been neglected."[248] In Chapter IX, "Musical Values in Folk-Interpretations," he writes "The music of the white people is the only consistent folk-music. The only compositions inherently representative of America have been based on 'white' folk-music."[249]

That these ideas were largely reiterative of Powell's own speeches can be seen in their respective response to Antonin Dvorak's vision of an American musical identity based on Negro and Indian folk music.[250] John Powell used Dvorak as a foil for himself in his Rice Institute lecture, calling him "carried away by Stephen Foster songs, which he erroneously believed to be negro songs" and also influenced by "the Indian folk-songs – fewer and less valuable – the real negro songs, and, finally the popular music of the day."[251] Accusing Dvorak of only superficially

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[247] Lamar Stringfield. "America and Her Music: An Outline for Music Clubs." University of North Carolina Extension Bulletin Vol. X (No. 7, March 1931).
[248] Ibid., 13.
[249] Ibid., 31.
[250] The "Dvorak Debates" are discussed in Beth E. Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Low Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).
[251] Powell, "Music and the Nation," 145.

understanding the American musical landscape, Powell systematically dismissed the authenticity and viability of four compositional schools influenced by the Bohemian including the "Red Indian School," the "Negro School," the "Stephen Foster School," and the "Popular Music School." He aligned himself and the "Anglo-Saxon Folk Music School" instead with Cecil Sharp's early work on English folk-songs prior to his Appalachia trip. "I can never forget my relief, pride, and joy," Powell declared, "when in 1905 a volume of these folk-song settings came into my hands… and [I] realized that as an Anglo-Saxon I had a right to exist in the world musically, that I had a native musical language, and that the folk-song of my own people, so far from being non-existent, was more varied and richer in power and beauty than the folk-music of any other race."[252]

Stringfield similarly devoted much of his pamphlet to invalidating the Czech composer's foreign perspective along with the notion of black and Native American musical authenticity. He included the fourth movement of Dvorak's Symhpony in E Minor, "From the New World" (1893) as a recommended listening in Chapter VII, "Origin of American Negro Music" only to invalidate it as "a Bohemian's impression of the American Negro" and claimed that the principle English horn melody of the first movement based on "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" was in fact originally based in "the old song books of the white people."[253] In the following chapter, "Negro in American Music," he recommends the symphony's opening *Largo* movement to remind the reader that though the principle theme has been misattributed as "an old Negro melody," the thematic material within the movement is "entirely from Dvorak's own melodies."[254] The two composers thus took a contrarian, anti-pluralist position in the Dvorak debates. For both, black music was unoriginal and derivative, Native American music was too primitive to be usable, and the best examples of both race's music were expressions of the genius of white composers like Stephen Foster and Edward MacDowell.

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[252] Ibid., 154-155.
[253] Stringfield, "America and Her Music," 26.
[254] Ibid., 29.

Stringfield's pamphlet strove to combat Dvorak's influence on American music by encouraging white socialites to form music clubs and become propagandists for compositions based on white folk music. The end of each chapter is peppered with leading discussion questions meant to prime music club members to contribute to realizing his vision of a white American classical music canon. One question asks "Can the white race progress by developing from another race than which was first his own?"[255] Another reads "How can American composition be encouraged? Is more playing of music by American composers an incentive to them in their work?"[256] At one point he asks "Is Indian music valuable in American composition?" at the end of a chapter where he states that "a white man, who has not been born and reared in the environment of the music of another race, cannot use that music as a subconscious inspiration for composition."[257] On jazz, he begs the question asking "if jazz is not a vital American music, would more frequent performances of good music in a community be the best way to convince a public of the fact?"[258]

The year after Stringfield published "America and Her Music," he was faced with the realization that his residency at the University of North Carolina would be eliminated due to budget cuts. The Institute for Folk Music Research was originally a scheme for generating the funds needed to keep him employed at the school. As initially conceived, it would function as a laboratory for performing, composing with, and programming authentic folk music collected in the state, becoming another vehicle for spreading his musical-ideological agenda. When he first realized that his contract was unlikely to be renewed, he sent John Powell a copy of "America and Her Music" and explained that he was especially regretful that he was losing his position at the university "after such reception and proof of its practicality being now established."[259] His

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[255] Ibid., 26.
[256] Ibid., 32.
[257] Ibid., 34.
[258] Ibid., 40.
[259] Correspondence from Lamar Stringfield to John Powell**.** Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 6, Folder 1, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

solution was to fund a wing of the music department devoted to “folk music development” that could retain him. In March of 1931, he updated Powell on his situation saying that he planned on proposing a budget to the state. He had little faith in the state bureaucracy, though, and wrote “if the state does not take advantage of it, I do not feel that I am to blame.”[260] After facing expected funding difficulties, he worked out a funding structure that would allow him to continue his work by the following September. The position would be self-funded through recitals and concerts, and the University of North Carolina administration would accept contracts with guarantees as funding pledges. This would allow him to continue his work as a composer-in-residence by committing to divide his time between making music and folk-related “laboratory work.” This arrangement allowed Stringfield to fund himself with concert tours and ticketed programming like he would have had to do independently. However, wielding the title of Research Associate of the Institute of Folk Music lent authority to his reactionary agenda. Immediately after the Institute was formed, Stringfield reached out to representatives at Salem College, North Carolina College for Women, and Meredith College offering to give a lecture series on white folk music.[261]

The Institute for Research in Folk Music Development, later shortened to the Institute of Folk Music, would be a self-funded body within the School of Music governed by an Executive Committee composed of business associates and an Advisory Council composed mostly of researchers and musicians, one of whom was John Powell. In a document by Stringfield titled “Plans for Study,” he described a three-fold agenda of the Institute. First, it would involve “collecting folk-music, not already collected, in North Carolina” and “writing treatises on American folk-song” in collaboration with members of the advisory board and “deal[ing] with the

[260] Correspondence from Lamar Stringfield to John Powell, March 13, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, Box 6, Folder 1, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[261] Correspondence from Lamar Stringfield to John Powell, September 18, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, Box 6, Folder 1, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

sources, history of use in art-composition and future existence and activity of American folk-music." The second item on the agenda was to make a field research trip to England that would retrace Cecil Sharp's field sites. Finally, the Institute would produce two symphonic compositions "based on native folk-lore."[262] A parenthetical note after the first item on the agenda captures the extent that the institute was intended to bridge white folk song collection and composition for the purpose of creating a school of white American composition:

> (The field for this work may be broadened by encouraging the promotion of folk-festivals and by bringing out a general realization of the values of old folk-tunes now rapidly being discarded. This will mean the creation of new interest in American folk-music playing which will foster the preservation of our best folk-music. Younger composers will thus be given an opportunity to become saturated with an individualism in their art-compositions that will be distinctly American…)

Shortly after the Institute was formed, Stringfield wrote a piece introducing it to the readers of *Music Clubs Magazine*. He explains in this piece that the Institute was driven by a recognition that "folk-songs represent the psychological history of our country, as well as the foundation for our American composition and musical life," and credits "the advice and assistance of John Powell" in its formation. Stringfield presents its purpose slightly differently in this iteration, focusing more on its concertizing agenda. "*American Folk Music,*" including studying, collecting, and arranging folk tunes, is only the first of three agendas of the course, with "*Practical Composition and Orchestration*" and "*Chamber Music*" being its other two.[263] In this regard, though the Institute was nominally devoted to researching folk music, it was in actuality an apparatus that would more efficiently realize Stringfield's goals for American concert music than several decentralized music clubs. For this reason, the Archivist of the Virginia Folk-Lore Society Arthur Kyle Davis would disparage the Institute in a memorandum sent to UVA

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[262] "Plans for Study" (n.d.) in Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, Box 28, Folder 7, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[263] Lamar Stringfield, "Our American Orchestra." *Music Clubs Magazine* (n.d.): 13-14. In Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, Box 37, Folder 16, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

President John Lloyd Newcomb in 1934 by questioning whether “it means anything more than Lamar Stringfield’s State Symphony.”[264]

Though Powell was unsuccessful in his initial attempt at establishing a sister program at the University of Virginia with state funding, he was encouraged by his allies to continue in his efforts. The letters he received at this time demonstrate how the folk chair in Virginia was understood to be a direct counterpart to Stringfield’s Institute of Folk Music. On November 20th, Annabel Morris Buchanan tellingly misstated the title of the project, writing “I hear nothing from the Institute of Folk Research (Virginia, I mean; Lamar writes every few days). Do you want me to help in any other way about it? Should you talk to the University people any more, or bring it up before the legislature (sic), or let it drop for the present?”[265] Leaders of the North Carolina Institute often acknowledged the shared ideals between the two projects. On the 9th of December Harold Dyer, the Chairman of the Institute of Folk Music and head of the UNC music department, wrote to share news of the Institute’s activities, and obscurely intimated that the two could speak frankly “in view of our intimate knowledge of the interior ‘workings’ of the machine which has been set us” and because “our desires and ambitions for the success of the venture like-wise are mutual.”[266] Lamar Stringfield wrote to Powell on December 29th suggesting that he bring up the project with the state legislature the following month and suggested that Powell consider showing off the successes of the Institute to “your political and finance leaders.”[267]

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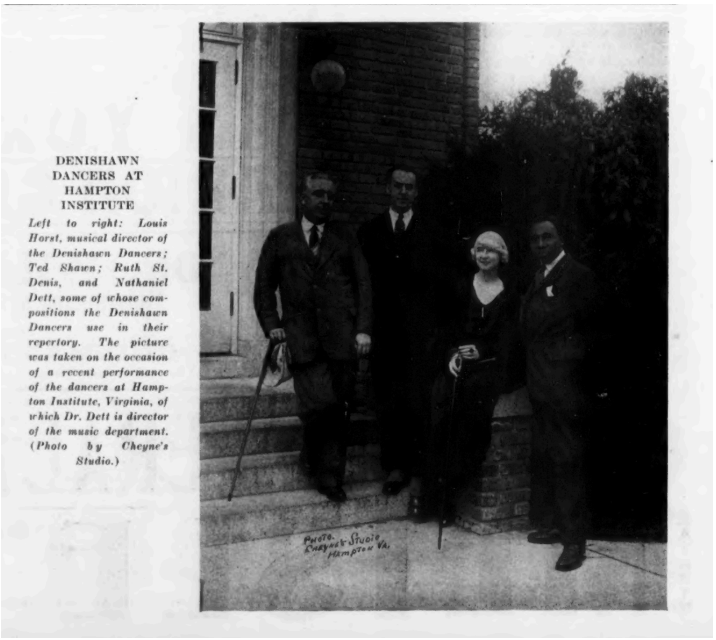
[264] “Memoranda as to the Folk Song Situation in Virginia.” December 8, 1934. Papers of the president, Subseries II, Box 17, Accession # RG-2/1/2.491 subseries II, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[265] Correspondence from Annabel Morris Buchanan to John Powell, November 20, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 6, Folder 5, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[266] Correspondence from Harold Dyer to John Powell, December 9, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 6, Folder 5, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[267] Correspondence from Lamar Stringfield to John Powell, December 29, 1931. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 6, Folder 5, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

1932-1934: Changing the Tune with the Musical Courier

Though Powell initially escaped ideological scrutiny for his efforts regarding the folk chair, both Stringfield and Powell began to face criticism the following year for the underlying ideological assumptions behind this seemingly-innocuous folk music work. The first major blow to their movement was an extremely unfavorable review by editor of the *Musical Courier*, Leonard Liebling, a Jewish-American pianist, composer, and critic whose career paralleled Powell's in many ways as both had their perspective on music profoundly shaped by their post-collegiate studies in Berlin and Vienna, respectively. Like Powell, Leibling recognized the antisemitic, anti-black, and white nationalist political implications of the pamphlet. Liebling regularly mocked Henry Ford in his "Variations" column throughout the 1920s, and he likely recognized that the Detroit manufacturing baron's movement to institutionalize square dancing to counter what he believed was a Jewish cabal running the popular music industry was the spiritual predecessor to Stringfield's movement.[268] The magazine also provided ample coverage of performances at segregated black colleges in the South such as Hampton Institute, often treating these schools as the premiere musical institutions of their respective states. Liebling's liberal and pluralistic ideals about American music and race were incompatible with Stringfield and Powell's southern white nationalist values. Whereas Powell was moved to lobby for the 1926 Racial Assemblage Act after learning of the desegregated Denishawn dance concert at Hampton, Liebling responded to the same concert by posting a photograph of Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis standing next to Hampton's musical director Nathaniel Dett (Image 1).

[268] The "Variations" column was nominally apolitical and the references to Ford were only occasionally related to music. In one instance, Leibling notes that "Leo Sowerby did dedicate to Henry Ford his setting of the Old English song, 'What If I Never Speede'" (Vol. 95, Issue 4, 1925): 37. In another, he wryly asked "why not delegate to Henry Ford the job of standardizing music teaching?" (Vol. 91, Issue 4, 1923): 20. An example of the base mockery Ford was subjected to, one excerpt simply reads "A mental prodigy is Henry Ford, who came out with this jewel of thought not long ago: 'But 1927 is not 1928. It is not 1915. It is not even 1926'" (Vol. 95 Issue 25, 1927): 29.



DENISHAWN DANCERS AT HAMPTON INSTITUTE

Left to right: Louis Horst, musical director of the Denishawn Dancers; Ted Shawn; Ruth St. Denis, and Nathaniel Dett, some of whose compositions the Denishawn Dancers use in their repertory. The picture was taken on the occasion of a recent performance of the dancers at Hampton Institute, Virginia, of which Dr. Dett is director of the music department. (Photo by Cheyne's Studio.)

Image 1.2 - a photograph of the white director of the Denishawn dancers Louis Horst and white dancers Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis next to Nathaniel Dett, the African American musical director at Hampton. The photo highlights the contrast between St. Denis's white skin and Dett's blackness, but presents this as a contrast without tension as St. Denis casually leans towards a smiling Dett.

In his review of "America and Her Music," Liebling explains that the pamphlet arrived at his desk months ago, but "was laid aside simply because the reviewer could not determine what to say about it." He sums up Stringfield's argument by stating that "Mr. Stringfield recognizes no American folk-idiom except that which derives from English or, as he would prefer to say, Anglo-Saxon sources." As Stringfield only uses the phrase 'Anglo-Saxon' sparingly preferring the term 'white folk music,' it seems as if Liebling was aware of the association between Stringfield and Powell. Indeed, The main body the review takes the form of outlandish quotations from the pamphlet presented either without commentary or with sarcastic quips paired with Stringfield's assertion that "'one of the few compositions that have been made from genuine American folk-tunes is Cripple Creek' (By himself.)." Liebling follows this up with an impassioned criticism of the very concept of 'Anglo-Saxon folk music,' writing:

> Just because by right of conquest the English people who settled in the Southern mountains became so isolated and illiterate that they retained some vestiges of the folk-songs of England, as a result of their failure to mingle with the American race as a

> whole, it may not be asserted that these songs are our only White American musical folk heritage.
>
> Mr. Stringfield goes too fast. The rest of us are waiting until the fusion in our melting pot is complete and we become, throughout the whole of our great land, a single alloy.[269]

Shortly after this review was published, Harold Dyer wrote to Powell calling his attention to Liebling's review. Dyer's and Stringfield's relationship was strained, and he intimated that "this is the result which I had hoped to avoid in the contacts through writing, talking, and performance with Mr. Stringfield" while acknowledging that "in this instance the interpretation placed upon Mr. Stringfield's publication is but a natural one." Dyer went on to ask Powell to write "a short statement either in rebuttal, or to clarify what appears to have been in Mr. Stringfield's writing a meaning obscure to Mr. Liebling."[270] Powell responded by immediately writing to the *Musical Courier* requesting a copy of the review and an opportunity to publish an article clarifying Stringfield's message.[271]

Powell's reply was a full three-page article with accompanying photographs titled "Virginia Finds Her Folk-Music" published on April 23. This article only mentions Stringfield briefly at the end, however, as Powell used it primarily to revitalize interest in his campaign at the University of Virginia. In this article, Powell presented the same arguments as Stringfield but with a more refined literary sensibility. Its central claim was to counter the notion that "we are not a musical people. Music seems to be left out of the Anglo-Saxon temperament," an idea that Liebling alluded to in his review when he wrote that "The Angles and the Saxons were both German races, and in Great Britain the Welsh, Irish, and Scotch possess more colorful folk-tunes than England." To counter this notion Powell paints a portrait of musical life in

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[269] Leonard Liebling, "America and Her Music." *The Musical Courier* Vol. 104 (Issue 2, January 9, 1932): 22.
[270] Correspondence from Harold Dyer to John Powell, January 16, 1932. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 7, Folder 1, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[271] Correspondence from Horrace Johnson to John Powell, January 21, 1932. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 7, Folder 1, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

Elizabethan England, a time when the Queen herself was an accomplished virginal player and that “every well-bred person” was expected to be able to read music more fluently than they could spell as “a person of whichever sex who could not join the singing [at a social gathering] would have been thought illbred and awkward.” Though these references to heredity are initially in reference to class instead of race, he quickly alludes to eugenics by invoking a reversed principle of hypodescent when he writes “if you have a drop of English blood in your veins, [Anglo-Saxon folk music] will give you a thrill nothing else can give: some deep racial memory will stir.”

Powell used this essay to establish Virginia as an ideal hunting-ground for Anglo-Saxon folk music with the intention of reviving the folk chair campaign. He remarks that the state was settled “when the Elizabethan tradition was still a living thing” and goes on to make two significant criticisms of important existing scholarship on Anglo-American folk music in the state which would help him position the work of the folk chair in the coming years. First, he criticizes *Traditional Ballads of Virginia* by C. Alphonzo (sic) Smith and Arthur Kyle Davis of the Virginia Folk-Lore Society, the product of several years of ballad collecting efforts by the two literary scholars, for neglecting or mistreating the musical content of the ballads. He also criticizes Cecil Sharp’s monumentally important *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (1917) which did in fact focus on the musical content of ballads over their lyrics, though he couched this criticism with a statement of admiration for how Sharp’s work helped folk musicians realize that “they shared a racial heritage which gave them, more than anything else could, a basis of understanding and mutual enjoyment.” Against Sharp, however, Powell insisted that there was nothing particularly significant about the folk song knowledge of mountaineers and indicated that he had encountered a number of white Virginians from all regions of the state who had learned authentic English folk ballads from their blue-blooded ancestors.

In this regard, Powell’s essay did little to quell the controversy surrounding Stringfield’s pamphlet. It did, however, spark new controversies between himself and the professional

folklorists whose work the folk chair would intervene upon. He made it clear that he still intended to get the folk chair funded, alluding to the fact that "many interested people are working to establish a department of Folk Music at the University, in order that the tunes which are in danger of being lost may be preserved." The essay indeed anticipates a strategic reorientation of his campaign to fund a folk chair. Having lost his faith in the state's ability to provide the requisite funds, he no longer relied upon the professional validation of existing scholars like Arthur Kyle Davis. The essay would instead serve a propagandistic function in Powell's upcoming campaign to independently raise funds for the folk chair. He included copies of this article with letters soliciting donations from wealthy white well-bred Virginians who were prone to be skeptical of academic blindspots and easily swayed by flattery and a desire to contribute to monumental interventionist projects that would serve their self interest. Instead of framing the isolation required for ballads to be transmitted across generations in terms of geography and culture, he emphasized genetic isolation by allowing anyone who could trace their lineage back to old England the right to claim the music as their own. The real value of this repertoire, he insisted, was in their musical rather than lyrical integrity:

> These tunes have beauty of line and structure. They have sustained length of phrase with surprising punctuation by emphasis on unexpected degrees of climax and its unfailing pointing. They have inexhaustible diversity, freshness and vigor of rhythmic effects both in phrase and measure-rhythms to keep the interest tense and alert. Most remarkable, however, is their structure. They are not pieced together but grow into being like living entities. These melodies are organisms. That is why even the sauciest or most jolly give the impression of elegance, of a chaste and classic nobility. Judged by the most stringent standards, many of them are well-nigh flawless.

Powell thus used this opportunity to respond to criticism against Stringfield by setting the rhetorical stage for a renewed effort to fund his own project that would accomplish the same goals that Stringfield articulated less artfully. Unlike Stringfield's Institute of Folk Music which required maintaining a certain degree of professional trust as it was funded through concert and talking fees at other universities, Powell's folk chair simply required moving a small number of wealthy donors to make sizable one-time contributions. His new strategy would be to present

the folk chair as a position that was uniquely qualified to appraise the intrinsic aesthetic value of the inherited musical baubles in possession of the wealthy whites who would pay for the position.[272]

Though "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music" was largely successful in redirecting attention away from the arguments made in "America and Her Music," it still elicited some pointed controversy in subsequent issues of the *Musical Courier*. On June 6th, the New York-born and Richmond-based violinist John Ingram-Brookes wrote an article titled "The Folksong Bugaboo" which opened with the sentence "all over this glorious land of the free and home of the brave there is a clamor; in some places faint, in others quite deafening, as in the South, home of the mammy-song, hookworm, Ku Klux Klan, Lamar Stringfield, John Powell, fundamentalism, etc., *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*." Ingram-Brookes identifies Stringfield and Powell as "the leading whoopers" who "have whooped so loudly and well that any number of colleges and universities have been hoodwinked and bamboozled into installing chairs of folksong in their institutions, presided over by gentlemen with degrees long enough and impressive enough to scare the wits, much less the folk songs out of the yokelry commonly supposed to be the possessors of this so-called 'valuable material.'"[273] Clearly unnerved by such bold derision and perhaps given a warning by one of her connections through the National Federation of Music Clubs, Annabel Morris Buchanan sent Powell a copy of Ingram-Brooks's piece the day before it was published stating "this criticism of what we are trying to do RILES me, and I have to answer."[274]

As Chairman of the NFMC, Buchanan had been leading a parallel campaign to encourage teaching Anglo-Saxon folk music to school-aged musicians and including folk-based compositions in official NFMC competitions and events, often strategically timing

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[272] "Virginia Finds Her Folk-Music: How the Southern State Was Led to Discover and Revive Its Traditional Tunes of the People." *Musical Courier* Vol. 104 (Issue 17, April 23, 1932): 6-7, 10.
[273] John Ingram-Brookes, "The Folksong Bugaboo: Derivations of Music of the People — Is there an American Tune of the Soil?" *Musical Courier* Vol. 104 (Issue 23, June 6, 1932): 6.
[274] Correspondence from Annabel Morris Buchanan to John Powell, June 5, 1932. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 7, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

announcements to support Powell and Stringfield in their campaigns. Four days after Powell's appeal to the Governor's budgetary commission in November 1931, she sent D.S. Freeman a press release stating that the National Federation of Music Clubs would officially begin "directing attention" to Anglo-Saxon folk music. This press release quoted Annabel Morris Buchanan explaining that "American folk-music is Anglo-Saxon in origin and does not have its early beginnings in American Negro or Indian chants" and stated that under Buchanan's direction, the Federation would "begin urging the use of English-American folk songs and dances in public schools and colleges, in music club study and programs, and advocating folk programs or festivals in states which have access to native folk musicians."[275] The day before "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music" was published, she asked Powell to look over an essay titled "A National Music for America" which she intended to send to *Musical America*. This essay proclaimed that "only through knowing our own native and racial musical resources can we progress to that command of our own personal resources that shall enable us as composers to rise to our greatest heights… music that is great because it comes, first, from natural gifts, then from sincerity and from thorough knowledge of that which has been ours for ages."[276] Buchanan also acted as a co-organizer along with Powell and Stringfield for the White Top Folk Festival, which the three used to scout white folk musicians from across Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.[277] Her reply to the *Musical Courier* was published in July under the title "Mr. Ingram-Brookes Starts Something." In this somewhat unhinged response, she asks "why should we refuse to admit the aristocracy of our own Anglo-Saxon race, with its roots deep in England, Scotland and Ireland;

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[275] "Federation is Concentrating on Folk Song Music in Nation." *Richmond Times-Dispatch,* November 15, 1931, 46.
[276] Annabel Morris Buchanan, "A National Music for America." April 22, 1932. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 7, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[277] David Whisnant gives the definitive history of the White Top Mountain Festival in the third chapter of *All That Is Native and Fine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Whisnant questions the integrity of the claims regarding folk authenticity that provided the conceptual underpinning of the festival.

and prefer to be considered instead, an upstart nation that has, like Topsy, 'just growed'? (Or is this, perhaps, only more 'deafening clamor from the South'?)."[278]

1933-1936: Gold in the Mountains, or the Vaults

The theory of value underscoring Powell's Anglo-Saxon folk music campaign reflected racialized anxieties over the loss of a stabilizing reference point for the value of money that was realized upon the elimination of the gold standard in 1933. As historian of money Michael O'Malley shows, social conservatives and white supremacists often projected fears of anarchism and a loss of individual identity to the abolition of the gold standard. A mass-consumer society where the value of currency is based on its ability to move in a market allowed minorities to acquire social and political influence even when their political rights and privileges were circumscribed by law.[279] At a time when market forces seemed to undermine the symbolic value of race, heritage, and pedigree, Powell advertised Anglo-Saxon folk music as a cultural counterpart to gold which gave these otherwise intangible sources of value an object form. By foregrounding the intrinsic value of white folk music over its exchange value, Powell offered it as a replacement of sorts for the lost economic order that was replaced by an unstable speculative economy.

In an essay titled "Treasure Recovered" published in 1934, Powell characterized Anglo-Saxon folk tunes as an overlooked source of semi-material racial wealth "which had survived crushing forces and erosive agencies which had surrounded it for three hundred years." "Through music," he insisted:

> … we are put into contact with our own lives in a mysterious and electrifying fashion. Human contacts become normal and natural, revivifying and inspiriting. The enjoyment

[278] Annabel Morris Buchanan "Mr. Ingram-Brookes Starts Something." *Musical Courier* Vol. 105 (Issue 1, July 2, 1932): 20.
[279] Michael O'Malley, *Face Value: The Entwined Histories of Money and Race in America*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

> of life, fresh, vigorous and unforced, pervades the clear mountain air, and the wisdom of simple ways is as apparent as it was to Cecil Sharp when he first made the acquaintance of the bearers of our musical heritage. There is a sense that we are a folk and that in that fact lies some of the secrets of the Golden Age for which we seek through future and through past. All go away from those heights with a realization of treasure recovered.[280]

Powell encouraged white elites to donate to his campaign by presenting them with a musical 'gold standard' that demonstrated the inherent worth of white cultural consciousness.

The folk chair would not be just another dry and impersonal academic institution serving only the interests of curious scholars. It was a position devoted to invigorating whiteness with the wealth of spiritual power that white elites yearned for.

The promise for racialized folk music to enrich the "enjoyment of life" for those who could claim it as part of their heritage was premised on teaching people to understand its intrinsic aesthetic value. Powell presented Anglo-Saxon folk music tradition as particularly 'revivifying' and 'inspiriting' due to the melodic elegance, modal intricacy, and balanced phrase structure of the typical song. Jacques Lacan lectured on such a correspondence between surplus value and subjective enjoyment or *jouissance* in his seventeenth seminar in 1969, explaining that both are the remainder left behind after an operation of robbery or mutilation that the injured subject nevertheless comes to desire.[281] Just as the production of surplus value traps the exploited subject in a relationship with capitalism, the surplus of surplus *jouissance* signifies its anti-revolutionary quality. "There is no transgression" in enjoyment induced by another, Lacan explains, "but rather an irruption, a falling into the field of something not unlike *jouissance* – a surplus."[282] For Lacan, this experience of being marked by an injury or a loss by a more primary and powerful being is the condition of becoming a subject. There is, in other words, an equivalence between being a speaking and desiring subject and being a subject of capitalist

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[280] John Powell, "Treasure Recovered." June 23, 1934. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 29, Folder 1, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[281] Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 2007).
[282] Ibid., 20.

exploitation – in either case, one has to have already been subjugated and subjectified by another.

This is to say that the appeal to realize the unrealized value and pleasure of Anglo-Saxon folk music was a call to sacrifice the parts of oneself that existed beyond the confines of racial being; though it promised a kind of pleasure in being reduced to a single thing, it never promised liberation. This new imaginary white subject was 'new' insofar as it never existed. But it was modeled on the imagined experience of listening to music in a distant past when there was never even a desire to be more than a member of one's ethnic group. Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon folk music chair did not offer to revolutionize existing scholarship on Anglo-American balladry taking place within English and social science departments. Instead, it simply offered a vocabulary for turning the intrinsic value of the folk tune into surplus value that would in turn, make possible a new mode of listening to this already-collected body of folk music that would excise the extraneous elements of identity that proliferated within industrial modernity. The enjoyment of listening to folk music was commensurate with the pleasure of experiencing white racial being as a totalizing aesthetic experience.

In doing so, white identity would ostensibly no longer rely on the survival of the cluster of symbolic rights and privileges to coerce recognition from others. White supremacy would, in other words, be composed differently than it had been under previous regimes of colonial domination and chattel race slavery. As Saidiya Hartman demonstrates, white identity under slavery relied on defining itself in terms of the right to directly own, use, and derive pleasure from racialized bodies.[283] Sylvia Wynter similarly makes the case that the paternalistic symbolic order of the slave economy gave whiteness a definitional authority that shielded it from having to define itself.[284] If white supremacy insists upon its own transcendence of historical

[283] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[284] Sylvia Wynter, "Sambos and Minstrels." *Social Text* no. 1 (Winter, 1979): 149-156.

contingencies, this is because it has a purely symbolic existence that only exists insofar as it is recognized as such by others.

This places white racial identity in a fundamentally different existential category than blackness. As Fred Moten puts it in his object-oriented analysis of blackness, black identity can be understood as an effect of the "resistance of the [enslaved] object" and a reflexive and sustained "objection to subjection" by white symbolic authority.[285] Black identity, like black music, is anchored to the reverberating (im)materiality of the scream of human property being cut, branded, and otherwise marked by its racialized Other. In this sense, blackness as a category foregrounds the violence of value and being made into a racial subject whereas the whiteness of American white supremacy blurs the line between subjectivity and sovereignty by desiring an object to value and enjoy as a vehicle for becoming a deindividuated racial subject. Though folk music was an object without the reflexive tendency to resist subjection, it was also unable to perform recognition of its owners' desires. It gave whiteness in the accumulation of value that could never be spent. The indifference to the financial realities of the Great Depression thus signified a fundamental incoherence in the imaginary register of 'racial integrity.' It met the biraciality of the post-Reconstruction symbolic order with a fantasy of wealth without expenditure, or enjoyment without concern for the moment after.

Against the rhetoric that Anglo-Saxon folk music could help manufacture a form of white supremacy that never had to concern itself with blackness was the reality that it could only imagine the pleasure of being racialized by music in reference to a sexualized fantasy of collective black musical ecstasy. Although Powell officially took the position that authentic black music did not exist, his more elaborate discussion of black music often reveals a deep sense of envious fascination towards blackness and black spirituality. In a 1920 interview, Powell took the unusual position of undermining the authenticity of Negro spirituals by suggesting that that the

[285] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 13.

'real' source of black music was best preserved in the rhetorical delivery of black pastors as they had the capacity to induce African American worshippers into a kind of collective racialized ecstasy of which white Americans had no counterpart.

To support this position, he told the interviewer of a formative encounter he had at the age of eight or nine with "real Negro music" while attending a black revival meeting in secret. After describing his relationship with his unnamed black mammy who would sing to him such that he "even reached the point where [he] could reproduce certain savage intervals that are foreign to the civilized ear," he explains that he once asked her to bring him to a revival meeting which whites were barred from prompting her to turn "threaten me with all kinds of spiritual torment if I dared to go." Unperturbed, he blackened his face with dirt "to cover [his] white innocence" and secretly attended a meeting one night featuring a popular preacher. Young Powell was utterly captivated by the rhetorical delivery of the preacher, which he believed represented the real black musical object:

> The first thing I noticed peculiar in his delivery was the difference of his inflection whenever he came to the name of the Savior. And as his speech went on he developed this inflection with a more and more elaborate musical figure. Finally it became a great and frenzied elaboration, and to its accompaniment his hearers burst into a wailing that knew no occidental key, no occidental figuration. It was pure savage music, intensely emotional, intensely frenzied.[286]

Black music was something both forbidden and boundlessly exuberant, and well-bred whites like himself were utterly forbidden from knowing this racializing ecstasy for themselves.

As Powell devoted himself to accumulating a body of music that could restore *jouissance* to whiteness, he often placed the blame on white Americans for severing themselves from their musical birthright. In an essay titled "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music," Powell explains that after Puritans came to power, the musical merriment of Merrie England:

> … was stripped from the land. Everything which was savored in the least of beauty for beauty's sake and in most cases all decoration, however innocent, was obliterated… And so it is as if one of the magic new silencers had been established everywhere: no

[286] "John Powell on Negro Music." *Musical Courier* Vol. 80 (Issue 6, Feb. 5, 1920): 26.

> longer did the village green ring with laughter and merriment; no Maypole could be set up with pagan rites… no lads and lassies do their courting to the delicate strains of "Newcastle." To all intents and purposes, England had become dumb and silent.[287]

Notably, Powell blames whites themselves for their inability to experience the kind of collective racialized religious ecstasy he first encountered at the African American revivalist meeting in his youth. Powell insisted that the age of Anglo-Saxon folk music that extended before this self-inflicted castration could restore the ability to experience racial *jouissance* at an instinctive and unconscious level. As he put it in "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music," "if you have a drop of English blood in your veins, [Anglo-Saxon folk music] will give you a thrill nothing else can give: some deep racial memory will stir."[288]

The UVA folk chair was officially founded when Murray Boocock sent UVA president Lloyd Newcomb the second of two $250 checks for the folk chair on behalf of his wife on October 14th, 1935. In the letter accompanying the check he sent to Newcomb, Boocock simply wrote "I congratulate you on the preservation of these valuable traditions of our Anglo Saxon people."[289] As Boocock's reference to the value of the traditions the folk chair would preserve seems to recognize, it was no longer enough to simply manage the sexuality and sociability of whites; whiteness had to be reappraised. The financial reality of the Great Depression was but one symptom of the overcommitment to market principles over the symbolic system that recognized the value and pleasure of white supremacy. Another symptom was the inability of whites under market modernity to experience *jouissance* after listening to the music of their race as African Americans ostensibly could. The Anglo-Saxon folk chair promised to restore racial integrity to the United States by teaching whites to reimagine the history of white American identity, love their race, and claim their ancestral inheritances by simply learning to appreciate Anglo-American folk tunes.

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[287] John Powell, "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music." *Musical Courier*, 6.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Correspondence from Murray Boocock to John Lloyd Newcomb, October 14th, 1935. Papers of the President, Accession # RG-2/1/2.491 subseries II, Box 17. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

The Boococks were a prominent family of socialites who lived in Keswick, a wealthy unincorporated community in the mountains just outside Charlottesville, and were locally famous for their extravagant parties.[290] They were locally and regionally well connected, having moved to the area from Brooklyn in 1894 at a time when other wealthy families from Richmond, Washington, and other cities in the Northeast settled the area by buying up old plantations and turning them into horse and cattle farms.[291] They had purchased a plantation from descendents of Merriweather Lewis and erected a sprawling, extravagant estate they named Castalia. Mrs. Boocock was the President of the Virginia chapter of the Women's National Farm and Garden Association and was currently serving as the national committee chairwoman of the Virginia Republican Party, while her husband was once the president of the Keswick Hunt Club and the couple often hosted parties after fox hunts. In the letter accompanying the check he sent to Newcomb, Boocock simply wrote "I congratulate you on the preservation of these valuable traditions of our Anglo Saxon people."[292]

In distinction to the UNC Institute of Folk Music, the UVA folk chair campaign emphasized the preservation of valuable folk objects over the development of an American classical canon. It also explicitly rejected Cecil Sharp's mountain thesis by privileging the descendents of the landed gentry as the true carriers of the Anglo-Saxon folk tradition. This class happened to comprise the philanthropists whom Powell now relied on for donations, and his ability to fund the chair rested on stoking the desire of wealthy whites to ground the value of

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[290] To give an example of their wealth and social connections, it was reported that a thief had stolen $30,000 worth of "jewelry, toiletries, and articles of clothing" during a party they hosted in April of 1924. The jewels were reportedly the property of Lady Jane Williams-Taylor, the wife of the governor of the Bank of Montreal, who was in town celebrating the 30th anniversary of the purchase of the Boococks' estate. "Detective Seeks Thieves: House Party at 'Castalia,' Near Keswick, Shocked by $30,000 Theft." *Virginia Star*, May 1, 1924, 9.

[291] See Edward Campbell Mead, *Historic Homes of the Southwest Mountains, Virginia* (Bibliolife, 2011 (1899)).

[292] Correspondence from Murray Boocock to John Lloyd Newcomb, October 14th, 1935. Papers of the President, Accession # RG-2 Subseries II, Box 17. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

their pedigree within cultural objects that were simultaneously extrinsic to themselves and an inalienable inheritance right.

At the same time, Powell's references to black music often reveal a sense of fascination towards blackness and black spirituality. In a 1920 interview, Powell argued that spirituals were not authentic black music while taking the unusual position that the 'real' source of black music was the rhetorical delivery of black pastors, as it had the capacity to impart African Americans with an ecstatic aesthetic experience that white Americans lacked for themselves. To make this point, he tells of a formative encounter he had at the age of eight or nine with "real Negro music" while attending a black revival meeting in secret. After describing his relationship with his unnamed black mammy who would sing to him such that he "even reached the point where [he] could reproduce certain savage intervals that are foreign to the civilized ear," he explains that he once asked her to bring him to a revival meeting which whites were barred from prompting her to turn "threaten me with all kinds of spiritual torment if I dared to go." Unperturbed, he blackened his face with dirt "to cover [his] white innocence" and secretly attended a meeting one night featuring a popular preacher. Young Powell was utterly captivated by the rhetorical delivery of the preacher, which he believed represented the real black musical object:

> The first thing I noticed peculiar in his delivery was the difference of his inflection whenever he came to the name of the Savior. And as his speech went on he developed this inflection with a more and more elaborate musical figure. Finally it became a great and frenzied elaboration, and to its accompaniment his hearers burst into a wailing that knew no occidental key, no occidental figuration. It was pure savage music, intensely emotional, intensely frenzied.[293]

In this passage, Powell presents black music as something both forbidden and boundlessly exuberant, which was an experience well-bred whites like himself were utterly denied.

Though Powell grew to both resent and envy African Americans for their unregulable musical *jouissance*, he also blamed white Americans for severing themselves from their musical

[293] "John Powell on Negro Music." *Musical Courier* Vol. 80 (Issue 6, Feb. 5, 1920): 26.

birthright. In “Virginia Finds Her Folk Music,” Powell explains that after Puritans came to power, the musical merriment of Merrie England :

> … was stripped from the land. Everything which was savored in the least of beauty for beauty’s sake and in most cases all decoration, however innocent, was obliterated… And so it is as if one of the magic new silencers had been established everywhere: no longer did the village green ring with laughter and merriment; no Maypole could be set up with pagan rites… no lads and lassies do their courting to the delicate strains of “Newcastle.” To all intents and purposes, England had become dumb and silent.[294]

Powell had long been resentful about the sterility of white Christianity. As early as 1903 while he was studying in Vienna, he occasionally disturbed his mother with letters propounding eccentric interpretations of Biblical principles. On March 7, 1903, he wrote to her explaining that he had decided to reject the notion of the Trinity because “the formula ‘Three persons in one God’ discloses the absurdity of this idea, for it makes a distinction between person & God” and that he did not believe in “the idea of God as a person… endowed with omnipresence, omnipotence & omniscience.” After stating that this “robs man of his rightful inheritance of Godship; gives him a stone for the Spiritual bread of the Communion,” he asserted his belief that “God is not a person, as we are, not an individual, but is an Existence, that <u>can</u> all things, <u>is</u> all things (i.e. is omnipresent), <u>know</u> all things & <u>loves</u> all things.”[295] When his mother wrote back in distress, he defended himself by saying that he was “going direct to God & his word for information instead of, as is often the case, stupid sensual priests & traditional superstition.”[296] It appears as if Powell would eventually associate folk music with the kind of racialized religious ecstasy he first encountered at the revivalist meeting in his youth, presenting it as an object that could allow American whites to one day claim the “rightful inheritance of Godship” they had been denied.

This lack of access to racializing musical *jouissance* was the driving force behind Powell’s notion ‘racial integrity,’ though it only took on an explicitly musical-aesthetic quality

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[294] John Powell, “Virginia Finds Her Folk Music.” *Musical Courier*, 6.
[295] John Powell Letter Transcriptions, 2002, Accession #7284-j, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va, 73-74.
[296] Ibid., 82.

during the folk music campaign. There has always been an affective quality to Powell's writings on Anglo-Saxon whiteness; racial identity for Powell was rooted in a feeling of ecstatic recognition when faced with objects belonging to one's race. Powell made the affective dimensions of racial integrity especially clear in an essay titled "The Breach in Dike" published in response to the first successful judicial challenge to the Racial Integrity Act of 1924. Comparing his generation to the one whose worldview was shaped by witnessing the "horrors of the Reconstruction period" and paralyzed by "the natural pseudo-philanthropic… manifested in the so-called broad-mindedness of the 'New South,'" Powell writes:

> With sorrow and pained surprise they have been forced to recognize the fallacies in the opinions of their predecessors… Actuated by such convictions and emotions, it is not surprising that the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America succeeded in getting through the General Assembly of Virginia their bill for the preservation of racial integrity…[297]

Powell came to believe that the failure of the racial integrity campaign's legislative agenda was due to the fact that the majority white Anglo-Saxons did not have this necessary affective identification with their race. The folk music campaign was a corrective that sought to teach white Americans to regard the Anglo-Saxon folk tune as an objectification of their racial supremacy and to experience its sound with the same ecstasy that he ostensibly witnessed among African Americans in his youth. And in the process, he appropriated Cecil Sharp's racial theories while rejecting the significance of the geographic isolation of poor rural mountaineers in preserving this intangible store of racial value. Instead, Powell emphasized the literary over oral transmission of white folk music which privileged members of the philanthropic class who could trace their lineage to the settlement of British America and acquired a British cultural education. Since the folk song itself held intrinsic value, it did not matter whether one first encountered it

[297] Powell, *The Breach in the Dike*, 2-3.

through an oral tradition or within a songbook. The value of gold was the same whether mined from an ore vein in the mountains or stored in a vault.

Though Powell had already rejected Sharp's mountain thesis as early as the appropriations hearing in November of 1931, his most explicit repudiation of Sharp's theory was in an article titled "In the Lowlands Low," which incidentally was the first article published in the first volume of the *Southern Folklore Quarterly*.[298] Powell references Sharp's influence on American folklore studies on the first page when he writes that "in his footsteps through the mountains have followed other devoted enthusiasts who from year to year garner wealth to swell the precious hoard" before stating that "this result seems to me calamitous."[299] According to Powell, Sharp had "put a false emphasis on externals" and failed to recognize the value of the tune itself in drawing Anglo-Saxon whites "together into a cultural stream which has been sweeping our people along for thousands of years."[300] Yet for all his emphasis on this deindividuating effect of the folk object, Powell primarily framed his criticism towards Sharp through the rhetoric of personal grievance:

> My own protest is like this: I am a folk musician. Why must I be excluded because I was born far from the mountain fastnesses, because I can read and write, because I have had a musical education? When I compare variants of tunes learned in childhood with those of members of my family not musically educated, I find that they have not been twisted into an 'artified' shape, but have remained pure and undefiled. Consequently I feel qualified to speak up for the whole class of people who are being forgotten, perhaps suppressed.[301]

On the one hand, this rhetoric of grievance over being alienated from the folk stream due to his urban elite upbringing effectively mirrors the alienation of the philanthropist class whom he depended on for funding the folk chair. At the same time, it speaks to the deeply subjective

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[298] Powell, "In the Lowlands Low," *Southern Folklor Quarterly* Vol. 1 (No. 1, March 1937): 1-12.
[299] Ibid., 1.
[300] Ibid., 2.
[301] Ibid., 2.

quality of Powell's understanding of 'racial integrity' and its function as a way of asserting the integrity of Powell's own racial identity.

This lack of a coherent racial identity may have its roots in another formative and forbidden experience which involved racial masking. In 1906 while studying piano with Theodor Leschetizky in Vienna after graduating from the University of Virginia, Powell wrote to his sister about his trouble finding a gym in Vienna, as they were all segregated by race and there were no clubs for Anglo-Saxons. After he was initially rejected from the Aryan gym, he spent several days unsuccessfully searching for a gym that would take him. He eventually stumbled upon the *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft* which only accepted members who were ethnically Saxon, but its physical director advised him to lie his way in. Upon returning the next day:

> When they asked if I were [sic] German I said that I was born in America but was of Anglo-Saxon extraction. I put perhaps an unnecessarily strong accent on the 'Saxon' & as the officer evidently didn't know the difference between Anglo-Saxons & any other kind of Saxons, they let me in. I went today for my first exercise & felt all the time like a Sheep in Wolf's Clothing. Do you think I am very wicked?[302]

Similarly to his forbidden encounter with black oratory, his experience with racial passing in the *Turnerschaft* involved both guilt over racial passing, envy over a racial experience denied to him, and anxiety over the lack of a corresponding racializing affect for Anglo-Saxon Americans. In this regard, an anxiety about his own lack of spiritual and racial integrity as a white Christian Virginian underscored his obsession with racial integrity and shaped his campaign to ground Anglo-Saxon American racial identity within the Anglo-Saxon folk musical object.

Antonio Viego contends that academic racism of the early 20th century was articulated through a theory of subjectivity derived from ego psychology that posited that it was possible to achieve fully-knowable, whole racial subjectivity.[303] The humanities and social sciences posited that racial subjects were ontologically whole, and thus manageable and controllable insofar as

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[302] Correspondence from John Powell to Elizabeth Powell Brockenbrough, Feb. 12, 1906. John Powell Letter Transcriptions, 2002, Accession #7284-j, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va, 178.
[303] Antonio Viego, *Dead Subjects: Toward a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies* (Duke University Press, 2007).

they were able to be rendered as fully-accountable 'dead subjects.' In the midst of this academic paradigmatic upheaval that turned southern research universities like the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina into research engines committed to managing white supremacy in the Jim Crow South through eugenics and other disciplines that attempted to control racial difference by rendering it fully knowable, Powell saw an opportunity to restore the subjective lack to whiteness that he and other elites experienced in the post-Reconstruction South.[304]

In his Rice Institute lecture from 1924, "Music and the Nation," Powell situated his work in the context of several compounding lacks.

> We are not a people of homogeneous blood, not even approximately so; we do not possess common traditions and customs; we do not speak a common language; we do not react, mentally or emotionally, in the same way to certain great fundamental facts and challenges of life. And as we are not a nation, we cannot hope to have a national art in any field. We cannot hope to have even a truly national government.[305]

Powell's proposed solution to all of these lacks was "the engrafting of our culture upon the fundamental Anglo-Saxon root" and creating an American musical idiom based on Anglo-Saxon folk songs.[306] The result, he would suggest time and time again in his writings, would be an experience of *jouissance*, or an abundance of pleasure that could only be achieved by removing those within American society that compromised its integral wholeness.

1921 and 1938: Two Compositions

Powell's compositional aesthetic transformed as he was in the midst of his academic Anglo-Saxon folk chair campaign, reflecting his developing understanding of the intrinsic value and racializing power of the folk music object itself. Powell treated musical themes

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[304] J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*: *Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
[305] Powell, "Music and the Nation," 129.
[306] Ibid., 145.

impressionistically in earlier works such as *Rhapsody nègre* (1918) and the Overture "In Old Virginia" (1921) as if they represented the composer's subjective relationship to racial difference. Lamar Stringfield remarked as such about *Rhapsody nègre* in "America and Her Music" as he distinguished it from Dvorak's treatment of Negro melodies in his New World Symphony. Powell, he explained, did not claim to be using authentic black spirituals, but rather "created it out of his impression of Negro characteristics… Mr. Powell did not attempt to write typical Negro music, but he succeeded in making a masterful contribution to American musical literature based on it."[307] Similarly, Powell included references to "Dixie," the minstrel tune "Cl'ar the Kitchen, Old Folks, Young Folks," and a second 'Negro melody' he does not identify but claims to have learned from his mammy when he was a child in his Overture "In Old Virginia" which was written to commemorate the University of Virginia Centennial in 1921. This work stands out among Powell's output for juxtaposing both black and white musical signifiers, and this relates to the programmatic dimensions of the work. As his program notes state, the piece attempts to "convey an impression of the spirit of the south just prior to the Civil War" -- a south "unaffected, chivalrous, romantic, trembling on the verge of cataclysm, but keeping up its head and dancing gaily toward the approaching disaster in the traditional aristocratic manner."[308]

"In Old Virginia" opens with a declaration of the first bar of "Dixie" in the trumpets in B major, followed by ascending arpeggios in the harp oscillating between b diminished and d minor triads (Image 2). Out of this hazy texture emerges a lilting woodwind melody in d minor. This melody gets interrupted several times by strains of "Dixie." Powell in this regard treats "Dixie" like a premonition that returns again and again only to be ignored as the orchestra engages in bucolic gaiety. When the dance tune "Cl'ar the Kitchen, Old Folks, Young Folks" finally appears in full, it is as if it does so in blissful ignorance of the impending war (Image 3). These two themes, "Dixie" and "Cl'ar the Kitchen," relate to one another intervallically as the

[307] Lamar Stringfield, "America and Her Music," 28.
[308] Program notes reproduced in "A John Powell Novelty, Aeolian Hall, Dec. 4." *Musical Observer* Vol. 21 (January, 1922): 54.

both begin with a descending minor third, such that it becomes possible for an initial descending third to continue in either direction. The two melodies are indeed layered upon one another by the end of the piece, such that the glorious war cry of “Dixie” both undermines and is undermined by the gaiety of “Cl’ar the Kitchen” (Image 4). Based on the program notes, it seems that the reference to this minstrel tune represents an innocent white subjectivity able to indulge in playful race-crossing unburdened by post-Reconstruction shame. Though the presence of “Dixie” might initially seem like a straightforward declaration of southern pride, its treatment suggests that it is rather a more ambivalent, even mournful, representation of a fractured white postbellum subjectivity.

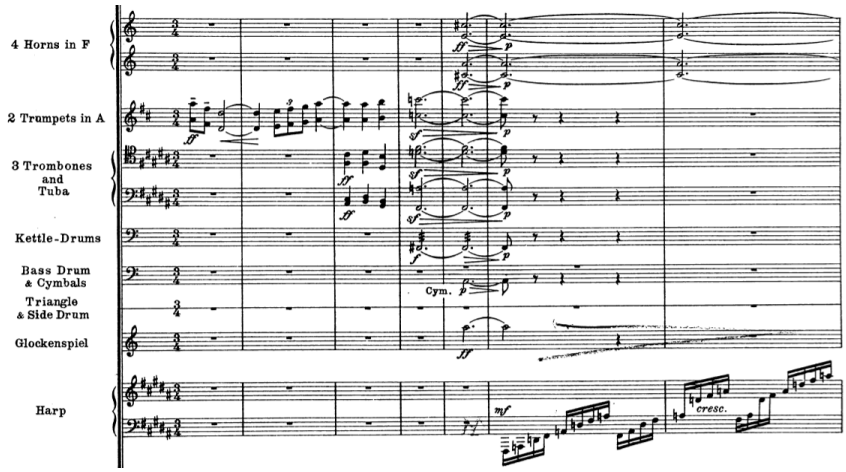

Figure 2 - Trumpets quoting “Dixie” at the opening of “In Old Virginia.”

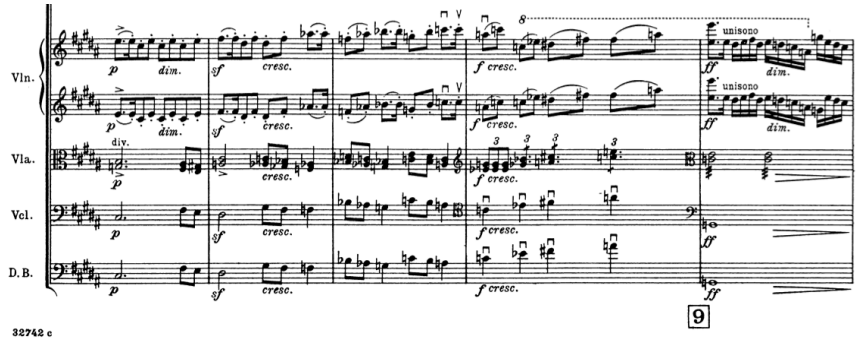

Figure 3 - “Cl’ar the Kitchen” in the violins and viola, four measures before rehearsal marker 9.

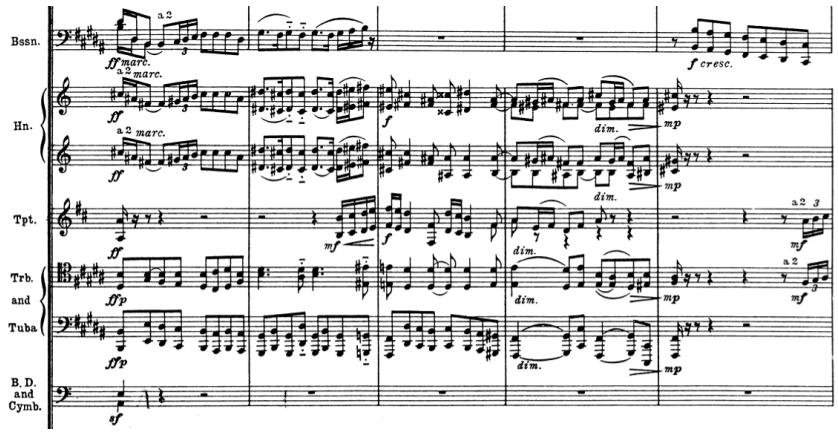

Figure 4 - “Dixie” inflected with the rhythmic motive from “Cl’ar the Kitchen” in the horns, 7 measures before rehearsal marker 29.

By the early 1930s, however, Powell began rejecting such impressionistic and subjective treatment of melodic material. He instead began attempting to preserve the purity of the white folk object. He outlined these new aesthetic principles in the Foreword to *Five Virginian Folk Songs* (1938):

> A melody, enduringly to grip and sway the human emotions, must – perforce – possess a high degree of melodic significance and beauty; and, from the purely melodic viewpoint, would tend to be more vigorous, more poignant and more highly organized than tunes invented in a period in which music relied largely upon polyphonic interest, harmonic color and the glamour of modulation and enharmonic change. The tunes of the folk-singer come to us from the pre-harmonic period and their persistence through the centuries in the mouth and heart of the folk indicates their possession of the special excellencies of that period.[309]

He goes on to suggest that intrinsic harmonic implications, or lack thereof, of the melody is one of the main distinctions between the vacuous tunes of Tin Pan Alley and the rich tunes of the Anglo-Saxon folk tradition. Powell explains that he strove to be as harmonically unobtrusive as

[309] John Powell, *Five Virginian Folk Songs* op. 34 (New York: J. Fischer & Bro, 1938).

possible in his setting of the tunes stating “I have eschewed modulation, chromaticism, altered intervals and inconsequential dissonances as antipathetic to the diatonic basis of the melodies.” Powell thus strove to rid his settings of subjectivity, making the role of the composer more akin to a jeweler tastefully designing ornaments that preserved the integrity of mined musical gems rather than an interpreter of a tune’s hermeneutic content. As the musical-aesthetic value of the tunes was self-evident, it was only necessary for the well-trained composer to recognize its intrinsic beauty. As he would explain in a course on folk music he gave in the summer of 1934 through the UVA Extension Division, “my purpose in supplying harmonic settings to these songs was not to cover flaws or lack of interest in the melodies, but rather to interpret them to ears unaccustomed to listening to tunes as sheer melody. I am so strongly aware of their intrinsic value that I am convinced they can stand on their own feet without the condiments of ‘modern’ cleverness and chicanery.”[310]

The setting of the song “Pretty Sally,” which was collected by the UVA folk chair Winston Wilkson, gives some insight into what Powell meant by this (Figure 4). The piano primarily plays a sparse accompaniment that never exceeds three voices sounding simultaneously. Its primary function appears to be clarifying the phrase structure of the melody by strengthening cadences. It only moves in parallel motion on melodically-important notes of the vocal line while supporting vocal embellishments by holding onto longer note values. The only original melodic material appears in the first measure and to bridge stanzas, and even then the original material clarifies the structure of the melody in some way. The right hand in the first bar spells outlines the notes A-B-G#-A, an inversion of the A-G#-(A)-B-A in the melody in the following measure. Similarly, right hand in second bar of the bridge after the first verse spells out E-D-E-F#-E, which traces the contour of the second phrase of the vocal line (C#-B-C#-D-E), but up a minor third as if harmonizing with it. In the commentary preceding the setting, Powell remarks that “the melody is

[310] John Powell, “Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon Folk Music,” n.d. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Box 27, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

remarkable for the beauty and plasticity of its line, its graceful and eloquent turn of phrase and its metrical variety. In smoothness and finish of contour and in the tenderness of its pathos, it is unexcelled among Virginian folk-tunes." This guides the listener or performer to evaluate his composerly treatment of this remarkable melody in terms of whether he successfully captured these elements.

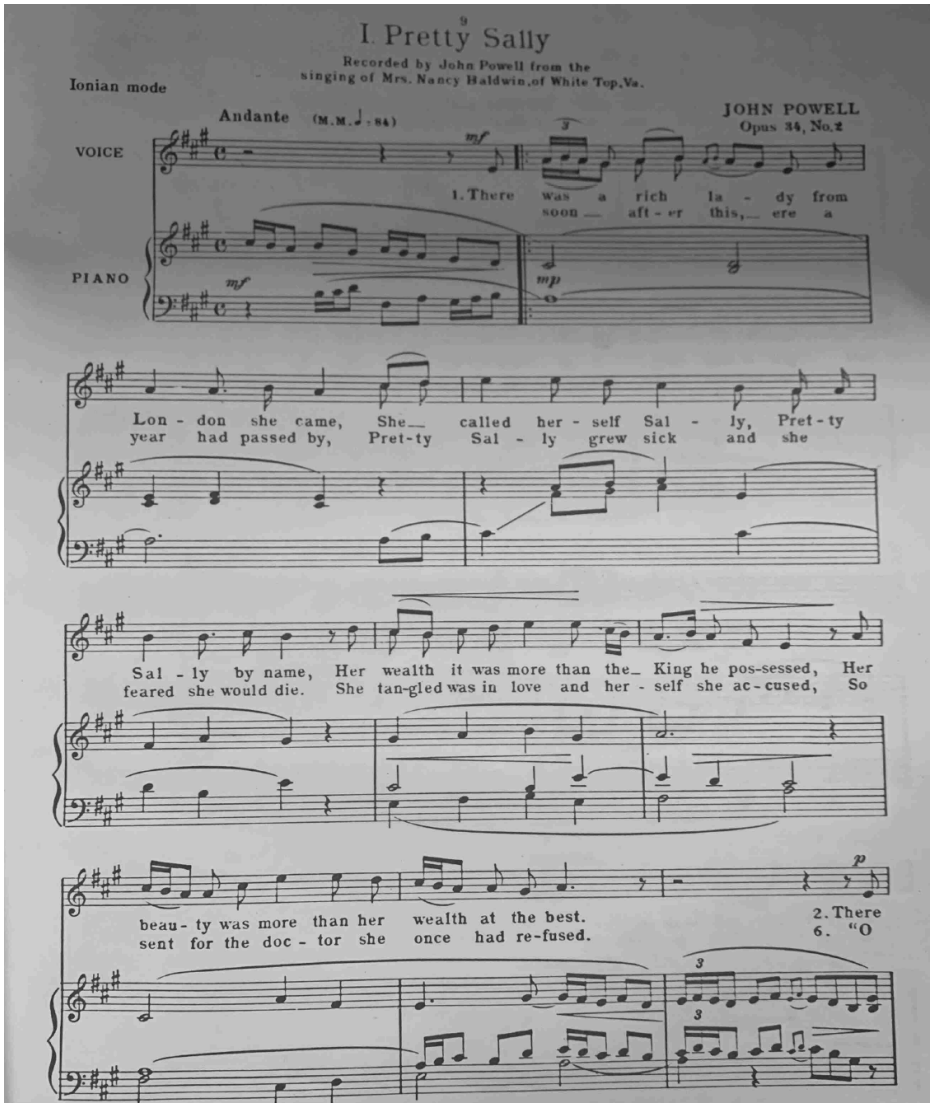

Figure 5 - John Powell's setting of "Pretty Sally" in *Five Virginian Folk Songs*.

By avoiding hermeneutic interpretation in setting music that he believed had the power to manifest a white subjectivity, Powell makes the assertion that the tune itself has the power to

attach white listeners and performers to an ancient stream of Anglo-Saxon folk consciousness if properly appreciated. In his preceding remarks, he suggests that the melody "has quite a marked Scandinavian flavour." Far from being a passing aside, if this were true, it would date the melody to the occupation of the British Isles in the centuries before the Norman invasion in 1066. This tune, then, not only attaches white Virginians to their British heritage. It also would attach their British ancestors to their Nordic viking ancestors, reconciling the competing white nationalist camps of Nordicists and Anglo-Saxonists. Through the power of suggestion and authority, this simple setting of a simple tune offered white Virginians a mythic and coherent white whole to attach to, allowing them to imagine themselves as Vikings and Anglo-Saxons instead of the fractured modern subjects they were.

Conclusion - Mere Musician-Enthusiasts

As Powell's folk-based ideology became increasingly radical and reactionary, he found himself alienating some of his previous supporters. Most significantly, Arthur Kyle Davis, who attended the folk chair budgetary hearing in 1931 in support, began actively working against the establishment of the chair. Beyond the feelings of animosity due to the personal affront Powell levied against him and his work in "Virginia Finds Her Folk Music," Davis felt that Powell, Buchanan, and Stringfield's approach to folk music differed too significantly from existing academic paradigms for folklore.

Most scholarly accounts of the institutionalization of folklore and folk-music studies in the United States focus on figures associated with the American Folklore Society, which was established in 1888. Karl Miller explains that this organization initially had two main objectives - professionalizing the field by "distinguishing serious scholars from untrained collectors" and articulating "an interdisciplinary common ground between its anthropology and literary studies

members."[311] Miller argues that this foundational scholarship was premised on a notion of an isolated folk whose separation from mainstream society made them suitable to contribute to academic theories about race, evolution, art, and culture. Though there was substantial conceptual common ground between the professional folklorists and the renegade amateur collectors centered around Powell, they were able to couch their racial and evolutionary theories behind a veneer of dispassionate scientific inquiry.

David Harker's cleverly-titled *Fakesong* connects the foundational work of American philologist Francis James Child on collecting and cataloguing English ballads to assumptions that underpinned the work of bourgeoise British folklorists from the first half of the 19th century who were committed to distinguishing the 'civilized' literary culture that flourished in England since the 16th-century and the 'pre-civilized' culture of the peasant class. Harker explains that Child's scholarship on ballads was especially focused on situating the scholar as an expert as distinguishing the 'true ballad' from popular poetry. Describing the work of 'post-Child academics' in the United States, Harker explains that they "wanted to present 'ballads' as a distinct 'formal literary type' within bourgeois 'Poetry' and 'Literature.'"[312] George Lyman Kittredge eulogized Child by exalting his "faculty" at understanding "the 'popular' genius" behind the composition of ballads and intuiting "the traits that characterize oral literature wherever and in whatever degree they exist."[313] Another post-Child ballad scholar Francis Gummere would define "'the true ballad critic' who could recognize 'alien stuff' and 'traditional material' and would define the ballad in social-Darwinist terms as being the product of 'a clearly-defined curve of evolution in the life-history of literary forms in English.'"[314] In this sense, the substance of Powell and his cohort's rhetoric about ballads was drawn from dominant paradigms in folklore studies.

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[311] Karl Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 87.
[312] David Harker, *Fakesong: The Manufacture of British Folksong 1700 to the Present Day* (Open University Press, 1985), 123.
[313] George Kittredge, "Francis James Child." In Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (New York, 1965). Cited in Harker, *Fakesong*, 122.
[314] David Harker, *Fakesong,* 122-124.

It was rather Powell's indifference towards professional standards of scholarship that made him the target of an academic turf war.

After Powell successfully campaigned to independently raise half of the $5,000 required, Arthur Kyle Davis sent John Lloyd Newcomb a sixteen-point memorandum expressing strong opposition and his feelings of betrayal.[315] This letter, dated December 8, 1934, contains vague references to interpersonal animus. Despite prefacing the memorandum with a claim that he "left out items or phrases that seemed too personal," Davis's finely honed scholarly rhetoric could not mask his indignation. The second point explains vaguely that his change of heart was due to Powell betraying a promise he made earlier to "cooperate and work harmoniously" with his organization. The eighth point is an equally ambiguous assertion that "it would be a mistake to introduce into a university 'happy family' a faction sure to make trouble in this University and from various groups outside it." It seems as if Davis believed that Powell's reputation spoke for itself and was indignant that Newcomb would even consider incorporating the research chair.

More tangibly, Davis explains that the folk chair would compete internally with the Virginia Folk-Lore Society and questions why the University would need a second collection of folk ballads, writing that it would be "a sort of disloyalty to itself as well as ingratitude, even treachery" were the University to incorporate the folk chair. Addressing Powell's most compelling justification for the position, he explains that the Virginia Folk-Lore Society's narrow attention to the lyrics of Anglo-American ballads over the music does not compromise the value of its collection and suggests that he could always "co-opt the necessary technical musical ability" were it to become necessary to account for the musical elements of ballads. He aligns himself with an older, professional class of academic folklorists who specialized in music including "Professors Child and Kittredge at Harvard, Lomax at Texas, Beckwith at Vassar, Smith at South Carolina, [and] Brown at Duke," insisting that "not one of these is really a musician." In fact,

[315] "Memorandum" Papers of the president, Subseries II, Box 17, Accession # RG-2/1/2.491 subseries II, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

being trained literary scholars rather than trained musicians is the source of their integrity. Such a position should be filled by a “musician-scholar or musicologist, by training and temperament inclined to university standards of accuracy, reasonableness, and scholarly cooperation” and not “a musician-enthusiast” who is, in an explicit jab at both Powell and Wilkinson, “a concert performer on piano or violin, without broad university training or scholarly background.” At stake was the academic integrity and credibility of the University. Powell, he explains “has consistently misunderstood and misrepresented the importance of ballad and folk-song study” and insists that “there is practically no precedent for academic exaltation of folk music apart from both general music and general literature.”

Writing on a Musician’s Club of Richmond letter heading, Powell sent Newcomb a ten-point memorandum explaining why the University of Virginia should pledge the remaining $2,500 to create the position. Compared to Davis’s memorandum which appealed to professional standards, nearly all ten points on this document either emphasize the cultural value of what the chair would collect or reassure Newcomb about the costs associated with the venture. Some points equate the two forms of value, such as the eighth point which states that “a decision either way on this question will cost $2,500” because refusing to pledge the remaining costs would likely mean forfeiting the amount that was already pledged, whereas pledging the remaining amount would mean “buying $5,000.00 worth of rare material for half that amount of money.” The final point of this memorandum equivocates various forms of value, stating “when millions of dollars are being spent in Virginia on research and reconstruction and the cataloguing of art treasures, it seems more than appropriate that the University should have a small part in the conservation of a portion of our spiritual wealth, which will, as certainly as the solid objects of brick and mortar, prove to be a source of pride and material profit.”

After considering both letters, Newcomb postponed filling the position until it could be entirely funded by private donations. After the remaining $2,500 was pledged by private donors and a job offer was sent to Winston Wilkinson just over a year later, Davis sent Newcomb

another letter expressing his disappointment while once again contrasting Powell's reactionary approach to folk music and his own distinguished professional career.[316] Some of his criticism demonstrates "the unsoundness of Mr. Powell's criticism," such as his opposition to having the folk chair make phonograph recordings of the tunes he would collect. He mentions that the National Committee on Folk-Song had just that year made an official statement to "encourage, in every way possible, the objective recording of folk-songs either on cylinders or disks in order to insure both accuracy and permanent preservation of the present available folk-song material." Calling Powell's position "quite untenable and out of line with the best informed opinion, literary and musical, in this country and abroad," Davis firmly contrasts the professionalized field he was part of with the renegade cohort of 'mere musician-enthusiasts' who were eschewing professional standards in order to study folk music in an unscholarly way. He goes on to list his professional accomplishments that year, quipping that it seemed like "my work in this field is somewhat more highly regarded outside the state than my own University appears to regard it." The letter concludes by intimating that the official support the folk chair received had made him begin to question the values underlying his home institution:

> The issue really is, in my opinion, what sort of activities, what sort of methods, what sort of personalities it is the duty of a university to foster, and, more specifically, will this University give its official backing to those who have spent their time in un-just criticism of the established and nationally known activity in this field, long (since 1913) associated with the University though not officially a part of it? The subject cannot be cut in half by any such simple dichotomy as that once proposed by Solomon. Two overlapping and now necessarily competitiv folk agencies here could only mean infusion and strain, and would be a very dubious boon to folk-song study or to the University. It seems to me that I have the prior and the more legitimate claim - de facto and de jure - upon the University's loyalty and support.

[316] Correspondence from Arthur Kyle Davis to John Lloyd Newcomb Feb. 12, 1936. Papers of the president, Subseries II, Box 17, Accession # RG-2/1/2.491 subseries II, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

This letter demonstrates a distinction between a professional and amateur approach to folk music research, and his shock and disappointment articulates a discomfort with the integrity of the University of Virginia's mission statement.

Davis's fears of Newcomb's indifference to professional integrity were confirmed in the perfunctory reply he received the next day which ignored the substance of his letter.[317] It merely informed him of the terms of the job he had offered to Wilkinson, and explained the terms of it having been funded by a "gift of money from outside sources for the establishment of a Folk Music Fellowship for a two-year period and Mr. Wilkinson has been engaged as a research fellow under this Fellowship," all of which he surely already knew. It ends by condescendingly congratulating Davis on all his achievements he had spelled out the day before. It seems as if Newcomb had not only chosen to allow Powell and his donors to pay their way into a university post, but that he viewed Davis's criticism and appeal to the professional standards of folklore studies to be overdramatic. In spite of these protests, the position went to Winston Wilkinson as planned. According to the terms of employment Newcomb sent to Davis, Wilkinson would work seven hours a day for the next two years collecting, classifying, and annotating folk tunes, and this work was to be compiled and delivered to the University in material form by June 30, 1936.

Over the next two years, Winston Wilkinson engaged in fieldwork collecting folk songs from locals in and around Albemarle County. Davis's concerns about the methodological incoherence of a 'mere musician-enthusiast' like Wilkinson would be confirmed in the final product, a two-volume collection titled *The University of Virginia Collection of Folk-Music*.[318] Unlike the Virginia Folk-Lore Society's carefully-curated *Traditional Ballads of Virginia*, Wilkinson's two massive volumes contain no information about how he evaluated the integrity of the tunes he chose to include. Indeed, it includes tunes sung by collectors including Richard

[317] John Lloyd Newcomb to Arthur Kyle Davis, Feb. 2, 1936. Papers of the president, Subseries II, Box 17, Accession # RG-2/1/2.491, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.
[318] Wilkinson, Wilkinson. *Folk Music and Ballads Collected by Winston Wilkinson*. 1932. MSS 38-179 Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

Chase, the acting leader of UNC Institute of Folk Music following Stringfield's decision to focus on cultivating a state symphony instead of running an institute. And several of the songs including common nursery rhymes like "The Itsy Bitsy Spider" were attributed to John Powell, himself.[319]

One of these contributions by Powell in particular, an usual rendition of "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," stands out for its gruesome and unorthodox text while also gesturing towards some of the anxieties underlying racial integrity.

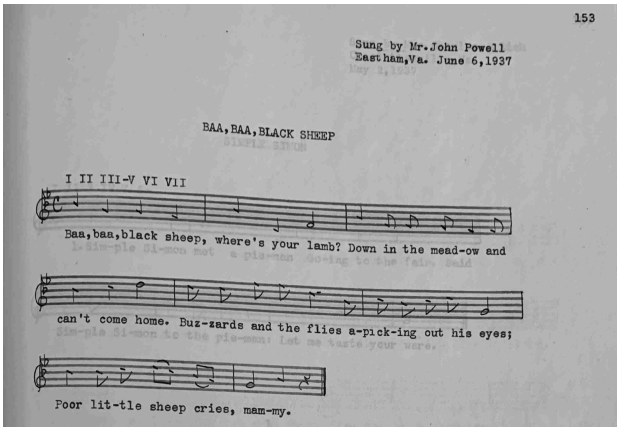

Image 2 - An aeolian-mode version of "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" provided by John Powell in the *UVA Collection of Folk Music, Vol. 2*

This song, usually titled "Bones" in other folk song collections, articulates many of the anxieties and ambivalences that Powell sought to resolve with his Anglo-Saxon folk song project. For one, its mere inclusion demonstrates how Powell's personal grievance about his own lack of folk authenticity shaped the project at the expense of professional academic standards. That a disavowed sense of shame underlying this position is further expressed in Powell's decision to locate himself in Eastham, an unincorporated community near Charlottesville where he had recently purchased an estate named 'Longways' in reference to lines formed in English folk

[319] Ibid. 105 and 135.

dancing, rather than in Richmond.[320] Its gorey lyrics and aeolian modality juxtaposed with the title of the common major-key nursery rhyme also seems to be designed to imply that this tune is a primitive relative of the more refined children's song. An Anglo-Saxon folk tune counterpart to the brutal versions of fairy tales collected by the Grimm brothers, this version of "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" similarly functions to root Anglo-Saxon cultural identity in a mythic pre-civilized past.

Wilkinson did not include any commentary of his own within the two volumes of the *University of Virginia Collection of Folk-Music*, instead yielding the authority of interpretation to Powell. In the Introduction, John Powell writes of two "myths" that this project worked to expose. Coining them "the Myth of Non-existence and the Myth of Mountain Music," he explains that the latter was especially "injurious to music in America." Anglo-Saxon folk music, Powell explains, is the common inheritance of all white Virginians. And he insists that "our folkmusic [sic] lives and flourishes in no one locality… It exists in the mountains, on the tide-washed shores, on the prairies, at the crossroads, in the villages, in the towns and cities and in the great metropolitan industrial and financial centers."[321] Wilkinson, undoubtedly through Powell's suggestion, undermined all 'scientific' methodological principles of professional folklore scholarship. He privileged tunes known by white southern aristocrats over the romanticized and isolated white folk of the mountains, and made no effort at reflecting upon or theorizing the significance of his work. Echoing Annabel Morris Buchanan's explosive reply to criticism against the Anglo-Saxon folk music movement in the *Musical Courier,* Powell rails against the "sense of almost apologetic self-consciousness attending the use of the word aristocrat." White folk music belonged to aristocrats, who were encouraged to wield its power to create a truly elite, psychologically and spiritually whole, white American identity and ensure its integrity into the future.

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[320] See Karen Adams, *"The Nonmusical Message Will Endure With It": The Changing Reputation and Legacy of John Powell (1882-1963)* Master's Thesis (University of Richmond, 2006), 58.
[321] Ibid., 11.

At the same time, the content of the song gestures towards a contradicting ontology for Anglo-Saxon white identity. If the folk song, as Powell often claimed, reflects the psychology of a race, this song articulates the existential uncertainty that haunts this campaign. The lost lamb of the song that is alive enough to call for its mother yet dead enough to be eaten by buzzards. This tells the truth disavowed by the music departments recruited into Powell's Anglo-Saxon folk music campaign. Anglo-Saxon white American identity indeed fatally lacked internal coherency and affective identification, and music departments helped navigate this reality without accounting for it.

Re-membering ‘White Spirituals’ in the White South

George Pullen Jackson, Donald Davidson, and the White Fugitive Imaginary

Introduction

> The poet – it is he who is the critical reader – is aware of the present, and present, now or past or future. For by experiencing the past along with the present he makes present the past, and masters it; and he is at the center of the experience out of which the future must come.
>
> - Allen Tate, “Preface to Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas,” xvii.

> The Southerners were incurable for Cato over the social conditions in which he historically lived. They looked at history as the concrete and temporal series – a series at all only because they required a straight line back into the past, for the series, such as it was, was very capricious, and could hardly boast of a natural logic… They knew no history for the sake of knowing it, but simply for the sake of contemplating it and seeing in it an image of themselves. And aware of the treachery of nature, as all agrarians are, they tended to like stories, very simple stories with a moral.
>
> - Allen Tate, “Remarks on the Southern Religion.”

> Of course we were not proposing to create any utopian & simple agrarian community… we were defending the one that existed in the South, such as it was.
>
> - Donald Davidson to Allen Tate, 3 October, 1945

From April 23-26th of 1952, Vanderbilt University staged five performances of a light folk opera titled *Singin’ Billy,* culminating twenty years of work by Vanderbilt faculty on the ‘white spirituals’ of the shape note hymn tradition following the publication of German professor George Pullen Jackson’s *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* in 1932. It was composed by music professor at the neighboring Peabody College and composer Charles Faulkner Bryan,

who had previously composed a *White Spiritual Symphony* and collaborated with Jackson on the collection *American Folk Music for High School* (1947).[322] Its libretto was by Vanderbilt English professor Donald Davidson who had only intensified his segregationist rhetoric in the years following his founding of the Vanderbilt Fugitive poets in the 1920s and the Southern Agrarians in the 1930s. Among the attendees of the nearly sold out run of the opera was Vanderbilt Chancellor Harvie Brascomb and the university's Board of Trust. Its libretto included essays by Vanderbilt faculty member Herschel Gower and PhD recipient Thomas Daniel Young several years before he would join the faculty at his alma mater and devote himself to writing about the "Vanderbilt Tradition" established by Davidson, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Allen Tate with the Agrarian manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* (1930).[323]

Singin' Billy is about WIliam 'Singin' Billy' Walker who established a self-sustaining circuit of singing schools across the South during the Second Great Awakening in the early 19th century until his death in 1875. These singing schools taught rural southerners to read music using a notation and solmization system inherited from New Englander missionaries in the late 18th century and worship God through communal singing. These singing schools grounded what the white spiritual group at Vanderbilt and elsewhere believed to be perhaps the only authentic folk tradition in the United States, serving as the precursor to the more-popular Negro spiritual tradition. Unlike many folklorists including those discussed in the previous chapter who based their understanding of folk authenticity upon oral transmission, the white spiritual cohort emphasized the written basis of southern hymnody as well as its reliance upon institutions such as singing schools as this allowed them to materially trace the roots of the spiritual to the culture of Elizabethan England as a counter to the necessary immateriality of those who identified its origins in Africa, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, or the spontaneous expression of suffering

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[322] Biographical information about Bryan is mostly drawn from Carolyn Livingston, *Charles Faulkner Bryan : His Life and Music* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003).
[323] Thomas Daniel Young and Mark Royden Winchell. 1991. *The Vanderbilt Tradition : Essays in Honor of Thomas Daniel Young*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

slaves. The white spiritual advocates, then, inverted many of the prevailing academic assumptions about folk cultural transmission in order to make the claim that the spiritual tradition was rural, Southern, literary, institutionally-backed, and foundationally white. Though some white spiritual advocates like Annabel Morris Buchanan in Virginia acknowledged that the Negro spiritual versions of white spiritual tunes were in many regards "an improvement" over the original,[324] Jackson and his colleagues made it clear that they owed a hitherto unacknowledged debt to the white spiritual and the forgotten rural while Southerners who kept the tradition alive in shape note singings up to the present day.

The significance of this claim lay in its figurative capacity and historical implications. It insisted on naming a cultural debt that the descendents of slaves owed to the descendents of slave owners. Further, calling attention to the relative obscurity of the white spiritual and the rapid disappearance of the institutions that preserved it allowed researchers to imagine poor rural whites as aggrieved victims of post-Reconstruction modernity. Though they reinterpreted the rural 'Southern uplands' as a region populated by whites too poor to own slaves, I contend in this chapter that this disavowal of the reality of slavery's existence in even the intensely class-stratified Appalachian South reveals much about the form, function, and fantasy of the white spiritual imaginary that held together a discourse network of conservative white Southern intellectuals.

Singin' Billy was a plain white surface against which it is possible to see the thin strands connecting an intellectual tradition at Vanderbilt that existed adjacent to the "Twelve Southerners" who contributed to *I'll Take My Stand.* Its colonial narrative of Walker establishing a singing school in a white rural settlement and creating a singing swarm of deindividuated worshippers, thus resolving all the social, political, and interpersonal conflicts plaguing the town, calls attention to the imaginary register of the white spiritual. I argue that foregrounding the fantasies that the white spiritual provoked can help provide new insight into not only Jackson's

[324] Annabel Morris Buchanan, Review of *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands.*

still-contentious white spiritual thesis, but also help us rethink the sometimes vexed relationship between Donald Davidson and the core group of Fugitive poets including Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and Robert Penn Warren who later organized the publication of *I'll Take My Stand*.

Further, I contend that thinking of the white spiritual as a functional object that within what I call a white fugitive fantasy and discourse lets us rethink its relationship to the black spiritual imaginary as an expression of black fugitivity which it undermines and disavows. The white spiritual concept more actively participates in the historical revision of Reconstruction than is currently acknowledged. Using both Jacques Lacan and an assemblage of theorists of the Black imaginary including Fred Moten, Saidiya Hartman, Cedric Robinson, Alexander Weheliye, Katherine McKittrick, and others as interlocutors, I contend that the image produced by the white spiritual concept is inseparable from its function of disavowing, displacing, and forgetting the shame that lays at the heart of post-Reconstruction southern whiteness.

This shame, I argue, was not necessarily rooted in an internalized guilt, as is commonly suggested. Rather, it should be understood as a shame emanating from the failure of whites to sustain the illusion of mastery in the South. It is the shame of having to share what was once exclusive property, citizenship, and inheritance rights with the descendants of that very same property. *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, *I'll Take My Stand*, *Singin' Billy,* alongside other writings by Jackson, Davidson, and their associates, demonstrate that the white spiritual was from the beginning a reaction to this shame and loss. As an object of fantasy whose primary function was to displace and disavow the shame of failed mastery, the white spiritual offered a way to imagine the restoration of mastery in the South, even if this meant only experiencing the pleasure of being made a privileged instrument of God through musical worship. And it did this by displacing and disavowing the black fugitive imaginary.

Musicologists who have written about Jackson's *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1932) have yet to consider its relationship to the much more famous and transparently-reactionary collection of essays that "seriously proposed returning to an economy dominated by subsistence agriculture" contained within *I'll Take My Stand* (1930).[325] Both books played an important part, however, in Vanderbilt University's rise as a bastion for academically-rigorous Southern conservatives who opposed the progressive regime of sociologist Howard Odum at the University of North Carolina. Before the Fugitives made their intervention, the Vanderbilt English department under the chairmanship of Edward Mims was a model of white southern progressivism. As the Fugitive poets, they responded by rejecting the apologetics, racial sympathy, and tacit desegregationist orientation of Southern progressives by interpreting Reconstruction as the fatal moment in the longstanding battle between agrarian and industrial capitalism in the United States. They did this by romanticizing the culture and lifestyle that was lost upon the South's defeat in the Civil War. They reimagined the Confederate South as the ruins of America's once-glorious civilizational ethos akin to Athens of modern Greece.

Neither the Fugitives, the Agrarians, nor Jackson either defended or condemned slavery in this remembered and reconstructed South; it was simply irrelevant to the stories that they had to tell. The agrarian associate William Pratt, for example, dismissed the obvious charges of racism levied against Davidson as a member of the group by writing that his depiction of the South was that "of the pioneer farm, the family homestead, not the large plantation," and assures the reader that "there race was not really an issue because the families were all European in origin, not African or Native American."[326] This vision of a lily-white South was, of

[325] Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 2.
[326] William Pratt, "Donald Davidson: The Poet as Storyteller," *The Sewanee Review* vol. 110 (no. 3, 2002): 408.

course, a fantasy.[327] It could only be achieved by reframing and re-membering the region, blanchings it humanity of color with a wave of the hand. Doing so allowed them to reiterate the same criticisms once levied by Confederate apologists after Reconstruction, which they depicted as a tyrannical regime that repossessed their property and diluted their rights. Reconstruction, in these accounts, was a symbol of the grievous loss of white mastery in the region; the agrarians and other conservative intellectuals at Vanderbilt, however, abstracted the concept of mastery into whatever often-unnamed entity provided order and stability in the region. Jackson, Davidson, and their colleagues advocated for restoring the master's domain by invoking his absence. The incoherence of industrial modernity was figured as the consequence of dethroning the region's white sovereign and replacing its reign with a disorganized multiracial regime.

I'll Take My Stand is less known amongst musicologists than *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, which means that musicologists have yet to explore the clear connection between these two important texts. This is an unfortunate symptom of disciplinary myopia, as the Agrarian manifesto is a much-discussed text within literature, political science, and history departments. At the same time, scholarship on the Vanderbilt agrarians, and especially of Donald Davidson's contribution, would surely be enriched by considering Davidson's interest in George Pullen Jackson's work.

I'll Take My Stand established the 'Twelve Southerners' as leaders of a conservative intellectual vanguard who argued for southern economic hegemony in cultural, moral, and spiritual terms. Davidson was by far the most literal-minded and dogmatic member of the collective. As Paul V. Murphy shows in his study of how *I'll Take My Stand* has shaped conservative thought in the United States, Davidson maintained that one of the virtues that rural

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[327] Dunway, Wilma, *Slavery in the American Mountain South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Mark D. Groover, *The Archeology of North American Farmsteads* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008); W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004).

Southerners inherited from their agrarian past was an innate will to remember the past which made them capable of "stubbornly resisting the denatured cosmopolitan culture."[328] This set him apart from his fellow Fugitives-turned-Agrarians Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom, who were influenced by the cynical conservative modernist aesthetic of T.S. Eliot, regarded Davidson's folkish racial romanticism as thin and inchoate. Cracks began to form in the relationship between Davidson and the other Fugitives as early as 1926 due to his narrow-minded and literal belief in the possibility of recovering the past. And it was Davidson, in particular, who recognized Jackson's work on white spirituals as an extension of his own project.

Davidson responded to this alienation from his Fugitive peers by expanding his network to include other prominent scholars at Vanderbilt who were less concerned with the naivete of nostalgic remembrance. In a lecture at Mercer University delivered in 1957, Davidson acknowledged that "outside this circle of twelve were other figures, to whom we owed a debt."[329] Davidson named the historian Walter Lynwood Fleming of the Dunning School who was the Dean of the Graduate School in the 1920s. He also identified the head of the philosophy and psychology department from 1911-1942 Herbert Sanborn, a Holocaust denialist and frequent contributor to American neo-Nazi publications. When Davidson gave his lecture, Sanborn had very recently published *The International Conspiracy* (1955) which associated desegrationism with a Zionist conspiracy to take over the social sciences in American universities.[330] But Davidson reserved his most effusive praise to his "friend and master, the late George Pullen Jackson" to whom he "owed a special personal debt."[331] Davidson explains that he had spent a full year studying Goethe under Jackson, and elaborated on all the lessons that *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* had taught him:

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[328] Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History*, 102.
[329] Donald Davidson. 1958. *Southern Writers in the Modern World*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
[330] Andrew S. Winston, "'Jews will not replce us!': Antisemitism, Interbreeding and Immigration in Historical Context," *American Jewish History* Vol. 105 (Nos. 1/2 2021): 1-24.
[331] Davidson, *Southern Writers in the Modern World*, 56. Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, 274.

> … certain old songs I remembered from my father's singing were ballads and… others were spirituals – white spirituals. I came to know the wondrous music of B.F. White's *The Sacred Harp* and William Walker's *Southern Harmony* – all that great line of sacred song that belongs natively to our people, and yet, as a tradition, reaches back into the mists of antiquity… And so, through Dr. Jackson's guidance I was put in a position in 1930 and later to deny the false claim, then being widely circulated, that America in general and the South in particular lacked a true folk culture and had not any vestiges of folksong except the Negro spirituals. I could and did say, in my own contribution to our symposium: "The South has been rich in the folk-arts, and is still rich in them – in ballads, country songs and dances, in hymns and spirituals, in folk tales."[332]

Davidson's reference to how knowledge of songs belonging "natively to our people" that reach "back into the mists of antiquity" shaped his contribution to *I'll Take My Stand* enriches our understanding of both Davidson's approach to agrarianism and Jackson's book in a number of ways. Most significantly, it confirms that Jackson's thesis that 'white spirituals' were a distinctively white Southern musical tradition belonging to a "lost tonal tribe" of "fasola folk" influenced Davidson's contribution to *I'll Take My Stand*, even though it was not yet published at the time. Indeed, Davidson's allusion to 'hymns and spirituals' is an undeniable trace of Jackson's influence as he was the first to nominalize the white spiritual even though a number of scholars had by then proposed that white religious music was the source of Negro spirituals.[333] By extension, it invites us to think of the correspondences in their idyllic depiction of the white South.

I make the case in this chapter for placing both Davidson and Jackson within a discourse network that was adjacent, but not identical to, the agrarian movement. In particular, I will make the case that this network was defined by a shared desire for the resurrection of the dead white South. Finally, this shared desire and accompanying fantasies were all generated by a shared method of disavowal; they simultaneously sought to hide the presence of blackness from the antebellum South while relying on claiming the building blocks of black American identity for

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[332] Ibid.
[333] Richard Wallasheck. *Primitive Music: An Inquiry Into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races*. London and New York: Longmans, Green, and co, 1893.

themselves. In doing so, this “white fugitive discourse network” conjured a re-membered image of the South as a region where racial citizenship, property, and inheritance rights allowed whites to experience a subjective wholeness that was now impossible to experience under industrial modernity. That subjective feeling and not the tangible set of lost property rights became the desired object of their resurrected white Confederacy. They certainly did not go so far as to argue for restoring the right to own slaves; instead, they offered the feeling of being made as whole as their ancestors were before they were dispossessed of their sovereignty.

As Murphy observes, in Davidson’s sanctified and sterilized memory of the South, “there were southerners… and they were white; there also existed Negroes, but they were a parasitical growth on white society. African-Americans were certainly not southerners in the same sense whites were.”[334] Though there was a method to the creation of this image, it was driven by pure desire rather than any rational method. Davidson simply refused to articulate a logical or systematic defense beyond asserting that white Southerners had neither the desire nor obligation to extend equal citizenship rights to African Americans.[335] In a 1937 review of John Dollard’s *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, Davidson countered the author’s call for an end to racial subjugation with the assertion that “the considerable elevation of the Negro can only mean the degradation of the whites. The white South does not wish to make this sacrifice, and that is all there is to it."[336]

Jackson, too, used a superficial method to separate the shared repertoire that made up the Southern revivalist camp meeting hymnody during the Second Great Revival in the early 19th century and the negro spiritual canon that was only first transcribed by abolitionists in the 1870s. Though Jackson’s method took on the appearance of a scientific apparatus that

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[334] Paul V. Murphy, "The Sacrament of Remembrance: Southern Agrarian Poet Donald Davidson and His Past." *Southern Cultures* 2, no. 1 (1995): 92

[335] In addition to Murpy, see Eugene Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994); Grigsby, John L. “The Poisonous Snake in the Garden: Racism in the Agrarian Movement.” *CLA Journal* 34, no. 1 (1990): 32–43; Nemmers, Adam. "A *Stand* Abandoned: The Southern Agrarians and the Second Lost Cause." *The Southern Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2020): 40-57.

[336] Donald Davidson, "Gulliver with Hay Fever," American Review 9 (summer 1937): 170.

resembled the method used by philologists to determine linguistic genealogy, scholars have long been vexed at trying to account for the conceptual incoherency of both his premises and his method. Jesse Karlsberg, for example, described Sacred Harp singing as a "miscegenated tradition" and succinctly criticizes Jackson for conflating "prior publication with first authorship."[337] Norman Cazden, Herbert Haufrecht, and Norman Studer more pointedly suggest that Jackson's method was designed to arbitrarily privilege the first iteration of a spiritual tune's melodic strains over the first appearance of its lyrics, as putting both on equal footing would complicate "the lily-white tradition he seeks to honor."[338] I agree with both assessments, and suggest that putting Jackson in dialogue with Davidson reveals a shared operation of displacing the black human from their sanctioned memory of the South in order to paint a portrait of a wholesome region populated by 'subjects of the law' rather than slave owners. These 'subjects,' rather than enjoying the privilege of owning, using, and abusing human property, enjoyed the pleasures of knowing their ancestors and thus desiring nothing.

Reviving and Re-Membering Mastery

Though both Jackson and Davidson made frequent appeals to the 'history' of the South, their work did not so much aim to contest the historical record of Southern race relations as it did to erase and rewrite the memory of cross-racial contact and identification in the antebellum South. Both appealed to the inflexible logic of modern Jim Crow segregation in monochromatic paintings of Southern and frontier musical worship in the 19th century. As Ronald Radano points out, "revivalist projections of race" were complex, and they facilitated cross-racial identification through musical worship.[339] Indeed, musical worship at camp meetings encouraged participants

[337] Jesse Karlsberg, *Folklore's Filter: Race, Place, and Sacred Harp Singing.* PhD dissertation (Emory University, 2015), 128-129.
[338] Norman Cazden, Herbert Haufrecht, and Norman Studer, *Folk Songs of the Catskills* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 292-297.
[339] Ronald Radano, *Lying Up a Nation: Race and Black Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 120.

to think of themselves in communion with a higher power, and thus often broke down otherwise firm boundaries and distinctions between white and black, Northerner and Southerner, rich and poor, and self and other. Even in the South, revivals were exercises in social equality and ministers often regarded these meetings as opportunities to encourage participants to free their slaves. As Presbyterian minister Barton W. Stone wrote, the fact that a revival in Paris, Kentucky "cut the bonds of many poor slaves… speaks volumes in favor of the work. For what avail is a religion of decency and order without righteousness?"[340]

The audibility of musical worship complicates any claims of racial ownership or unidirectional white-to-black cultural transmission. Scholars have long debated the question of how to characterize the relationship between white and black religion in the antebellum South, but Paul K. Conklin explains that there is a general consensus that "from the mid-century on, the story of evangelical Christianity in the South was a story of both blacks and whites, of a wide expanse of shared beliefs, experiences, forms of baptism, testimonials, hymns, and even styles of preaching and congregations responses."[341] Though distinctions between black and mainline evangelism can be traced to the first attempts at converting slaves in Virginia and the Carolinas in the 1740s, it was not until the decades preceding the Civil War as white Southerners began to adopt a regional identity that a notion of 'white revivalism' emerged. Conklin explains that in the Western Appalachian state of Kentucky, turn-of-the-century revivalists took a position against slavery "almost as a rule" and it was only over the ensuing decades that "in order to make their peace with slavery, evangelicals tried to pull from it all its moral stigma… by trying to turn the plantation into a form of extended and supportive family."[342]

Conklin himself slips into the trap of using the unmodified form of 'evangilism' to refer to its increasingly white supremacist and pro-slavery expression in the South as opposed to the

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[340] J. Richard Rodger and Barton W. Stone, *The Cane Ridge meeting-house* 2nd edition (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1910), 165
[341] Paul Conklin *Cane Ridge, America's Pentacost* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 172.
[342] Ibid., 177.

black evangelical movement that preached liberation from slavery. In her analysis of mid-century sermons, Hortense Spillers shows that as mid-century white evangelists increasingly used Christianity to rationalize a benevolent form of slavery, black ministers like J.W.C. Pennington developed within Christianity a “pre-eminent mode of discourse by which African-Americans envisioned a transcendent human possibility under captive conditions."[343] In this regard, the history of the distinction between white and black evangelism traces the emergence of the idea of the South as the last bastion of legally-sanctioned slavery in the United States. White and black evangelism adopted two distinct modes of discourse that became attached to different fantasies, and both repurposed the aesthetic of transcendence that previously signified the shattering of the distinction between self and Other in early revivalism. On the one hand, white evangelism conjured a fantasy of a historically-transcendent South that was the domain of benevolent white mastery. On the other hand, the fantasy conjured by black evangelical discourse had even before this point been oriented towards a future where the fugitive could transcend earthly suffering and aimless wanderings and experience freedom.

The ‘white spiritual’ is one of many phantasmic objects that emerged in the wake of this violent split between two racialized discourses, fantasies, temporalities, and aesthetics of transcendence within American evangelism. In spite of Jackson’s insistence on the white-to-black transmission of spirituals, the emergence of an original American spiritual canon can be traced back to the more egalitarian expression of the Second Great Awakening. As the abolitionist minister Barton Stone explains in his book of songs for worship, ‘spirituals’ were distinguished from the more formal genres of psalms or hymns by not being based in pre-existing hymnody nor did they necessarily function to praise God. Rather, spirituals were newly-composed songs that embraced a wide range of subjects as they were directly “suggested by the Holy Spirit” or otherwise “composed on the divine communications to men.”[344]

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[343] Hortense Spillers, “Moving on Down the Line,” *American Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (1988): 88.
[344] Barton Warren Stone, *Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs: original and selected* (Bethany, VA: A. Campbell, 1844), 5.

Jackson's attempt at segregating spirituals by insisting upon a prior or privileged origin of white spirituals can be understood, then, as a refusal to imagine the kind of cross-racial listening that would have taken place at camp meetings like the one at Cane Ridge in 1801. As Conklin explains, that although it is "impossible to decipher from the evidence," it is all but certain that "blacks must have had some effect on southern Presbyterianism – at the very least on hymn singing."[345]

Conklin's appeal to the plausibility, rather than facticity, of the historical imaginary speaks to the stakes of this chapter. Though, like all the chapters in this dissertation, it engages with the intellectual and institutional history of music scholarship in the American university, it is more narrowly concerned with understanding the relationship between different modes of discourse and the fantasies that they make plausible. The seductive power of Jackson and Davidson's agrarian white spiritual discourse is located in its vision of a South that always had a coherent sense of itself as a region of benevolent white mastery. At the same time, the dissonance between this fantasy and the historical record makes the very notion of 'white spirituals' incoherent and conceptually untenable. I do not intend to relitigate the question as to the legitimacy of a 'white spiritual tradition,' nor do I want to contest the details of Davidson's depiction of the antebellum South. Rather, I want to use this chapter to arrive at a better understanding of the relationship between certain modes of discourse and the historical fantasies that they produce and legitimate.

The term "white spiritual" – like the term "white South" – is a historical fantasy that thus signifies a particular discursive position that has more to tell us about 20th-century white Southern conservatism than it does about the historical record. The majority of critical scholarship on Jackson and, to a lesser extent, Davidson has emphasized the mere untenability of their historical claims without fully interrogating the type of discourse that made such claims compelling to its adherents.

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[345] Paul Conklin, *Cane Ridge*, 30-34.

In particular, I make the case that white spirituals intervened on the relationship between musical ecstasy and liberatory desire that the Negro spiritual had come to evoke by the turn of the century. White spirituals also offered an ecstatic musical experience. But instead of attaching the aesthetic of transcendence to liberation, they joined ecstasy with dogmatism and respect for traditional symbolic hierarchies. Jackson and Davidson in turn associated white spirituals with a number of disciplinary regimes that Negro spirituals were never made to evoke. If negro spirituals were primarily circulated as an oral tradition before being transcribed, white spirituals were part of a written tradition preserved in printed and published in songbooks. Where early 20th-century scholars of negro spirituals like W.E.B. Du Bois emphasized the diffuse nature of the transmission of negro spirituals by associating them with fugitive slaves, Jackson and his peers rooted the transmission of white spirituals within the institution of segregated singing schools established in the 19th century and annual singing events that brought worshippers from afar into a single location. They in turn deemphasized the subjectivity and desires of individual musical worshippers. Rather, the white spiritual offered ecstatic experience only through subjecting oneself to a disciplinary regime of learning the association between the shapes of noteheads and the solmization technique that gave the so-called “fasola” folk their name.

I argue in this chapter for recognizing the white spiritual concept in relation to the discourse and fantasy of white antebellum mastery in the South. In its insistence upon valorizing white southern mastery long after the abolition of slavery, the white spiritual idea that flourished at Vanderbilt University from its introduction in 1932 through the staging of *Singin’ Billy* in 1952 was part of a broader discourse network that included the Fugitive poets and their Southern Agrarian offshoot, the anti-evolutionist Southern fundamentalism that asserted itself during and after the Scopes Trial in 1925, and the production of academic defense of segregation in the years preceding the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. As part of the discursive register of the Jim Crow regime, the white spiritual concept helped shape a segregationist

fantasy of a lost, but recoverable, past. White spirituals were framed as a forgotten inheritance right that the ancestors of modern day white Southerners had used to experience the transcendental aesthetic through contact with the divine. In this way, white spiritualiss presented musical pleasure as a reward for adhering to the dogmatic conservatism associated with southern fundamentalism in the 20th century.

Placing Jackson and Davidson within the same discourse network opens the door for recognizing a much more comprehensive series of discursive correspondences that sheds light on the function of the white spiritual as an object of both discourse and fantasy. Doing so will shed light on questions of Jackson's method and Davidson's white supremacist activism that have vexed interdisciplinary scholars of both the Sacred Harp singing circuit and the Southern Agrarian movement. Second, by suggesting that Jackson's methodological foibles are designed to perform an operation of displacement and disavowal, it becomes possible to reconsider the relationship between the white spiritual and its disavowed black other.

The White and Black Spiritual in Fantasy and Discourse

"Out of them rose for me morning, noon, and night, bursts of wonderful melody, full of the voices of my brothers and sisters, full of the voices of the past."

- W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

This chapter follows a constantly-morphing set of relations rather than a central figure, Jackson and Davidson will each appear and reappear at intervals, often, but not always, in relation to one another. The figure of the white fugitive will surface by itself for a period, and then resurface at a later point as the dispossessed master of the black fugitive. I will think of white spirituals as a kind of imagined property of the white fugitive as well as the antithesis of the black spiritual. This chapter's interpretive lens will focus, variously, on the white/black spiritual, the white/black fugitive, the white/black South, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, *Singin' Billy*, and the Confederate dead. The reason for this is that the white spiritual is only one

component of what Jacques Lacan calls in his seminar on “The Ethics of Psychoanalysis” an *anamorphosis*, or “any kind of construct that is made in such a way that by means of an optical transposition a certain form that wasn’t visible at first sight transforms itself into a readable image. The pleasure found in seeing its emergence from an indecipherable form.”[346]

Within art, an anamorph is an object that only becomes legible when viewed at a particular angle. Lacan’s preferred example is a white and grey streak in Hans Hobein’s “The Ambassadors” (c. 1533) that is revealed to be a skull when examined at an extreme angle. Lacan observes that the anamorphosis hides one illusory organization of space upon another, showing that the purpose of art is not to simply imitate or represent objects, but “make something different out of that object” by establishing it in “a certain relationship to the Thing… intended to encircle and to render both present and absent.”[347] In other words, the clash between perspectives introduced by the anamorph gestures towards the inarticulable and unrepresentable within language.

“The Thing” is a negativity that precedes conscious thought but is experienced as a “certain zone of reference” that is only locatable by circling around it. Lacan associates this object with the sovereign good of the creation myth that is blocked off from the subject by the interdiction of the Father. It is the apple of Eden and the unattainable Lady of courtly love poetry. Both are objects that represent the absolute goodness of the divine that only remain good when kept at a distance through repression. In the case of white spirituals, the Thing is in the antebellum South in which the black critique that calls white supremacy into question is silenced. An object bound in a series of contradictions, the white spiritual represents the desire to simultaneously transgress the law so as to overcome its limits and to be absolutely subjectified by it so as to experience the pleasure of being touched by the lost object. Jackson evokes this idea in his account of a Sacred Harp singing convention in *White Spirituals in the*

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[346] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII*: *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* trans. Jacques Alain-Miller (W.W. Norton, 1997), 135.
[347] Ibid., 141.

Southern Uplands. The moral goodness of the white spiritual is expressed in its offer of both masochistic repression and the ecstasy of apocalyptic obliteration:

> And if we are to agree with the psychologists as to the 'immorality' resulting from the excitation and non-satisfaction of the emotions, then those *Sacred Harp* singers were engaged in one of the most purely moral pursuits. Their emotional catharsis was one hundred per cent. On the one hand, inhibition, the necessary end of civilization; on the other, complete release, the blessing of this music-making and the prime reason, perhaps, for its longevity; a blessing which obviously cannot descend upon those ominously great masses of mere hearers of music.[348]

The white spiritual offers the desiring white subject three gifts that substitute for contact with the Thing: a constructed memory of a region ruled by the ancestors of modern whites, faith in the resurrection of the dead South, and the elimination of the alternative memories and interpretations of the region held by slaves. In this imagined South, whites engaged in collective musical worship because they did not need to be self-conscious about their racial identity. Though this South was indeed killed by modernity, it was only waiting for the moment to 'rise again' once whites were ready to receive their inheritance. This new Old South notably did not explicitly promise whites the right to rule over non-whites again. In fact, only whites needed to exist in this South. In lieu of the right to own others, however, the white spiritual was the object of a transcendental master subject whose sovereignty *over* whites would be restored. Under the auspices of a resurrected Master, the repurposing of the white spiritual by slaves and black Americans was merely incidental. The white spiritual thus took the form of a stable and unchanging master object that foreclosed the counter-discourses and alternative imaginings of what Katherine McKittrick calls the "demonic grounds" of the antebellum South.[349]

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[348] George Pullen Jackson, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands: The Story of the Fasola Folk, Their Songs, Singings, and "Buckwheat Notes"* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).
[349] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

In Lacanian terms, the white spiritual was "a case of necrophilia."[350] Its symbolic potency relied upon acknowledging that it was dead. Its deadness, however, stood in relief to the symbolic liveliness of the Negro spiritual, which had no trouble embedding itself into discourse and shaping the subjectivities of both white and black Americans. Resurrecting the white spiritual's white South, then, required stealing the life back from the object that it insisted did not exist. This perspective is structured by a paradox between the claim that the white spiritual was the original source of the black spiritual and the fact that the idea of the black spiritual was that source of the white spiritual concept. It makes legible Lacan's representation of the master-slave dialectic as "the theft, the abduction, the removal from the slave of his knowledge, through operations of the Master."[351]

These three perspectives – the white spiritual as an object of discourse, of fantasy, and of the other – all frame the white spiritual's status as what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*, or the 'object of the lower-cased other (*autre*).' This famously elusive-yet-capacious concept stands for the phantasmic object that introduces repetition within a desiring subject. Lacan developed his understanding of *objet petit a* over the course of several decades, and it is considered one of his most slippery concepts despite its importance within his understanding of fantasy, discourse, and the barred subject (represented as *$* in Lacanian algebra). If the slash at the center of *$* represents a radical splitting of a subject unable to reconcile its sense of self with how it is perceived by the other, *objet a* is that difference in a phantasmic form. Taken as such, *objet a* is an imaginary thing whose source, function, and promises can all be called into question by interrogating the wound of desire within a subject. The idea of the white spiritual, in this framework, reveals more about the sense of lost integrity within industrial modernity among its adherents than it does about the historical record of American hymnody.

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[350] Jacques Lacan, "Kant with Sade," *Écrits: A Selection* trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1980).
[351] Jacques Lacan, *The other side of psychoanalysis* trans. Alan Grigg (WW Norton & Company, 2007).

In Lacan's *Seminar XIV* on "The Logic of Phantasy," he identifies both object *a* and $ as figurations of the relationship between what he calls the Big Other and the speaking subjects it produces. This capitalized Other organizes the field of language and it has many of the qualities of the Thing, which Lacan stopped referring to once he began developing his theory of the Other. Both are objects that resist symbolization insofar as they are preconditions for the development of language itself. If the slash through the subject represents an existential condition of being unable to become subjectively whole, the object *a* is the object that the subject attaches his or her desire for completeness onto. As Seth Brodsky writes, both signify the loss of wholeness that accompanies a subject's entry into the symbolic field of language, such that "instead of doing nothing, [*objet a*] does the impossible. Quite literally: fantasy renders this Real loss into an image, something radically resistant to symbolization, and then sets this image-of-nothing to work."[352]

If the Other is experienced only through the abstract force of the Law, religious dogma, social expectations, etc., and *objet a* is the externalized expression of the cut made by the Other on the subject, *objet a* speaks to the relationship between desire, pleasure, subjectivity, and the law. Lacan describes its various iterations in his essay about the impossibility of transgressing the law within fantasy titled "Kant with Sade." Simultaneously taking the form of objects of an individual's desire and "objects of the law," the objects of fantasy demonstrate that individual "desire is the Other's desire."[353] In other words, the cut of $ on the one hand references the will of the Other to make us subjects of language, the law, and the social order. At the same time, it is the source of all desire. In order to reconcile these two ontologies of the cut, it is necessary to recognize that the transcendental Object that wounds us also produces the phantasms that allow us to imagine what it would be like to be whole, complete, and wanting of nothing else. There is thus only a superficial difference between a desire to follow the law and a desire to

[352] Seth Brodsky, *From 1898: Or, European Music and the Modernist Unconscious* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017), 80.
[353] Lacan, "Kant with Sade," *Ecrits*, 658.

transgress it. In either case, the Law as a codification of the Other's will represents both the source and the limit of individual fantasy.

Contemporary white Southern conservatism provides plentiful examples of this indistinction between the desire to follow and transgress the Law. Holding together the apparent contradiction between slogans like "back the blue" and "don't tread on me," or of the United States flag flying next to the symbol of the Confederacy, is a collective fantasy of a South between two deaths. This vague, half-articulated notion that one must reject the authority of the Law in order to follow it most absolutely is also encapsulated within the discourse on white spirituals. White spiritual researchers defined it as the exclusive cultural property and inheritance right of modern white Southerners that could only be claimed after opposing the prohibitions of industrial modernity so that the antebellum legal and social order could reassert itself.

Though Jackson and other white spiritual researchers presented themselves as historians, their discourse functioned to obliterate history rather than enrich it. Indeed, the weakness of the central historiological claim of the white spiritual's preexistence to the Negro spiritual is the crux of most scholarly critiques of Jackson's work. This fragile claim justified the act of taking and repurposing the concept of the Negro spiritual which already had its place within African-American liberation discourses and fantasies. And within these counterdiscourses, the conceptually-prior Negro spiritual had a different way of figuring the relationship between the Law of the old South and liberatory desire. It was understood within the Negro spiritualist discourse part of what Fred Moten calls "the phonography of the very screams that opens the way to the knowledge of slavery and the knowledge of freedom."[354] And as such, its liberatory aesthetic was understood to be inseparable from its function as a record of suffering and survival under slavery.

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[354] Fred Moten. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 21-22.

Black phonography records the development of a discourse that can be traced back to the foundational violence of slavery. In contrast, Jackson and his peers associated white spirituals with a prior state of benevolent mastery that they yearned to restore. The relationship between white and black spirituals in this regard parallels the master-slave dialectic which Hegel identifies as the engine of historical consciousness and Lacan places at the core of his theory of discourse. For Lacan, all discourse is an extension of the genealogy of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, which he depicts as $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ in his algebraic language. In this dyad, S_1 represents the master as a singular signifier that distinguishes itself from all other signifiers while S_2 is the multitudinous "battery of signifiers" which is composed of un-individuated signifiers that exist within a "network of what is called a knowledge."[355] The discourse of the master, which Lacan identifies as the original and primary discourse from which all others emerge, begins with a clash between a desiring individuated master and a knowledgeable assemblage of slaves. The master's desire leaves him without knowledge, whereas the slaves are forbidden from desiring. Their surplus production, which Lacan calls object *a*, is a signifier of their technical knowledge and their manifest understanding of the master signifiers, and the master's attempt at appropriating it forces him to confront the truth of his own limitations. His mastery is composed of a series of limits and boundaries; his existence is bound by the will of a greater master signifier and his mark of distinction is in fact a cut through his subjectivity that separates his idealized boundless self from his lived reality. He is, in truth, a split barred subject *$* that can only fail to control the surplus production and desire of the slave. This is the constitution and the contradiction of the master-slave dialectic as it constitutes a master's discourse. The complete equation, or 'matheme' as Lacan calls it, of the master discourse is thus as follows:

[355] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis,* 31.

Master discourse

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

Agent	Other
Truth	Product/ Loss

Object	Meaning
S_1	The master. The signifier that is distinguished from all other signifiers. The singular object of pure desire and will that lacks knowledge and insight.
S_2	The slave. The assemblage of signifiers from which S_1 differentiates itself. The multitudinous object of knowledge and insight that lacks the right to desire.
$	The barred or split subject. The object representing the product of being made a subject. The bar represents the “dehiscence at the heart of the organism” which can never be sutured.
a	The little other (*autre*). The object of both desire and loss which represents both surplus and loss. The mark shame of the barred subject upon failing to become a complete subject, and the desire it produces to overcome that mark within fantasy, for example.

My way of thinking about the white spiritual within discourse is indebted to Lacan’s structural theory of the discourse as an elaboration of the master signifier’s impossible struggle to sustain a belief in his own mastery. The term emerged out of the nostalgic haze of white fugitive memory, of a South ruled by his ancestors. It functions on its face to erase the memory of the failure of white Southern mastery by othering and displacing the record of black fugitive freedom dreams and testimonials provided by black spiritual discourse. Jackson’s contribution

to white southern academia was not so much the discovery of a lost tradition, but the naming of an object that could be the seed of a new image of the South.

As the product of an academic project, it was also part of what Lacan calls the university discourse, which is a modulation of the master discourse formed by rotating the objects on the discourse matheme by a counter-clockwise quarter turn:

University discourse

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

Agent	Other
Truth	Product/ Loss

In Lacan's account, the university discourse is one of two possible responses to the crisis introduced in the master-slave dialectic. Namely, it is the master's response to his failure to steal the knowledge of the slave by creating a knowledge- and mastery-producing apparatus. An assemblage of knowledge producers, not the individual master, is the agent, and the other is the desired object. By interrogating the lost object of past mastery, this assemblage produces marked subjects ($\$$) in the form of degrees, awards, and distinctions while asserting monolithic master narratives (S_1) as truths.

Lacan's decision to think of the emergence of the university as a recuperative response borne out of a crisis is consistent with the role that scholarship produced in universities like Vanderbilt played in the decades after Reconstruction. The story of the "White Spiritual Struggle for Existence," as Jackson calls his book's final chapter, is the story of a cultural war between the urbanized North and the agrarian South that relitigates the white Southerner's loss of the ability to imagine himself as a sovereign in the wake of the Civil War. In his review of Jackson's

book, black historian Carter G. Woodson calls Jackson's book a case of "history made to order" through the "rewriting of the history of sections and races from the so-called scientific point of view" within "most of the large universities."[356] From a Lacanian perspective, this 'history made to order' was the "perverted discourse of the master" that signified his refusal to "die of shame" after his failures.[357] Instead of acknowledging the indefensibility of slavery and working towards reconciliation with African Americans, *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* presented Southern whites as injured former masters waging a noble defense against northern industrialists.

In Lacan's dialectic theory of discourse, the university is only one possible response to the loss of imaginary sovereignty. The other represents what he calls the discourse of the hysteric, in which the shame of the master and surplus of the slave that the university refuses to account for takes the position of the truth of a self-consciously split and barred subject. The hysteric interrogates the concept of mastery S_1 to produce an undisciplined flow of knowledge whose disorganization speaks to his alienation from the master signifier that could serve as its organizing principle.

Hysteric discourse

$$\frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

Agent	Other
Truth	Product/ Loss

This is the discourse of Donald Davidson's writing on white fugitivity, including his work on white spirituals that repetitively acknowledges white Southerners' loss of the sovereignty that

[356] Carter G. Woodson, "White Spirituals in Southern Uplands," *Journal of Negro History* vol. 19 (no. 1, 1934): 93-96.
[357] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 18.

should be their ancestral inheritance. This recognition makes it clear that Davidson's 'sacrament of remembrance' which he used to depict "the thinness of the present compared to the fullness of the past," as biographer Louise Cowan puts it can only "recapture not the past but its plenitude" by conjuring a master, not by becoming the master signifier itself.[358]

Instead of working to produce a new master discourse like the university discourse, Lacan explains, the hysteric recognizes that the mastery of S_1 is dependent on the will of a truly-transcendental signifier that exists beyond rational comprehension. As a result, the hysteric discourse is built upon the desire for a master to grace him with the pleasure that accompanies being a privileged instrument of divine law. As Lacan puts it, the hysteric:

> …wants the other to be a master, to know many things, but all the same not to know enough not to believe that she is the supreme prize of all his knowledge. In other words, she wants a master over whom she reigns. She reigns, and he does not govern… As soon as you ask the question *What does so-and-so want?* you enter into the function of desire, and you bring out the master-signifier.[359]

Judith Butler explains that a desire to be ruled over by "a repressive or subordinating law" is based on a fabricated "story about what it was like *before* the advent of the law, and how it came about that the law emerged in its present and necessary form."[360] Indeed, Davidson and Jackson are both representative of the neo-Confederate tendency to ignore the history of slavery rather than call for its reinstitutionalization.

To say that the white spiritual was part of a white fugitive discourse, then, is to suggest that it helped give form to a shifting, kaleidoscopic series of discourses that allowed white southerners to reconstruct, rather than reconcile, their memory of the past. This is to say that its existence ironically needed the loss of the thing it insists upon; there would be no white spiritual without the loss of white mastery in the South.

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[358] Louise Cowan, *The Fugitive Group: A Literary History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 102.
[359] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 166.
[360] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 36.

1925-1954: 'Hontology' in the University, and Fetishistic Disavowal from Scopes to Brown

> I called the replacement a detail; but it strikes me as an extremely important one, for on it depends perhaps the success or failure of the cultural struggle itself, that struggle which determines whether we, as individuals and as a region and nation, are to be people of culture or those usually called provincials and even barbarians.
>
> - George Pullen Jackson, "On Knowing Ourselves First," 1950.

> With a bit of seriousness you will see that this shame justifies itself by not dying of shame, that is, by maintaining with all your energy a perverted discourse of the Master, which is the University discourse… What I am telling you, and perhaps this is all some of you will be able to retain from this year, is to focus on production – on the production of the university system.
>
> - Lacan, *Seminar XVII*

In his presidential address at the annual South Atlantic MLA meeting in 1950, George Pullen Jackson performed a series of displacements and disavowals while calling for a radical revision of the national public education system. The system as it was, according to Jackson, had failed to teach children of the English language's "value as a mirror of our racial life through the centuries and ages."[361] There was a palpable sense of urgency in this speech. In fact, addressing this problem was so important to him that he took extraordinary measures to be able to speak in the first place. The previous year, he convinced nearly every member of the Vanderbilt language faculty to join the regional MLA chapter and then vote for him as President.[362] He then used this position as a bully pulpit to directly confront his predecessor Mexicanist James O. Swain's speech from the previous year. Swain had preached a multicultural agenda and called for members, according to Jackson's paraphrase, to "know the world instead of knowing just one's little part of it" and "know mankind instead of knowing just ourselves and those around us." Instead, Jackson proposed the exact opposite formulation in his speech "On Knowing Ourselves First":

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[361] George Pullen Jackson, "On Knowing Ourselves First (Presidential Address)" *South Atlantic Bulletin* 15 (no. 3, 1950): 4-6.

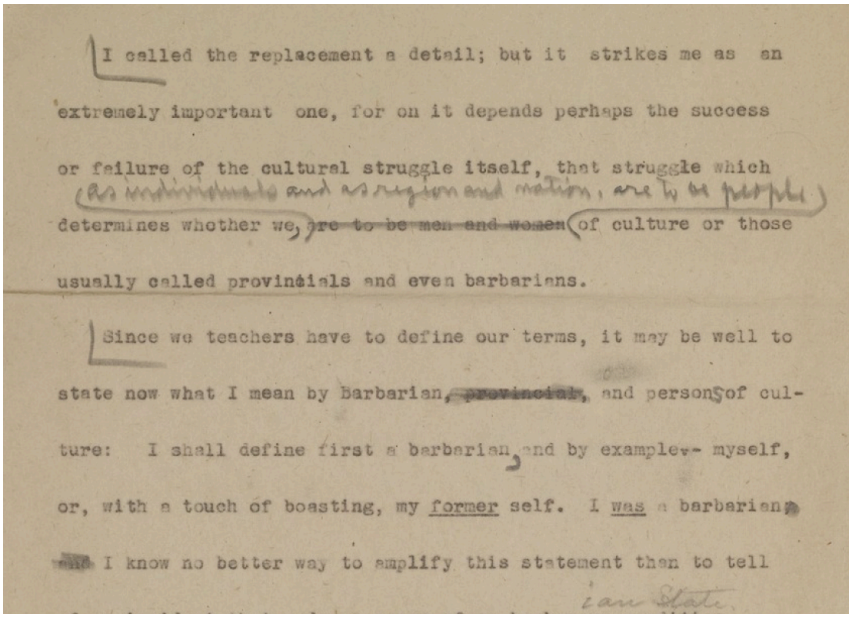
[362] "Nice Going," *South Atlantic Bulletin* Vol. 14 (No. 4, 1949): 2.

> I should like to replace the words 'instead of' by the words 'by first.' With this replacement, the plan for our cultural struggle would be expressed thus: Know the world *by first* knowing just our own little part of it and, what is almost the same, know mankind *by first* knowing just ourselves and those around us. That this is the proper order and that it is not always followed, I shall attempt to show.

These replacements – Swain with himself and the words "instead of" with "by first" – are two of many that give structure to Jackson's polemic. Such displacements, replacements, negations, supplantations, thefts and other forms of rhetorical slippages mirror the critical displacement of black spirituals Jackson performed twenty years prior with white ones. Indeed, this speech helps foreground the repressions upon which the fantasy of white subjective wholeness sits.

Having swept away his opposition, Jackson praised Donald Davidson and other members of the "twelve apostles" who authored *I'll Take My Stand*, calling them among the few scholars who already understood the Anglo-Saxonist intellectual Alice S. Green's definition of culture as "the sum of the experience of a whole race – its history, its wise lore, its lore of beauty embodied in story and song etc." This statement, Jackson acknowledges, was based on an interview conducted by "Virginia's eminent pianist-composer, John Powell," whose Anglo-Saxonist folk revival movement was the topic of the previous chapter. This acknowledgement is a trace of another critical displacement. There is a pencil-edited copy of this speech in John Powell's archived papers. Whether these edits were made by Powell or by Jackson is unknown, but the edits are all reflected in the final product. Regardless, it speaks to the mostly-unacknowledged influence that the radical eugenicist and Anglo-Saxonist had on Jackson's thinking.[363]

[363] Marked copy of "On Knowing Ourselves First," nd, Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 38. Papers of John Powell, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va., United States.



I called the replacement a detail; but it strikes me as an extremely important one, for on it depends perhaps the success or failure of the cultural struggle itself, that struggle which determines whether we, as individuals and as region and nation, are to be people of culture or those usually called provincials and even barbarians.

Since we teachers have to define our terms, it may be well to state now what I mean by barbarian, provincial, and person of culture: I shall define first a barbarian, and by example- myself, or, with a touch of boasting, my former self. I was a barbarian, and I know no better way to amplify this statement than to tell

Image 3.

These displacements rearranged truth with the power of desire and academic authority. They also represent an outright refusal to reconcile with those calling for racial redress at a time when discourses of redress were in the air. 1950 was just five years after the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, giving the many half-veiled references to both Confederate nostalgia and German racial theory woven throughout his speech a particular air of defiance against the self-flagellating apologetics of white progressive academics like Swain. Instead of venerating the Confederacy, Jackson venerates folk objects from the antebellum South. The strain of German racial theory that linked race, region, and language was masked through a process of translation that produced English phrases like “cultural struggle” and “historical-structural phases… of our racial life.” Jackson ends the speech with a reference to a “strong wind blowing usually in the right direction,” suggesting that it was possible to blow away the chaos of modernity in order to reveal the part of traditional Antebellum society that remained in the form of folk literature and “literature-in-tone.”[364] The folkloric remainder was the object of desire that

[364] Jackson, “On Knowing Ourselves First,” 6.

held together an image of the Confederacy as the last time that racial, regional, religious, and national identity cohered in the United States.

A sense of shame haunts this speech, and, as Lacan says, “it’s a shame (*un honte*)... which should produce a *hontology*” that is repressed within university discourse.[365] Indeed, many of the displacements within this speech function to either mask or overcome shame by producing an alternative interpretation of white American history. He refers directly to this process of overcoming shame when he speaks of his experience as “an American boy in Europe” who was “a young man in a foreign land striving to know its cultural ways without having first come to know those of my own land and region to any degree of depth.” In doing so, he admits, “I was a barbarian.”[366] His call to reform the public education system by teaching American children to “know ourselves first” through white folklore is thus presented as a way of defending future generations against seeing themselves in a similarly barbaric light. As the head of a professional academic organization calling for others to join him in leveraging their desire and authority to create an apparatus that would teach white youth to think of themselves as inheritors of a great cultural tradition, Jackson attempted to usurp the university discourse and align it with his particular ideological and idealistic values.

University discourse

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

The term *hontology* is a pun that suggests on the one hand that the ‘ontology’ of the university is couched in the operation of displacing the shame of the failed master, while also suggesting that shame is a structuring force within academia. In Lacan’s matheme for the university discourse, object *a* – the original shame of the master’s failure which sets discourse

[365] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 17.
[366] Jackson, “On Knowing Ourselves First,” 4.

into motion – is in the position of the repressed other of a community of knowledge bearers. This repression or refusal of shame gives purpose to the university's production.

This term also anticipates Jacques Derrida's notion of *hantology*, or 'hauntology' from *Specters of Marx* (1993) in reference to the constant return of Marx's revolutionary philosophy even a century after his death.[367] Hauntology for Derrida is a way of accounting for the presence of the disavowed promise for a future which never materialized; this promise returns like a ghost animated by an unfulfilled desire that prevents it from resting in peace. *Hontology* for Lacan is a different way of accounting for similar phenomena, but where the driving force behind the return of the repressed for Derrida is a desire that has lost its attachment to an object, Lacan's *hontology* emphasizes the work behind sustaining a disavowed historical reality.

A recurring joke in *Singin' Billy* foregrounds the relationship between disavowal and shame when the titular character is accused by suspicious townsfolk of being either a peddler or a "demned Abolitionist" upon arriving in the rural settlement in Northwestern South Carolina called Oconee Town. The singing master puts the matter to rest by declaring that he "naturally resent[s] the insult — as any native son of South Carolina should."

This accusation of being an abolitionist has a greater structural significance within the plot than its teasing nature might suggest. It is first levied by the impotent and immature town patriarch Uncle Kiah in the first act in order to incite a mob against the pious intruder into his domain. Upon raising suspicion against Walker, an unindividuated mass of townsfolk cry out "Abolitionist! Run him out o' town! Lynch him!" The accusation thus invokes a display of Kiah's power to create an undifferentiated mob out of the townsfolk, which Walker deftly rebuffs.[368] By refusing to allow Kiah to shame him, Walker establishes himself as Kiah's foil. His white spirituals are ultimately shown to have the same ability to turn the townsfolk into a swarm of

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[367] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 2012).
[368] Charles F. Bryan and Donald Davidson. *Singin' Billy : A Folk Opera*. (Columbia, S.C: Foundation for American Education, 1985)

voices. Indeed, Kiah's weakness as the town elder seems to be the root cause of the social and interpersonal turmoil which made Walker's arrival in town necessary. At the climax of the opera, which I will examine in greater detail later in this chapter, Walker leads the entire town in singing the hymn "Wondrous Love," both paralleling and dwarfing this much more pathetic attempt at driving him out of town. Walker has the discursive function of the university within *Singin' Billy* insofar as his 'refusal to die of shame' establishes his offering of building a singing school as an alternative to the failed master Uncle Kiah. But instead of presenting himself as a new master, Walker touts his privileged relationship with the true master signifier of the Lord. Learning to sing white spirituals in singing schools would impose order upon the disordered town by turning everyone into proud instruments of the divine.

At the same time, the accusation of being a "demned Abolitionist" speaks to Davidson's own refusal to feel ashamed of slavery, and *Singin' Billy* insists that its audience more than half a century after the Civil War feels the same way. Angie Maxwell explains that a sense of indignation towards the very notion that the white South should be ashamed of its past fueled the region's reaction to what Donald Davidson called the "Cold Civil War," whereby "the South became a major target in a sustained campaign to shame and humiliate whites in the region beginning after World War I."[369]

An ontological analysis speaks to a distributed sense of shame that permeates the university's production including cultural productions such as *Singin' Billy*. Shame is not quite repressed; it is consciously disavowed and denied. Vanderbilt historian Walter Lynn Fleming's expressed this refusal to be ashamed for the history of slavery in *The Sequel to Appomattox* when he stated that "the negro is the central figure in the reconstruction of the South… without [whom] there would have been no Civil War. Granting a war fought for any other cause, the task of reconstruction would, without him, have been comparatively simple."[370] As W.E.B. Du Bois

[369] Donald Davidson, *Southern Writers in the Modern World* (University of Georgia Press, 1958), 34.
[370] Walter L. Fleming, *The Sequel of Appomattox: A Chronicle of the Reunion of the States* (Yale University Press, 1919), 34.

observes, the historians of the Dunning School including Fleming were united by a desire to restore dignity to the white race by propagating a regime of untruth based on the idea that "evil must be forgotten, distorted, skimmed over."[371] In blaming the technical and moral failure of white mastery on complexity, Fleming tacitly acknowledges that Reconstruction was a failure of whites to manage slavery but then insists that this failure is understandable and not a question of morality.

Such displacements and replacements, I want to suggest, can be understood in terms of what Slavoj Zizek calls the "fetishistic disavowal" of inconvenient truths in service of conceptualizing the wholeness of an object of desire. Zizek thinks of fetishistic disavowal in terms of both ideological regimes as well as ecology, both of which take on the appearance of a wholeness which even its adherents understand is a conceptual impossibility. Its logic can thus be summed up in the tautological formula: "I know, but I don't want to know that I know, so I don't know."[372] Of course Jackson and Davidson knew on a conscious, but mostly-unarticulated, level that the past they were imagining did not and could not exist. Yet their writing showed a disciplined commitment to acting like they believed that it did. Davidson even articulates this strategy of conscious, knowing disavowal of reality in his poem "Sanctuary" (1933) when the narrator's father admits that belief in the intergenerational knowledge he was transmitting required "a trust… as though a vow":

> These old tales are like prayers. I only know
> This is the secret refuge of our race
> Told only from a father to his son,
> A trust laid on your lips, as though a vow
> To generations past and yet to come.

But acting like one believed in this myth made it possible to generate and sustain fantasies of the revival of the lost object of their desire, becoming its own kind of fundamentalist faith. As in

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[371] Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880* (Routledge, 2017), 722.
[372] Slavoj Zizek, *Violence* (Picador Press, 2008), 53.

fantasy, this technique was powered by a dynamo of pure desire for an impossible wholeness that both Jackson and Davidson foregrounded in their work from the late 1920s through the 1950s.

The ease in which Jackson performed the aforementioned series of disavowals in his 1950 presidential address to call for the radical revision of American educational and cultural institutions reflects the fact that this speech simply collected and compiled positions he had already articulated within his writings over the previous two decades. Disavowal fueled by desire was a cornerstone of Jackson's method of arguing on behalf of the folk authenticity of the white spiritual and the modern inauthenticity of its black counterpart. It made it possible to think of a 'white spiritual' tradition that remained untouched by the influence of slaves in the first place. And in making his case, Jackson demonstrates that the operation of disavowal is fueled by an engine of pure desire with the power to move imagined objects when he flippantly asserts that Negro spiritual did not deserve parity with the white spiritual tradition because it was "so far from [African Americans'] feeling as to what religious singing should be, so far from what they liked racially."[373]

Jackson sublimated this technique of disavowal within an experimental methodology combining ethnographic observation, historical and biographical research, and, most importantly, comparative textual analysis. He identified the source of popular Negro spiritual tunes such as "Amazing Grace" within Methodist and Baptist shape note hymnals by locating what Dena Epstein describes as "mere [melodic] fragments – interjections or 'wandering refrains' suitable for almost any occasion" within camp meeting tunes that were apparently reassembled and retitled into black spirituals.[374] While this gave Jackson's work an air of scientific authority, Jackson's later work did not necessarily rely upon this same methodological pretense.

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[373] Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 408.
[374] Dena Epstein, "A White Origin for the Black Spiritual? An Invalid Theory and How It Grew," *American Music* Vol. 1 (No. 2, 1983): 58.

As he increasingly performed sweeping acts of disavowal based on only fragments of evidence, he drew equally sweeping conclusions about their relationship to a white racial essence. Shortly after publishing *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands*, Jackson published a standalone article titled "Stephen Foster's Debt to American Folk-Song" where he performed the same method of comparing melodic fragments within Stephen Foster songs and Methodist camp meeting tunes to argue that Foster's attempts at referencing Negro folk songs with his music led him to unconsciously replicate "the racial melodic tendencies inherited from the British Isles."[375] The following year he asserted in his book *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America* that white spiritual tunes "*are part and parcel of the ancestral folk-melodism of the English-speaking peoples* (italics in the original)."[376]

By isolating the association between white spirituals and the white spirit through disavowal, Jackson could imagine a correspondence between the transcendental beauty of white spirituals and the kind of holistic racial identity that he would call for in 1950:

> I have been impressed, as I have come to know these tunes better, with their variety and beauty. They are believed, by the country folk who still sing them, to be "the most beautiful music on earth." When I first heard this sweeping judgement I put it down as emanating from an understandable through extravagant zeal, one which was all the greater perhaps since the singers, mostly oldsters, felt they were fighting for the very life of a dying cause. But I now see I was mistaken. The songs are living vigorously without being fought for. The country folk clearly realized – however they may have expressed the realization – that the 'good old songs' were ingrained in their racial souls and that for this reason it was the most completely soul-satisfying of all music from whatever source.[377]

Having explicitly articulated the belief that the significance of white spirituals was in their "completely soul-satisfying" quality, Jackson's subsequent writings often adopted an overtly conspiratorial or *völkisch* rhetoric that was by then firmly associated with the race nationalism of the Nazi party in Germany. His essay "Some Enemies of Folk-Music in America," for example, identifies two primary agents responsible for "bringing about the extinction of American

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[375] Jackson, "Stephen Foster's Debt to American Folk-Song," 155.
[376] George Pullen Jackson, *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America: two hundred and fifty tunes and texts: with an introduction and notes* (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1937), 19.
[377] Ibid., 21.

folk-song" while adding a new persecutory dimension to the history of white spirituals by suggesting that the "the spiritual folk-songs" were "carried thither by preacher-singers who were often jailed for their preaching if not the songs they sang."[378] In the essay "Wanted: An American Hans Sachs," which was published two years after the defeat of Nazi Germany, Jackson invokes Richard Wagner's Meistersinger to call for Americans to follow the example of Germany and establish institutions that would elevate the white spiritual canon at the expense of the "unrooted and unbound" music which dominated American musical listening practices at the time. "The Germans… have avoided the disaster," he writes, "and Richard Wagner's *Mastersingers of Nurnberg* is a parable showing how it's done."[379]

The disavowal which takes the place of method in Jackson's writings on white American folk music between *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* (1932) and his death in 1954 had particular currency in the white South between roughly 1925 and 1954. This time frame bookends two important court cases that substantiated, and then delegitimated, the discursive frame from which both Vanderbiltians spoke. 1925 was the year of the spectacular *State of Tennessee v. Scopes* trial which made Dayton, Tennessee, and the South as a whole, a laughing stock before the nation. And 1954 was when the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* initiated the decades-long process of ending *de jure* desegregation in the South. These trials also bookmark the emergence and dissolution of the white fugitive discourse as well as the introduction of the white spiritual fantasy and the loss of its plausibility.

The Scopes trial, especially, deserves a 'hontological' analysis. As Angie Maxwell shows, the Scopes trial locates the resentment towards public shaming "at the cradle of southern consciousness."[380] Further, both Maxwell and Edward Shapiro both demonstrate the

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[378] George Pullen Jackson, "Some Enemies of Folk-Music in America," *Papers Read by Members of the American Musicological Society at the Annual Meeting* (American Musicological Society, University of California Press, 1939) 83, 82.
[379] George Pullen Jackson, "Wanted: An American Hans Sachs," *Georgia Review* 1 (no. 1, 1947): 18-27.
[380] Angie Maxwell, *The Indicted South: Public Criticism, Southern Inferiority, and the Politics of Whiteness,* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 3.

extent that the Scopes trial elicited an indignant reaction from the Fugitive group, whose poetry before that point rarely made direct reference to the South.[381] This was a defining moment in the history of the Fugitive poets that set in motion their re-establishment as the Southern Agrarian critics, as Davidson, Tate, Ransom, and Warren all took the unexpected stance of supporting the Butler Act, which disallowed public schools to teach evolutionary theory. By 1926, all of the core members of the Fugitives published or were working on projects that defended the culture and traditions of the Confederacy as well as the roots of Southern fundamentalism. Jackson similarly invoked the notion of a war of attrition between rural and urban America, referring to the "skirmishes" surrounding "the Tennessee anti-evolutionary legislation" during the *State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* trial in 1925 as a moment when "the country has won a temporary advantage over its ultimate conqueror."[382]

Jackson first began publishing on Southern hymnody in the year following the Scopes trial in 1926, though he did not use the term "white spirituals." Titled "The Fa-Sol-La Folk" and published in the *Musical Courier*, this article instead characterized the rural white singers of Sacred Harp as "tonal fundamentalists" whose hymnody, according to the preface in a 1921 reprint of the *Sacred Harp* used in the 1923 annual session of the United Sacred Harp Musical Associated, contrasted with "the cold and secular" music of the North which created the "unfortunate condition which the chate music of this volume is intended to combat."[383] It was this opportunity at defending the religious virtue of religious rural whites without regards to slavery or the presence of black folk in the region that allowed Jackson to introduce for the first time in his writing a *völkisch* theory that tied together race, region, and music:

> The importance of the Fa-sol-la folk can be better estimated when we realize that it has been and still is the sole organized mode of esthetic expression of a very large mass of

[381] Edward S. Shapiro, "The Southern Agrarians, h. l. Mencken, and the Quest for Southern Identity." *American Studies* 13, no. 2 (1972): 75–92; Angie Maxwell, *The Indicted South: Public Criticism, Southern Inferiority, and the Politics of Whiteness.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
[382] Jackson, *White Spirituals*, 425.
[383] George Pullen Jackson, "The Fa-Sol-La Folk," *The Musical Courier* Vol. 93 (Iss. 11, 1926): 6.

> people; a mass which inhabits the hilly inland, Negro-less, city-less stretches of the South, that part running out from the south end of the Appalachians and off to the west, which might be called “the poor white belt.” It is the song of a simple, sober, God-fearing nordic people which shies at the cities, shies not only at their good music and at the steeped-over dregs of that music which come from Tin-Pan Alley, but even at the church music of the city denominations… It is their very own, a part of them, hence it is sacred. And they will defend it as long as they can against the newer institutions which are now entering their region by modern highways.[384]

Jackson’s attempts at isolating whiteness by disavowing blackness in this article is clumsier, but the pretense of defending the dignity of rural whites allows him to introduce the phrase ‘poor white belt’ as a negation of the idea of the Black Belt in anticipation of this same treatment that he would apply to the concept of Negro spirituals in 1932. And it is only after displacing the problem of blackness that Jackson is able to start singing the praises of the “simple, God-fearing, nordic” whites who populated the region.

Though Jackson does not name the Scopes trial or the Butler Act within this piece, it represents his participation within the small network of Southern academics especially located in and around Vanderbilt University who sided with rural fundamentalists in the wake of the trial. His first article on Southern hymnody demonstrates how the *Scopes* trial initiated a shift in the discursive field that made it possible to take a defensive position on behalf of Southern whiteness without reference to slavery. In fact, it disavowed the evolutionary foundation of race science which served as the primary academic justification for slavery. Instead of invoking evolved differences between whites and blacks, it defends the spiritual dignity of white Southerners to justify Jim Crow segregation. Maxwell explains the effect that this had on the Fugitive circle:

> In the wake of the criticism echoing from Dayton, Tennessee, such motivation took a strange turn. Ransom, Davidson, Warren, and Tate, each in his own way, attempted to salvage a growing list of determinants of white southern identity – God-fearing religion, an imagined European hierarchy, and a sanctified genealogy – all of which they believed provided stability in the turbulent onslaught of industrialism and progress… They were

[384] Ibid., 10.

> no longer fugitives fleeing the South. They embraced it and tried to convince others to do the same.[385]

My own argument hinges on the notion that this project transformed the southern university and the Fugitives within it precisely because it was a mark of shame to reject, analyze, or overcome. It displaced the shame of slavery with a more defensible shame of cultural backwardness. And this made it possible to reorient the discursive relationship between white southerners and slavery to focus on the relationship between white southerners and northern elitists. The *Scopes* trial made a spectacle of white Southerners in terms of religiosity and cultural backwardness, making it possible to both imagine and defend the white South on its own terms.

The Scopes trial placed the white South within a clearly-articulated set of discursive binaries. It was religious and not scientific, rural and not urban, traditional and not progressive, and white rather than biracial. More fundamentally, the South operated on a logic that equated survival with resistance to change against the North's logic of progress as the transformation of everything. In this regard, the South became a stable and coherent object that could be recovered through what Allen Tate identifies in his contribution to *I'll Take My Stand* as a "reaction… [that] aims at cutting away the overgrowth and getting back to the roots."[386]

The State of Tennessee v. Scopes and the *Brown v. Board of Education* trials mark the rough beginning and slow end of the plausibility of this fetishistic disavowal within the white southern university system. I say 'rough' and emphasize the location of the university system because it is a logic that made the idea of the Confederacy worth defending in the first place, and it continues to operate up in neo-Confederate sentiments and movements up to the present day. Yet it is also the case that the Fugitive defense of the Butler Act shook up the progressive Southern academic establishment that was most associated with Howard Odum's progressive sociological empire at the University of North Carolina and the Vanderbilt English department

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[385] Maxwell, *The Indicted South*, 108.
[386] Allen Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion." *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (Louisiana State University Press, 1977).

under the chairmanship of Edward Mims.[387] And although the *Brown v. Board* decision was met with a movement of massive resistance which certainly included universities, it revealed the hollowness of any defense of the white South that did not reference the oppression of African Americans. In short, whereas the *State of Tennessee v. Scopes* helped make it possible to defend the white South as a self-contained object that did not carry any traces of blackness, *Brown v. Board of Education* shattered this object for all but a minority that increasingly had to define itself both outside of and against the university establishment.

Fugitive Desires in the Land of Eden

Jackson, Davidson, and the core Fugitive group did not respond to the Scopes trial by outright rejecting the theory of evolution. Instead, they defended the South's right to believe in religious myth. John Crowe Ransom presented the most developed response to the trial in his book *God Without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy* (1930), criticizing industrial scientism for robbing science of its mystery and abstracting the individual object from the infinite series it belongs to. Science and religion and they both follow the Law of an imperceptible transcendent order. In a distinctly Lacanian maneuver, Ransom writes that "any object is an instance of a rule, but wonderful must be the authority of the Rule." A single rule "simply has distributive validity," he continues, "but then a Rule is also the existence of a King; and if his act is nothing but distribution, think what an infinite act, and what a Distributor he must be!" The truth behind Evolution for Ransom is that it represent an "infinite system by a fabulous being: a Logos, a Word, a Principle, a Law, a Cause, a Whole, a Universal, a Platonic Idea – or God himself, construed as the aggregate and energizing unity of all the masses, or the forms, or the wills, or the objects within some other classification."[388] Industrial scientism, however, refused to

[387] See Edwin Mims, *The Advancing South: Stories of Progress and Reaction* (Doubleday, 1926)
[388] John Crowe Ransom, *God Without Thunder* (Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1930), 294-295.

recognize Evolution as a mythic signifier of the infinite, making its use as a weapon against the respect that Southerners had towards the mystery of the imperceptible especially egregious.

A thread connecting Ransom's thought with that of Lacan and Zizek is a theory that the first step in piercing through the obfuscating and narrowing veil of rationality is to recognize that objects of perception are only fragments of a transcendental imperceptible Object that we give various names (God, the Law, the Word, the Universal). There is, in other words, a truth that precedes language. Further, all three recognize desire as a barrier separating the subject from this unitary Object. For Ransom, science under industrialization becomes an apparatus that "directs us to amuse ourselves, between desires, *by simulating and putting through another desire-process.*" Industrial scientism conditions desire by attaching it to objects and compelling us to work to produce them. Desire then signifies the sacrifice of pleasure, which can only be regained "when we neither desire the world nor pretend to control it."[389] This can only be achieved by rejecting industrialism and living an esthetic life of pleasure which he would soon associate with the agrarian society of the rural white South.[390]

Ransom helps show how a desire to restore the social relations within an idealized South cuts through the archetype of the Fugitive that gave the Vanderbilt Fugitive poets their name. The Fugitive is a recurring figure within Donald Davidson's poetry and prose, and it returns in Jackson's depiction of 'fasola folk' of a 'lost tonal tribe' who managed to remain whole by refusing the temptation to modernize. Davidson's and Jackson's Fugitive is only a fugitive of the law by technicality as he swears his allegiance to the Law of the Old South that had been killed and replaced by the progressive law of industrial modernity. All of these phantasms – the fugitive, the fasola folk, and the Law of the Old South – are iterations of the same objective split that refer to the same primary injury of the loss of exclusive ownership, property, and inheritance rights under the new regime. Davidson articulates the relationship between an imagined

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[389] Ibid., 173.
[390] Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," in *I'll Take My Stand*.

Fugitive Southerner and the law in a 1945 article responding to the symposium *What the Negro Wants* published in the *Sewanee Review* under Allen Tate's editorship. Writing that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were "legislative fictions… planted in the Constitution by fraud and force" after the South's defeat in the Civil War, he defends the legitimacy of *de facto* segregation by invoking a white Southerner who remembers that "his grandfather before him, and his father afterwards, never at any time agreed to accept the Negro… as a member of white society."[391]

The imaginary objects in this passage – the white Southerner, his ancestors, and the 'real' law before the Civil War that had been undermined by the 'fictitious' law of progressive modernity – are all iterations of object *a* insofar as they all exist as manifestations of the sense of loss and lack at the heart of post-Reconstruction whiteness. Yet they each also sit in various proximities to the primary cut. Closest to the cut is the displaced law of the Old South, and this object makes it possible to imagine the ancestors who once ruled as the enunciating voice of the Other. The image of these ancestral masters makes it possible to conjure up the figure of a modern white Fugitive who honors his ancestors and their domain through acts of remembrance. There is no Fugitive who does not 'remember' his ancestors, just as there are no ancestors of significance without the idea that they held now-lost exclusive rights and privileges in the white South. Each new object brings *objet a* closer to the present, with the Fugitive most closely resembling men like Jackson, Davidson, Powell, and others in their intellectual circle.

The white spiritual represents one additional abstraction, insofar as it signified the inalienable property that the imagined white fugitive inherited from his ancestors in spite of the new regime. Davidson was especially explicit about this. In his essay "White Spirituals in the Land of Eden," he locates the white spiritual within "Eden" and uses it to characterize the *lack* of desire of rural white Southerners who have maintained the wholesome connection to their ancestors that Davidson and Jackson themselves desired:

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[391] Donald Davidson. "Preface to Decision," *The Sewanee Review* 53 (no. 3, 1945): 399.

> The folk of Eden do not have to study much over what to keep and what to abandon, because they know how they wish to live. The town of Eden keeps some things, and the country around it other things, but they do not make it their business to disturb one another where their ideas of preservation do not happen to coincide... Thus it happens that the land of Eden has kept alive, almost unwittingly, the all-day singings which have been a feature of life in the South since eighteenth-century times.[392]

Davidson does not speak in this essay from the university discourse, insofar as he drops all pretenses of method. Instead, he speaks as a hysteric by affirming Jackson's conclusions while referring to nothing other than his own desire for Jackson to be correct:

> Their musical style drew one's mind back to the great camp-meeting days, from which songs improvised and remembered found their way into collections like "The Sacred Harp." As for Dr. Jackson's argument that the Negro spirituals derive ultimately from the white spirituals, I thought as I listened that no one acquainted with the controversy between those who argue for a white origin and those who hold out for an exclusively Negro origin could remain unconvinced in the light of the Sacred Harp performance. Songs like "My troubles will be over," "Oh, who will come and go with me," and "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand," were remarkably like Negro spirituals, but they were demonstrably older than the recorded versions of the Negro spirituals that resemble them. They had been created in the heyday of the shape-note choral art and had been kept alive by the obscure devotees of Sacred Harps and Southern Harmonies. Doubtless the Negro had adapted them in his peculiar way, but he had first of all taken his songs from the source where he had got his Bible, his plow, his language.[393]

In imagining a return to the time of the "great camp-meeting days," Davidson brings object *a* into a close hermeneutic circle. It suggests that the modern white fugitive may have not been fully severed from his ancestral tradition, making it possible to believe that more of the spirit of the Old White South survived than was previously assumed. The white spiritual, in this regard, was infused with a futurity that the white fugitive needed an object to conceptualize.

I want to riff on Lacan's theory of discourse and object *a* by suggesting that each iteration of object *a* on this chain references a prior discursive modulation as well as an act of theft from the slave and her discursive descendents. Whereas the idealized South as a region of white mastery is the object *a* of the master, the image of the white ancestors who once ruled the

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[392] Donald Davidson, "The Sacred Harp in the Land of Eden," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 10 (no. 2, 1934): 203-217.
[393] Ibid., 206

region are the product of the post-master discourse of the university. This speaks to my claim in Chapter One that one of the primary functions of the university was to theorize an evolutionary history of whiteness at a time when white supremacy needed new justification for itself. The figure of the white fugitive was itself the product of a group of analytic poets who did not have faith in the university's ability to properly mythologize the ancestral masters it conjured. Finally, the white spiritual, though a product of a university discourse, was elaborated upon by Davidson and Jackson as a way to infuse the fugitive myth of the past with a faith in the possibility of not just mythologizing, but restoring in a literal sense, the original lost object. As Lacan observes, the hysteric's desire for a master can be so strong that "the question must be asked if it is not from this that the invention of the discourse of the Master started."[394] This observation, however, does not speak to the form that object *a* takes within post-master discourse.

I want to make the case that each iteration of object *a* on the chain following the white South are stolen objects from slave and post-slave discourses that function to disavow the truths contained within the original. The reality of black slave fugitivity in the South pre-exists the conceptualization of the white fugitive, even though the fugitive poets never acknowledged their southern fugitive counterpart.[395] Yet the white fugitive's central grievance is the loss of the very same property rights which were the condition of the slave's oppression. In this regard, it can be said that the slave fugitive is the fugitive of the white fugitive's ancestors, just as the white fugitive's ancestors carry the mark of an injury made upon them by the slave fugitive.

Whether or not the body of music that Jackson called the 'white spiritual' was the ancestor of the Negro spiritual tradition, the fact remains that its name refers to the pre-existing concept of the Negro spiritual which it works to discredit and disavow. This is to say that the

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[394] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis,* 165.
[395] Allen Tate explains in a retrospective, the term was chosen because "a Fugitive was quite simply a Poet: the Wanderer, or even the Wandering Jew, the Outcast, the man who carries the secret wisdom around the world." "The Fugitive 1922-1925: A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION TWENTY YEARS AFTER." *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 3, no. 3 (1942): 79.

idea of the Negro spiritual had a function as an object of desire within black fugitive discourse long before the 'white spiritual' was conjured into existence. The debt that the white spiritual has to the concept of the black spiritual is expressed through a series of disavowals which fashioned the white spiritual as the mirror opposite of the black spiritual in a number of significant ways. Jackson's emphasis on the literary basis of the white spiritual runs counter to the primary orality of the black spiritual that defies being captured through notation. The white spiritual is conceived of as a fundamentally disciplinary object that is to be sung collectively, while discourse on the black spiritual emphasizes its individuating function that encouraged slaves to imagine the possibility of freedom. And perhaps most fundamentally, the white spiritual imagines the Antebellum South as an idyllic agrarian community while the black spiritual bears witness to the violence of slavery and the very real stakes behind the decision to become a fugitive. These and other displacements became part of the white spiritual's core identity, and it is thus existentially indebted to the black spiritual which it is said to pre-date.

This recognition helps us reconcile the ambiguity in Lacan's usage of the object *a* in discourse and fantasy; though he only explains that it represents the surplus production of the slave which the master appropriates, I want to suggest that it also functions as the battery of others' desire which the master makes his own only in retrospect. This explains the tertiary function of the white spiritual within the post-master discourses as opposed to the black spiritual's more primary function as a record of the freedom dreams of the slave and the demonic grounds she inhabited within the original master-slave dialectic. The anamorphic white spiritual thus can be said to have two ontologies; it is both the externalization of a cut at the core of white subjectivity and a stolen, signifying, fugitive object of the slave.

The Analyst and the Confederate Dead

But his pliant hand is dust.

Here is no singing tongue.
Only the mute cool rust
Fingers thee, loosely strung,
And men read, as read they must,
What once was sung.

- Donald Davidson, “Old Harp”

And where, O Allen Tate, are the dead? You have buried them completely out of sight – with them yourself and me. God help us, I must say. You keep on whittling your art to a finer point, but are you also not whittling yourself. What is going to happen if the only poetry you can allow your conscience to approve is a poetry of argument and despair. Fine as such poetry may be, is it not a Pyrrhic victory?

- Letter from Donald Davidson to Allen Tate, 15 February, 1927

When the Fugitive poetry group issued the first edition of its self-titled poetry magazine Vanderbilt University in 1922, the term ‘fugitive’ referred to a sense of alienation from the elitist intellectual and literary environment in the South. The opening statement of the first issue of the *Fugitive* magazine published read “The FUGITIVE flees from nothing faster than from the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South.”[396] Ransom’s “Necrological,” widely-considered to be the first mature poem of the group, indeed paints a dreary portrait of war that is a far cry from Davidson’s exalted memory of the Confederacy. A Medieval monk surveys a bloody battlefield strewn with corpses. The dead bodies, the monk observes, had become both castrated and deracinated; the bodies were not white but “gory and fabulous,” and he fixates on the body of a knight whose “little groin… was spilled by a stone.” “Necrological” does not mourn the state of white southern identity in the aftermath of the Civil War. It studies it and diagnoses the folly of its fantasies. Even the title of Ransom’s contribution to *I’ll Take My Stand*, “Reconstructed but Unregenerate,” locates the desire for transcendence and resurrection of the lost object of the South within the limited subjectivity of the ‘unregenerate’ post-Reconstruction subject. In Ransom’s *An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy* written in response to the *State of Tennessee*

[396] Cowan, *The Fugitive Poets*, 21.

v. Scopes trial, he offers a penetrating criticism of what Lacan recognizes as the master's discourse function to "repress what inhabits mythical knowledge" by "making truth a play of values."[397]

Ransom's fugitive defense of the rural South's religiosity hinges on the recognition that truth lies outside the realm of the purely-perceptible. His critique of northern rationality suggests that it had become its own master discourse which could only create new subjects through theft and disavowal of truth located beyond the boundaries of discourse. Like Lacan, Ransom suggests that this discourse could only "fail to possess the world as a precisely known system of objects." As a Fugitive, he devoted his work to forcing science to face "the moral of an infinite… that the mind must confess to its impotence and rest in humility."[398] The figures populating his poetry and writing were themselves fugitives. Like the medieval monk, his fugitives were aware of the epistemic limits that made mastery both impossible and fatally dangerous.

If Ransom's fugitive poetry and pre-Agrarian writings articulate the skepticism of an analyst, even Davidson's pre-Scopes poems expressed a desire to intimately know his ancestral masters. The narrator of the poem "Old Harp" from his first book *An Outland Piper* (1924) conjures an "ancient master" who once "sang of old, old things in tongues men have forgot" on the dusty instrument. That the imagined music of this imagined master was lost leaves the narrator lamenting that "men must read, as read they must / What once was sung."[399] The old harp of this poem refers to a physical instrument, and there is no indication that Davidson was even aware of the existence of the *Sacred Harp* at this time. Yet this poem's presentation of the object of desire as the song of a long-dead master sheds light on Davidson's eventual interest in the white spiritual. It also speaks to the fact that Davidson had a rather different idea of what it meant to be a fugitive than Ransom. The imaginary figures populating Ransom's poems all bore witness to the senseless cruelty of the Other. They were the priest of "Necrological" hiding in a

[397] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 91.
[398] Ransom, *God without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defense of Orthodoxy*, 275.
[399] Davidson, "Old Harp," *An Outland Piper* (Houghton Mifflin, 1924), 6-7.

church while men killed each other outside; they were the namesake of “Dead Boy” who was not “the first-fruits” that “the Lord hath taken” but rather “was the old tree’s late branch wrenched away”; they were the woman in “Janet Waking” whose lover was sensely killed by “a transmorgrifying bee.” Davidson’s fugitives, on the other hand, tended to desire the same thing: to resurrect a lost master (killed by industrial modernity and northern scoundrels) and enjoy the pleasure of being subjugated under its rule.

In this regard, the poetry of the Fugitive group moved beyond the university discourse of the Vanderbilt English department by cultivating two different fugitive discourses. The first was an analytic discourse of Ransom, Tate, and Warren whose writing maintained the distinctions between myth, history, memory, and mastery. This is the final of Lacan’s four master discourses:

Analytic discourse

$\underline{a} \rightarrow \underline{\$}$

$S_2 \quad S_1$

Agent	Other
Truth	Product/ Loss

Lacan presents the analytic discourse as a reaction to the hysterical discourse, responding to the hysteric’s desperate and disorganized pleas for the master’s return with silence. Indeed, the rest of the Fugitive group often regarded Davidson’s nostalgic romanticism as naive. Though all of their poetry was populated by fugitive figures who desired a master to suture the wound of a subjective split, Ransom, Tate, and Warren’s poetry maintained an analytic and skeptical distance from these barred subjects. Only Davidson’s poetry strove to be, as Allen Tate observed “a history of [his] mind” as a wounded subject fixated on redress.[400] Tate’s analytic gaze sometimes indeed seemed to be aimed at understanding Davidson himself, and his fantasy of the Confederate South. His poem “Ode to the Confederate Dead” depicts a hysterical

[400] Tate to Davidson, 14 May 1926. In *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate* (University of Georgia Press, 1974), 166.

subject much like Davidson who enters a decrepit and unkempt Confederate cemetery and, blinded to the decrepitude around him, begins fantasizing about the glory of the Confederacy. While the man revels in the past, the narrator makes the deflating observation that:

> Night is the beginning and the end
> And in between the ends of distraction
> Waits mute speculation, the patient curse
> That stones the eyes, or like the jaguar leaps
> For his own image in a jungle pool, his victim.

The poem, Tate later explained in a self-critical essay, was "'about' solipsism… or about Narcissism, or any other ism that denotes the failure of the human personality to function objectively in nature and society."[401] While I do not suggest that the subject of the poem (referred to as 'you') was intended to be Davidson, Tate sent this poem to Davidson in the midst of a dramatic literary dispute between the two, eliciting a defensive response.

To be sure, both Tate and Ransom still participated in a discourse that structurally displaced and repressed black life in the South. There are a couple of ways to account for this. First, it speaks to the ethical and political dimensions of their analytic discourse. Tate acknowledged this distinction between the impasse he arrived at in poetry and his personal political commitments, writing that "to those who may identify the man at the gate with the author of the poem I would say: He differs from the author in not accepting a "practical solution," for the author's personal dilemma is perhaps not quite so exclusive as that of the meditating man." Lacan explains that the analyst's discourse exists in counterpoint to the master's discourse (it is the only discourse that requires two rotations in either direction to reach) as it has a particularly clear-headed understanding that "discourse is bound in the interests of the subject."[402] Tate and Ransom indeed understood this. In Tate's essay contribution to *I'll Take My Stand* titled "Remarks on the Southern Religion," Tate identifies within religion a "violence" that belief performs on reality which could be useful for his preferred political project of reaction. Like

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[401] Tate, "Narcissus as Narcissus," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 14 (no. 1, 1938): 108-122.
[402] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 92.

religion, Tate writes, “reaction is the most radical of programs; it aims at cutting away the overgrowth and getting back to the roots. A forward-looking radicalism is a contradiction; it aims at rearranging the foliage.”[403] In this sense, Tate instrumentalized the insight of the analyst as to the difference between knowledge and truth by using religion and myth to manipulate the hysterical discourse of Southern fundamentalism rather than treat it. In other words, Tate recognized that fetishistic disavowal cuts reality and creates a false vision but found use in harnessing this operation. If northern industrial rationality imposed a highly-organized yet superficial reality upon the South, Tate held that an earnest belief in religion and myth could shatter it so a new reality in the image of the myth could be built. Yet his essay ends by anticipating his eventual disavowal of the racism of the agrarian project in the 1950s. He admits an ambivalence as to the possibility of reconciling knowledge of the untruth of myth with the political necessity of believing in it. “The Southerner is faced with a paradox,” he concludes, “he must use an instrument, which is political, and so unrealistic and pretentious that he cannot believe in it, to re-establish a private, self-contained, and essentially spiritual life. I say that he must do this; but that remains to be seen.”[404]

Whereas Tate was unable or unwilling to extend his analytic gaze to include black Southerners, Davidson turned the technique of disavowal into dogma. Unlike Ransom and Tate, who both spoke as cynical yet partisan analysts of the drama between the neurotic North and hysterical South, Davidson tended to speak through the figure of an imagined white southerner whose subjectivity was split between a social historical self that remembered the wholeness of the past, on the one hand, and a public self capable of existing unmarked within modernity, on the other. These split subjects were Davidson’s imagined fugitives, and they were also reiterative versions of himself. In “The Tall Men,” the narrator expresses frustration towards the cynicism of modernists like Tate and Ransom who did not believe in the possibility of

[403] Allen Tate, “Remarks on a Southern Religion,” in *I’ll Take My Stand*, 175.
[404] Ibid., 175

reconstructing one's racial past through encounters with what T.S. Eliot may have called its "dry salvages," which Susan Hegeman explains represent "existing emblems of the past's presence" in Eliot's poetry:[405]

> I have loitered by graves. I have trod old floors,
> Tiptoed through musty rooms and glanced at letters
> Spread under glass and signed Yr Obt Servant ,
> And wistfully conned old platitudes in stone.
> But shall I say the praise of men, bright honor,
> The songs of my own race and the ways of fighters
> Are something read in a book only, or graven
> Only in stone and not in the hearts of men?

This is but one of Davidson's many fugitives of modernity who contemplate old objects in order to imagine the subjective wholeness of the white men who came before him. These objects help him 'remember' both his inherited wealth and inherited grudges. He is one of the "hardy few… untaken and unwanted" in his poem "Refugees" who wait with "weapons hid" for the right moment to revolt; he is the "immovable body" of the essay "Still Rebels, Still Yankees;" he is the white man who remembers that his grandfather "never agreed" to the "legislative fiction" of the Fourteenth Amendment; he is the father in the poem "Sanctuary" who tells his son of a secret "refuge of our race" hidden within the Appalachian wilds to which he should retreat "if ever defeat is black."[406]

Lacan identifies repetition as one of the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, associating with what he calls "the primary process" of "rupture, between perception and consciousness."[407] This primary process, which Lacan also refers to as the "primal scene" and even "some kind of original sin" in his seminar, gives truth through the hysteric to the axiom that "man's desire is the desire of the Other."[408] Davidson's repetitive and reiterative depictions of

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[405] Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1999), 34.
[406] Donald Davidson, *Still Rebels, Still Yankees and Other Essays*. (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1999); Donald Davidson, "Sanctuary," *Poems 1922-1961* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966): 71-73.
[407] Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1964. Trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977), 56.
[408] Ibid., 38.

characters resembling himself who each contemplate relics in order to honor their ancestors and remember their inheritances speaks to the hysterical necessity of constantly repeating the act of disavowal in order to stave off the return of the repressed truth. In this regard, he distinguished himself from Ransom and Tate as analysts, and also from Jackson and the other Vanderbilt faculty like Walter Lynwood Fleming and Herbert Sanborn who were all more comfortable speaking as representatives of the university.

According to Lacan, the repetition at the heart of the hysteric discourse highlights its relationship to fantasy. The alterity of the master signifier leaves the hysteric's knowledge production compulsive and disorganized. In want of a structuring principle, the hysteric can invent a master that he or she "can reign over."[409] This nonexistent, hypothetical master is the object that drives repetition and answers the question 'what does So-and-so want?'

Davidson made it fairly easy to discern that he wanted the resurrection of the white South as he imagined it. The white South itself was the master of Davidson's hysteric discourse rather than the historical figure of the slave master. Davidson to associate the antebellum South with a subjective and social wholeness that was once rooted in the myth of the gentle paternal master through inventing a new myth that was based on a different set of associations between race, wholeness, and the Law. Instead of guaranteeing slave ownership rights, it was abstracted into a divine authority that simply granted exclusive privileges to a chosen race whose ancestors invented it. The slave master was now just one of many fugitives populating this fantasy, and in his place was the South as the master signifier that was the chosen subject of the God of the Second Great Awakening from the first half of the 19th century. Just the Second Great Awakening brought with it a new understanding of revival as an ecstatic lived experience and an anticipation of the Messiah's imminent return, the white fugitive fantasy sought to capture the experience of ecstatic suspended existence which was the allure of the Methodist and Baptist camp meeting, which Jackson argued also gave rise to the white spiritual tradition.

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[409] Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis,* 129.

As biographer of the fugitive group Louise Cowan observes, the fugitive figures who populated Davidson's poetry and other writings all turned to history in order to demonstrate "the thinness of the present compared to the fullness of the past" in order to "recapture not the past but its plenitude."[410] Tate, however, recognized as early as 1926 that this "plentiude" was itself thin in Davidson's disorganized fantasy of the past. In a response to a request for criticism of Davidson's "The Tall Men," Tate performed an analytic cut into Davidson' fantasy of the past when he wrote to him that the flood of historical references in the poem were an attempt at "envisag[ing] an experience of the first order with a symbolism of a lower order" which made him conclude that:

> You are really trying to write a history of your mind, but this mind is not as simple as you think; it cannot be so homogeneously accounted for as your schematism would lead one to believe. At the present moment you represent the convergence of forces that will not be adequately represented by reference to Tennessee history, and *the result is thinness*; the symbols seem trivial. This brings up *the second quality – incoherence*. The triviality of the symbol will not carry all the emotion you bring to bear on it… and the *disparity produces a jagged, incoherent pattern* (emphasis added).[411]

Davidson responded to this criticism well, though he did not seem to internalize its implications. When he sent Tate a copy of his poetry collection titled *The Tall Men* which was being sent to publication, however, it produced a remarkable series of exchanges between the two which highlighted the relationship between the two as being akin to that of the hysteric and his analyst. On December 29th, 1926, Tate wrote back to Davidson imploring him not to allow the manuscript to be published. There was simply too much bad writing and the collection was fatally incoherent. "I think the bad verse in it may be due to a desire to round out the scheme of a vision when the vision isn't there," he offered, "or, grant the presence of the vision *in a certain condition*, this condition is disordered, and the texture of every section of the book is disordered

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[410] Louise Cowan, *The Fugitive Group: A Literary History*, 102.
[411] Tate to Davidson, 14 May 1926. In *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate*, 166.

too, mixed, repetitive, and abounding in over-emphasis."[412] Calling it a "failure to reduce the material at hand to order," he went on to define poetry as an analytic operation for articulating irreparable loss:

> It isn't that I disagree with your 'ideas'; I am personally inclined to believe that Southerners are better men than Yankees, that the fall of the South meant a state for the pig, and that some sort of love is the keynote of ethics. But if I *dis*believed these doctrines, I should feel as much interest in them, *as poetry,* as I do believing in them.[413]

Davidson, understandably, was embarrassed by this blunt criticism. He responded by accusing Tate of having drunk too much bad liquor and for holding "Victorian" aesthetic values. In response, Tate wrote back suggesting that Davidson's poetry was "neither bird, nor beast, nor fowl: it is not poetry, it is not philosophy, it is not sociology: it is a little of all three, and none." In plain language, he named the truth that Davidson's poetry failed to confront: "our past is buried so deep that it is all but irrecoverable."[414]

Davidson responded with silence, only breaking it after Tate sent him a copy of "Ode to the Confederate Dead." Davidson immediately recognized that the depiction of a solipsistic Southerner devoted to the long-dead Confederacy was effectively a poetic continuation of their argument. "Your *Elegy* (sic) is not for the Confederate dead," he recognized, "but for your own dead emotion, or mine (*you* think)." Davidson followed this acknowledgment up with the pointed question "And where, O Allen Tate, are the dead?," articulating the difference between poetry of analysis and poetry of desire.

This question is just as incisive as Tate's analytical critique of Davidson's romantic attachment to an invented past. The analyst's truth, of course, was that the Confederate dead were dead and buried. Yet this was not Davidson's understanding, and this question speaks to the essential difference between a hysterical and analytic understanding of poetry. For

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[412] Tate to Davidson, 29 December, 1926, 181.
[413] Ibid.
[414] Ibid.

Davidson, poetry could enspirit the dead and even bring them back to life. If, as Lacan identifies in his analysis of *Antigone*, there is a distinction between real and symbolic death, Davidson used poetry to keep the Confederate dead on symbolic life support.[415] Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead," in this perspective, both denied and mocked the hysterical truth that the Confederacy was still symbolically alive.

This question highlights the distinction between two different discursive orientations of poetic solipsism. Though Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead" diagnoses the pathological solipsism of the neo-Confederate hysteric, Davidson's response to Tate suggests that his poetic disavowal of reality and embrace of symbolic fantasy was a conscious ethical imperative. In refusing to put the Confederate dead to rest, Davidson maintained that the Old South was still symbolically alive insofar as it still had the power to shape identities, generate fantasies, and forge memories. Tate merely articulated an analytic discursive truth while missing Davidson's insight. If Davidson's writing was defined by a symptomatic thinness and incoherence that reveals the desperation behind his desire, Tate's writing was repressive and marked by failure. It could not reconcile the dreariness of modernity with the desire he shared with Davidson.

In this sense, the essential difference between Davidson and Tate was not of ideology nor of desire. Rather, it was a difference in their response to the problem of the Confederate dead. Tate's analytic discourse functioned to repress the symbolic power of the dead by treating them as a mythic, rather than real, presence in the South. Davidson, on the other hand, regarded them as the stuff of a fantasy with the power to bring the master of the South back to life. Though white Southerners would never be able to convince themselves of their own absolute sovereignty, Davidson held on to the possibility that they could once again become the favored subjects of the law.

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[415] Lacan how Antigone enters a state of being "between two deaths" in the interrum between when she is entombed alive and her physical death in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis.*

Singin' Billy and the Desire for a Master

Though Donald Davidson and Allen Tate eventually reconciled as friendly colleagues, Davidson never lost his faith in the possibility of restoring the spirit of the Confederacy through poetry while Tate could bring himself to believe in it. By the 1950s, Davidson was the sole member of the founding Fugitive poets to remain at Vanderbilt, and indeed even in the South. John Crowe Ransom had become a fixture at Kenyon College in Ohio, Robert Penn Warren would leave a position at the University of Minnesota to teach at Yale in 1951 while Tate took over Warren's old post at Minnesota. *Singin' Billy* was an attempt by Davidson to work with a new group of artists and intellectuals who still believed in the Southern agrarian project. Davidson sent a copy of *Singin' Billy*'s libretto shortly after its run in 1952, writing that the experience working on the production brought him "the highest, truest joy, the most profoundly stirring moments [he had] known since the Fugitive days, with you."[416] Two days later, Tate responded with flattery, writing "all that humming of operatic activity in Nashville, with you in the limelight, must portend a new renaissance."[417] However he also returned his copy of the libretto, apologizing for not having had time to read over it.

Tate understood Davidson's ambition to be a leading figure of a spiritual awakening in the white South, but his disinterest in the libretto may reflect a lack of faith. To the modernist poet, the plot of *Singin' Billy*, George Pullen Jackson's rhetoric about 'white spirituals,' and the fantastical excesses of opera itself likely seemed too fanciful to be the basis of a reactionary program that required its participants to earnestly believe in its founding myths. According to Slavoj Zizek and Mladen Dolar, opera was "from its very beginning, opera was dead, a stillborn child of musical art."[418] Opera occupies a space, according to Zizek and Dolar and as Davidson

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[416] Davidson to Tate, 4 May, 1952. *The Literary Correspondences of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate*, 365.
[417] Allen Tate to Donald Davidson, 6 MAy 1952. *The Literary Correspondences of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate*, 365.
[418] Slavoj Zizek and Mladen Dolar, *Opera's Second Death* (New York: Routledge, 2017), viii.

said of the Confederate dead, between two deaths. Opera is a "huge relic, an enormous anachronism, a persistent revival of a lost past, a reflection of the lost aura."[419] The fact that Davidson responded to the increasing legitimacy of desegregationist rhetoric with an opera set in an antebellum all-white settlement town speaks to opera's ability to not only depict but "retroactively recreat[e] the mythical past that nobody believes in but yet is dearly needed and piously re-created."[420]

The quality of being 'between two deaths' was shared by both opera and the discursive South that was waiting for the right moment to 'rise again.' Though opera was not a common form of postbellum cultural production in the South, opera is a powerful medium for crafting fantasies of nationalistic revival. Opera's excesses can push at the boundaries of the truth that analytic discourse validates, and its canon is filled with protagonists – Dido, Carmen, Salome, Siegfried – who die so that their voices can live outside the confines of the opera house in the fantasy life of its spectators. "When we enter the opera," Dolar suggests, "we have to deal with something too silly and ridiculous for philosophy to tackle but something that psychoanalysis has put on the agenda: the logic of fantasy."[421] The fantasy of opera makes it possible to think of death as a precursor to the kind of symbolic immortality that white Southerners ascribed to the Confederacy.

Singin' Billy in particular stages what Lacan identifies as the hysteric's fantastical desire to conjure a master to be subjectified by. It distills the fantasy elements in George Pullen Jackson's profile of William 'Singin' Billy' Walker from *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* into a scenario that Davidson claims "represents an imagined (though entirely possible) episode in Walker's career."[422] This appeal to the imagined possibilities evoked by Jackson's scholarship

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[419] Ibid., 3.
[420] Ibid., 4.
[421] Ibid., 4.
[422] "Preface" in Charles F. Bryan and Donald Davidson. *Singin' Billy : A Folk Opera* (Columbia, S.C: Foundation for American Education, 1985)

over its historical accuracy indeed reflects Jackson's own approach to using history as a vehicle for re-imagining the racial and spiritual integrity of the antebellum South. Jackson characterizes Walker in his book as a figure akin to both a musical Johnny Appleseed who established singing schools throughout the South and a modern-day Martin Luther who spread the gospel to the common folk by setting religious texts to folk tunes with his *Southern Harmony*. Walker's singing schools were for Jackson the infrastructural base that kept the white spiritual tradition segregated and provided a material foundation for the white southern tradition. And *Singin' Billy* celebrates the singing school as a symbol of the immortality of the white Southern spirit.

The institution of the singing school and its solmization pedagogy for streamlining and standardizing the hymn learning process were central to Jackson's analysis of the white spiritual as a folk tradition. The white spiritual myth is built on an apparent contradiction between the appeal to its institutional foundation and to an intangible sense of folk spontaneity. And it is tasked with compelling institutions with the power to enforce racialized inheritance claims. As such, the white spiritual articulates the same desire for absolutist authority that has been attached to opera from its beginnings. Dolar observes that operatic music often "stages its own power and its effects" by directly appealing to the Other in "an attempt to make it yield."[423] *Singin' Billy* indeed depicts the white spiritual as both a gift from God and a way to conjure the organizing presence of the Other. Indeed, Walker is summoned to Oconee Town before the plot begins with a plea to establish a singing school in order to help impose order on the socially and morally disordered settlement. Walker responds by offering the denizens of the settlement a devil's bargain. He asks them to sacrifice their personal desires in order to experience the ecstatic pleasure of being an instrument of the Other. Though most of the townsfolk readily accept Walker's offer to become the solmizing members of the chorus, the few who refuse to become the antagonists who must be coerced into sacrificing their individuality. By the end of

[423] Zizek and Dolar, *Opera's Second Death*, 9.

the plot, Walker takes his leave unchanged if not a little richer having turned the community into a swarm of undifferentiated musical worshippers.

Operatic fantasy is fueled by displays of music's power to move, possess, and captivate. "Music, in opera," Dolar explains, "stands in a self-reflective relationship – it performs its own representation."[424] Opera is a space to use music to mediate conflict without appealing to reason or being burdened by language. Operatic subjects wield music like a weapon. Music resolves dialectical opposition by forcing one side into submission. The figure that is best able to manage music's affective power, Dolar asserts, wins the privilege of being the spokesperson of the Other. According to Thomas Daniel Young, the central conflict of *Singin' Billy* is expressed through the dialectical opposition between two theories of song. On the one hand, he explains, is "song as the unrehearsed utterances of the feelings and attitudes of the untamed natural man" on one side and "song as a means of worshipping God" on the other.[425] This is a conflict that is only able to be settled through a musical display. At stake is the type of subject that populates the fantasy of the old white South. In *Singin' Billy,* the white spiritual settles this debate by compelling the "untamed natural man" to sacrifice his individual pleasure in exchange for experiencing the ecstasy of being made a singing subject of God.

Before Walker's arrival in Oconee Town, its residents only know of song as an "unrehearsed utterance" in the form of folk ballads, fiddle tunes, and dancing songs. The townsfolk thus suffer from the disorganization and subjective lack that is a symptom of having too much individuality. The town's wealthy and widowed matriarch Miss Callie begins the opera closest to subjective wholeness, only desiring to see the denizens of Oconee Town at peace with themselves. Her counterpart, Hezekiah "Uncle Kiah" Golightly, is a Revolutionary War

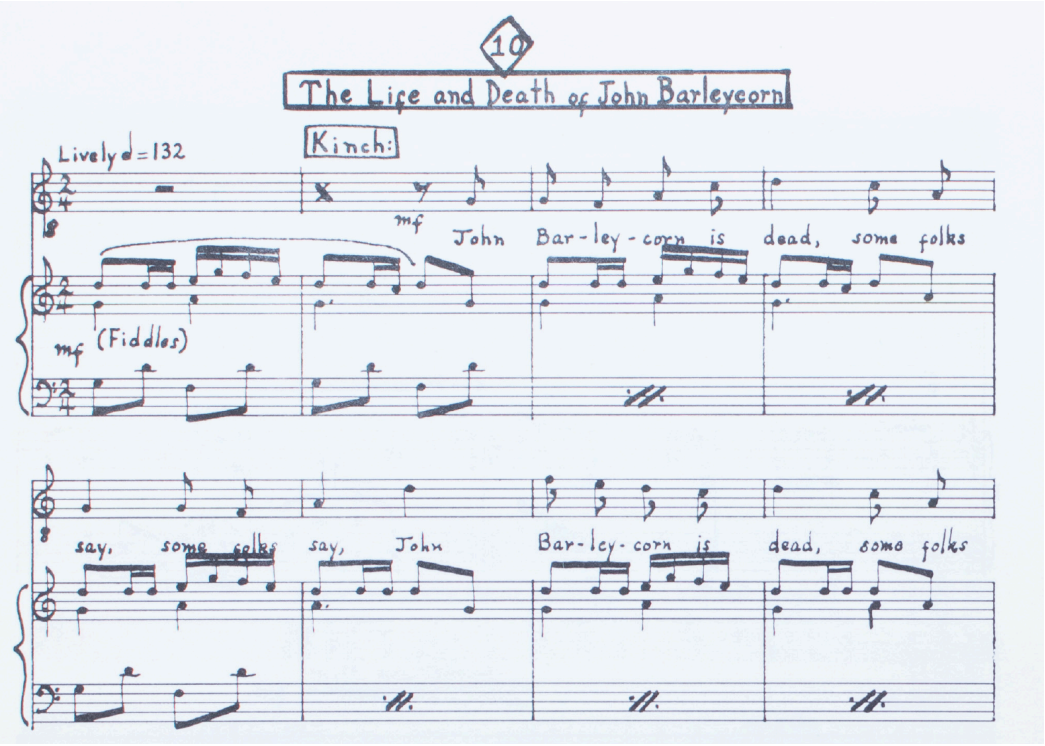
[424] Ibid.,10.
[425] Thomas Daniel Young, "Preface," *Singin' Billy*, XIII-XIV; Bryan's setting of "John Barleycorn" to the tune of "Wondrous Love" suggests a family resemblance between the ancient ballad and modern hymn such that Herschel Gower mistakenly called the former "another version of the the song" as he observes that the layering of the two songs "gives the effect of two melodies, when there is actually only one, or the effect of a kind of double musical illusion." Herschel Gower, "Charles Faulkner Bryan and the Music of 'Singin' Billy'," *Singin' Billy : A Folk Opera*, XXII.

veteran and mischievous town elder whose immaturity makes him unfit as the town patriarch. Walker experiences the lack of coherence between the two town elders at the very beginning of the plot, when he arrives at Uncle Kiah's cabin with a letter from Miss Callie inviting him to town before being led away from town and then abandoned with his papers stolen by the distrustful patriarch. Walker himself, as a chosen instrument of God, begins with no profound lack or desire himself beyond this stolen letter of introduction threatening to make it more difficult to earn the trust of the townsfolk.

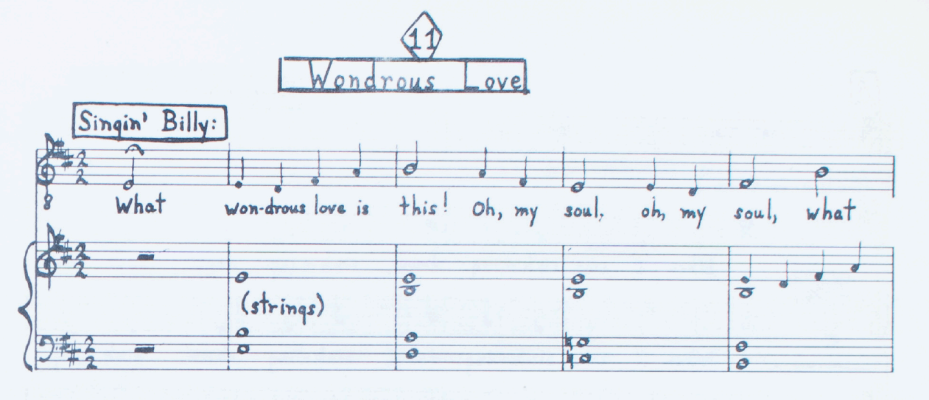
Without a capable patriarch, the town has fallen into disarray. The young men of Oconee are all impotent and disordered. The "wild mountain boy" Kinch Hardy enjoys dancing and fiddle tunes, but becomes violent when he drinks at parties. Miss Callie's nephew, Hank Maggreggor, in contrast, has dug himself into a hole of religious fervor leaving him ridden with guilt, unwilling to court women, and uninterested in socializing with men. The young women of the town begin the plot frustrated at the immaturity of their male counterparts. The young and pretty Margaret Williams desires to be with Hank but is constantly rebuffed by him and called a sinner, while the "little spitfire" Gussie Epps struggles to moderate Kinch's violent tendencies. When Walker arrives in Oconee Town, he desires nothing in particular besides accumulating followers and imposing order on the disordered town.

Kinch Hardy, as the archetypal wild mountain ruffian, prefers paganistic old English ballads and fiddle tunes to Walker's Christianized hymns, and he performs his resistance to Walker's influence on the Oconee community at two pivotal moments in the plot by leading the young men of the settlement in a new version of the ballad "John Barleycorn" that is set to the tune of the white spiritual "Wondrous Love" in diminution. Vanderbilt English professor Herschel Gower goes so far as to suggest that "John Barleycorn" is "another version" of "Wondrous Love" in his essay on Charles Faulkner Bryan's music. Though tracing the genealogy of "John Barleycorn" is beyond the scope of this study, I have not found any versions of the song that

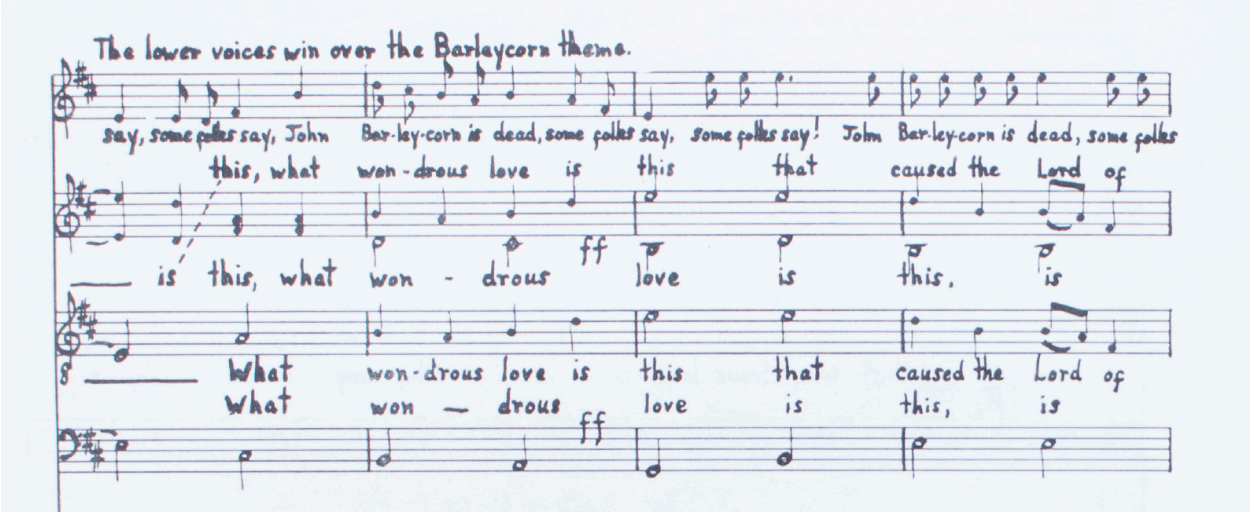
resemble the tune of “Wondrous Love.”[426] The lyrics are also newly composed to fit the metrical cadence of “Wondrous Love.” The only aspect of “John Barleycorn” that remains is the title.



[426] One of the first references to the song appeared around 1670 in a broadside announcing “A Pleasant New Ballad on Sir John Barleycorn” stating that the lyrics should be sung to the tune of “Shall I Ly Beyond Thee.” Though this melody seems to have been lost, it may be related to the song “Lull Me Beyond Thee” in John Playford’s *The Dancing Master*, which was also known as “Oil of Barley.” For an extensive speculative discussion of the tune’s origins See Frederick Keel, Frank Kidson, A. G. Gilchrist, H. E. D. Hammond, and Lucy E. Broadwood. “Songs from Surrey.” *Journal of the Folk-Song Society* 6, no. 21 (1918): 1–28. See also Baring-Gould, S. (Sabine) (ed), Sheppard, H. Fleetwood (Henry Fleetwood) [-(joint ed), Bussell, F. W. (Frederick William) (joint ed) and Sharp, Cecil J. (Cecil James). Songs of the West. New and rev. ed. under the musical editorship of Cecil J. Sharp. London: Methuen, 1905.



The replacement of “John Barleycorn’s” tune with that of “Wondrous Love” and the imposition of new lyrics is a sleight of hand that allows Davidson and Bryan to exploit its pre-existing associations without being restricted by its original form or content. Insofar as the melody is refashioned in the image of “Wondrous Love,” its form dramatizes the disciplinary function of the white spiritual. Displacing “John Barleycorn’s” tune while retaining its particular associations with pagan ritual sacrifice, alcoholism, and individualistic pleasure-seeking helps establish by contrast “Wondrous Love’s” themes of Christian self-sacrifice, prohibition, and submission to the masses. The replacement of the tune of “John Barleycorn” allows Bryan to easily compose a confrontation between the two songs in which the raucous tune becomes engulfed by its slower, newer, and more dignified counterpart. It allows “Wondrous Love” to confirm the rumor that “John Barleycorn is dead, some folks say” by physically burying it underneath the mass singing about the pleasure of being deindividuated within a swarm of worshipping voices.



"John Barleycorn" became a symbol of prohibition at the turn of the century, especially following the publication of Jack London's autobiography of the same name.[427] Christian journals, especially, took to using the name as a stand-in for alcohol, and declarations of his death were used as innuendo for the successful passage of prohibition. Churches and temperance groups held 'funerals' for John Barleycorn in 1920. According to the *Christian Century,* at least one minister held a funerary service as early as 1917 after the passage of the Lever Act which banned the production of alcoholic spirits from any produce that could be used as food. The journal noted that "it must have been a difficult performance" because "one is always expected to say something good about the dead."[428] In the following years, it became a trope to talk about prohibition as if it were a church-led military crusade to free people from the "dominance of John Barleycorn," as one editorialist put it in an article appropriately titled "Ohio Conquering and to Conquer" in 1918.[429] As this language suggests, "John Barleycorn" came to

[427] Jack London, *John Barleycorn: Alcoholic Memoirs*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
[428] "The Funeral of John Barleycorn," *The Christian Century* vol. 34 (No. 38): 7. https://archive.org/details/christiancentury342unse/page/n273/mode/2up?q=%22John+barleycorn%22
[429] "Ohio Conquering and to Conquer," *The Christian Century* vol. 35 (no. , 1918): 20. https://archive.org/details/christiancentury352unse/page/n454/mode/1up?q=%22John+Barleycorn%22

represent the triumph of a restrictive mode of governance. To be ‘liberated’ from John Barleycorn was to become subjugated by the moral authority of divine law.

“John Barleycorn” became such a potent symbol of the moral degeneracy associated with alcohol addiction because its lyrics portray paganistic ritual murder as a metaphor for the process of growing, harvesting, and brewing barley. Robert Burns’ version of the ballad from 1782 describes cutting off John Barleycorn’s legs and then tying him up “like a rogue for forgerie,” while another describes extracting the marrow from his bones and crushing his body between two stones.[430] Burns’s version depicts John Barleycorn into a Christ-like figure whose sacrifice was for the benefit of mankind. It ends with a toast to John Barleycorn for helping “man forget his woe” and “heighten[ing] all his joy.” Other versions end with descriptions of alcohol dependence as either a curse or an idealized state of being. None of the versions of the song, however, contain the line “John Barleycorn is dead, some folks say.” There is no need to make his death into a rumor when the song meticulously describes the murder of John Barleycorn and subsequent desecration of his corpse.

Though the earliest known iteration of the song emerged during Queen Elizabeth’s reign and likely reflects a timely fascination with rural pre-Christian English traditions rather than referencing any authentic ritual practice, it was easy to frame the song as a representation of the very antithesis to the values of the Christian-led prohibition movement. This makes the conceit of giving John Barleycorn a Christian ‘funeral’ a form of moral prohibition. It inhibits the paganistic ritual described in its lyrics by removing his body, which also means that it could not be used to make alcohol. The word ‘prohibition’ in this context becomes layered in meaning. Beyond referring to the use of state power to ban alcohol, it speaks to the prohibitive power of the Church to suppress, interrupt, and displace alternative modes of governance.

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[430] "John Barleycorn. A Ballad" *Burns: Complete Poems and Songs (shorter edition, Oxford, 1969) pp. 22-24, "John Barleycorn. A Ballad" (1 text, from before 1784).*

Singin' Billy performs the kind of prohibition that the song had become associated with during Davidson's formative years. And it does so by suggesting that "Wondrous Love" is a spiritually-disciplined version of "John Barleycorn" despite the fact that Bryan and Davidson dramatically changed both the tune and the text of the latter. This allows Davidson to overstate the genealogical coherence between the two Anglo-American musical traditions and also to present Walker as a Martin Luther-like figure who also produced a new hymnody by imposing religious texts onto pre-existing secular folk tunes. Davidson explicitly draws a connection between Martin Luther and Walker by having Walker tell Kinch that the tune is "too good for the Devil to keep. He can't have it. I'd fight the Devil himself for that tune." He then tells Kinch that he has a version of the song in his book *Southern Harmony* before singing "Wondrous Love."[431]

Scholarship on shape note hymnody following Jackson's work tends to overstate the connection between Elizabethan balladry and Southern hymnody. William Bonner cites Jackson's *Spiritual Folksongs of Early America* in his 1944 analysis of "The Ballad of Captain Kidd" while painting a scene of "hopeful, mundane saints… gathered symbolically at a hundred different rivers" singing songs to the tune of such secular ballads. He observes that "Wondrous Love" shares "the same stanzaic pattern" as the ballad, implying a genealogical connection without going so far as to affirmatively make such a claim.[432] Jackson, on the other hand, was less cautious in his 1951 essay on the same ballad where he claims that "What Wondrous Love is This" belongs to the "'Ballad of Captain Kid' song family" due to a correspondence in their metrical patterns even though their melodic contours and modality are rather distinct.[433] This stronger claim would get repeated in subsequent scholarship, including Richard Crawford's textbook *America's Musical Life: A History* (2005) where he claims that "Jackson's comments

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[431] *Singin' Billy*, 47-48.
[432] Willard Hallam Bonner, "The Ballad of Captain Kidd." *American Literature* vol. 15 (No. 4, 1944): 377-378.
[433] George Pullen Jackson, "The 400-Year Odyssey of the 'Captain Kidd' Song Family – Notably Its Religious Branch," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* vol. 15 (Issue 4, 1951): 239-248.

give WONDROUS LOVE an aura of age and romance" but adds the caveat that Jackson "does not document the path linking the Captain Kidd ballad to its sacred transformation."[434]

There is a romantic impulse to identify a beloved hymn like "What Wondrous Love Is This" within an ancient family structure. However the available evidence suggests the more tempered conclusion would be that the song uses a metrical trope that is common within the Anglo-American song tradition. Davidson was particularly invested in such ancestral romances, and the implication within *Singin' Billy* that "Wondrous Love" is a version of a version of "John Barleycorn" shrouds the family structure of Anglo-American songs with a fantasy of formal coherence. This imagined romance is the product of a forceful displacement or disavowal of a subjective lack of coherence within white Southern identity. The reality of this lack and the force of its disavowal are only implicitly acknowledged insofar as the white spiritual functions within the opera to impose coherence and structure upon the two dysfunctional subjects of Hank Maggregor and Kinch Hardy. The zealous Hank begins to moderate his religious fervor almost immediately upon learning the hymns contained in Walker's *Southern Harmony*, telling Walker "when I sing that music, my soul opens to God – and I think better of me. When you are leading us in that music, I feel that God's hand is with your hand."[435] Kinch, however, resists sacrificing his individual *jouissance* for the Other's pleasure until the climax of the opera.

As it becomes clear that the conflict between Kinch and Walker is irreconcilable, Kinch challenges Walker to a duel. And, to the horror of the concerned townsfolk, Walker accepts. He then reminds Kinch that the challenged party has the right to choose the weapon. When Walker arrives at the duel site, he pulls out his tuning fork and declares that it will be his chosen weapon. Telling Kinch "I'll sing you down," he then leads the town in a singing of "Wondrous Love." Quite literally weaponizing the white spiritual, Walker forces Kinch to contend with the force of the voices whose mass signifies his influence and authority over the settlement. This

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[434] Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2005): 167.
[435] *Singin' Billy*, 62.

swarm of voices engulfs Kinch and his gang's feeble rendition of "John Barleycorn." The duel ends with Kinch admitting defeat and joining hands with Walker in a display of both submission and fellowship. With Kinch reformed, Miss Callie compels Uncle Kiah to return Walker's letters of introduction, finally confirming his identity. However, nobody comes forward when Miss Callie asks if anyone would like to see the letters for themselves. Having transformed the settlement into a unity through teaching them to sing white spirituals, the significance of repossessing these letters is that it represents that even the town's patriarch has accepted the subjugating authority of the white spiritual.

The climax is where the fantasy register of *Singin' Billy* is at its most pronounced, and thus where the opera is at its most exuberant and excessive. And it is also where the white spiritual – the desirous *objet a* of Davidson, Jackson, Bryan, and their peers – is imbued most explicitly with the power to displace and disavow difference to create a fantasy of wholeness. The words and melody of "John Barleycorn" are completely replaced in order to have it efficiently subsumed underneath "Wondrous Love" in the climax; it displaces Kinch's weapon and transforms the duel from a ritual contest between two individuals of equal standing into an unequal battle between two social assemblages of vastly different forces; and it has the effect of displacing Kinch's lifestyle of enjoyment in order to force him to recognize the pleasure of fitting into the crowd and being an instrument of another's desire. This is also the moment that most powerfully interpolates the spectator by encouraging the audience of white Southerners to desire the ecstasy associated with the moral and religious order of the rural South before the Civil War and Reconstruction. The self-regulating spiritual reformation of Oconee is framed as an alternative to the disorder of Reconstruction. By the end of the opera, Walker not only proves that he is not a 'demned Abolitionist.' He shows that he could become in just a few short weeks even more of an insider to Oconee Town than either Kinch or Kiah. In the context of growing discontent with the Jim Crow regime, *Singin' Billy* takes a stance in favor of homegrown authoritarianism instead of the intervention of outsiders.

Singin' Billy lays bare the form and function of the white spiritual fantasy shared by Davidson, Jackson, and others who were inspired by Jackson's original scholarship. In this case, the white spiritual especially articulated the desire of the hysteric to be subjugated as an instrument of a master with the authority to organize the symbolic field. This promise of the pleasure of sacrificing *jouissance* for another is precisely the function of object *a* within a hysterical fantasy, and *Singin' Billy* imbues the other with a power to coerce such a sacrifice. The white spiritual, in this regard, is a dead object that produces dead subjects that are strictly organized and exist as instruments of another's desire.

Spirituals of Bodies and Flesh

Holding together the cascading series of displacements and disavowals that give the fantasy of *Singin' Billy* its form is the disavowal of the real Pickens County, South Carolina. Historian John M. Coggeshall has documented that there were in fact over 6000 slaves in Pickens County comprising roughly 20% of its population by 1860 with approximately one-third of the families in the area owned slaves. By 1865, the area had become the site of a colony of freed slaves called Liberia.[436] The memory of this community is buried under the literary myth of the highland racial innocence of Appalachian whites who lacked a sophisticated understanding of the "biracial nature of Southern identity" even after Reconstruction.[437] In reality, Coggeshall shows, whites in the region such as those imagined in *Singin' Billy*'s Oconee Town experienced the presence of Liberia as an attack on their racial integrity. Wealthier whites engaged in a

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[436] John M. Coggeshall, *Liberia, South Carolina: An African American Appalachian Community* (University of North Carolina Press: 2018). Coggeshall relies on data from the work of sociologist Wilma Dunaway, such as "Speculators and Settler Capitalists: Unthinking the Mythology about Appalachian Landholding, 1790-1860." In *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, dited by Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight Billings, and Altina Waller (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press): 50-75.
[437] John C. Inscoe. *Race, War, and Remembrance in the Appalachian South* (University Press of Kentucky, 2008),

concentrated effort to take back ownership of the land by offering its residents predatory loans with land as collateral. Poorer whites established a local KKK post. Clearly this reaction had nothing to do with their attachment or lack thereof to the white spiritual tradition. The fugitive reality masked by the white spiritual fantasy is that the idea of whiteness has always been sustained by exercising the authority to repress black humanity by wielding exclusive rights like a weapon, be it the *de jure* right to own human property or the *de facto* right to violently enforce the color line.

The racial reality of the Southern uplands is complex and involves both white supremacist violence and cross-racial solidarity. Local historians Alma Lynch and Elizabeth Ellison discovered that enslaved African Americans began attending the nearby Oolenoy Baptist Church as early as 1836.[438] In 1887, a group of around twenty black men lynched a white man named Mance Waldrop who raped a young black girl who later died from her injuries with the help of a white man named Gaylord Eaton. The men who performed the lynching were all exonerated when South Carolina Governor John P. Richardson granted them pardons following a meeting with black ministers.[439] In the early 20th century, African American banjo player Jake Staggers (b. 1899) learned to play in the adjoining Oconee County from his brother and two friends, one of whom was white and the other black. Staggers told white banjoist Art Rosenbaum that “We used to have fun! White and black, get on the flo’ at one time and dance.”[440]

Coggeshall observes that there are “conflicting oral accounts” of the founding of Liberia, and that it is unknown whether the land was gifted from whites out of generosity or guilt, or whether it was purchased in exchange for either money or labor. There will almost certainly never be a firm answer to this question due to the partial, selective nature of oral transmission.

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[438] Alma Lynch and Elizabeth Ellison. *Echoes: Oolenoy – Pumpkintown* (Easley, SC: Pace Printng, 1980).
[439] Damon L. Fordham, *True Stories of Black South Carolina* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing Inc., 2008).
[440] Cecilia Conway, “Black Banjo Songsters in Appalachia,” *Black Music Research Journal* Vol. 23 (No. 1/2 Spring - Autumn, 2003): 158.

Though white accounts such as that of local historian Bert Reese tend to speak of Liberia as a generous offering from "four prominent local families," Coggesshall notes that it was founded during the "time of statewide fears of land confiscation and redistribution" following General William T. Sherman's requisition of a strip of coastal land stretching from South Carolina to Florida.[441] Coggeshall demonstrates that the lack of certainty in the historical record calls our attention to the "hidden transcripts" or countermemories which tend to be buried when hegemonic historical accounts are regarded as certain facts. His history of Liberia, South Carolina is a history of competing fragments and plausibilities quite unlike the complete and implausible historical accounts favored by the white spiritual scholars. The necessarily fragmented history contained in the hidden transcripts of Liberia, South Carolina nevertheless reveals the biracial reality of the region's history.

The distinction between hegemonic and hidden transcripts parallels the distinction between the white swarm of deindividuated voices at the climax of *Singin' Billy* and the assemblage of signifiers that Lacan calls S_2 within discourse. The two swarms enunciate and sonify their respective transcriptions. To be overwhelmed from the outside by a mass of singers whose participation delineates who does and does not belong within the social collective is a different experience compared to facing a battery of heterophonic signifiers that carry different fantasies, tell different stories, and desire different objects. If the hegemonic swarm wields the logic of either/or like a weapon, the hidden swarm overwhelms with possible interpretations.

Saidiya Hartman elaborates on this difference when she imagines the life of a young black girl named Esther Brown in the 1920s who exists today as a mere trace in the archives. Like Kinch Hardy, Esther "hated to work." But where Kinch's refusal to toil for others made him an outcast, this became Esther's entrypoint into a different type of swarm.[442] Esther disliked working and preferred strolling around Harlem and "losing herself in cabarets and movie

[441] Coggeshall, *Liberia, South Carolina,* 56.
[442] Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019).

houses." The streets, Hartman posits, "offered a display of talents and ambitions. *An everyday choreography of the possible* unfolded in the collective movement, which was headless and spilling out in all directions, strollers drifted en masse, like a swarm or the swell of an ocean."[443] Whereas the swarm of voices that initially threatened to lynch Walker for being an abolitionist and later drowned out Kinch's voice were organized under a master signifier, the black swarm of Harlem was inherently disorganized as an "assembly of the wretched and the visionary, the indolent and the dangerous."[444] The swarm of the white spiritual fantasy took the form of a weapon wielded against the indolent and dangerous Kinch. The swarm of Hartman's imagined jazz age Harlem was, in contrast, unwieldy and amorphous.

Still, both swarms are imaginary and deindividuating racialized ideals. And both have genealogies that can be traced back to the original master-slave dialectic. The contours of the white swarm is a materialized expression of the desire to overcome shame and by becoming the privileged instrument of a master. The white swarm is deindividuating, being held together by a consensus to sublimate individual desire to the desire or will of a transcendental Other. In contrast, there is no single source of the desire that shapes Hartman's account of the blackened swarm of Harlem. That swarm's desire radiates outwards in all directions speaks to the logic of evasion and untranscribability which made both the fugitive and signifying discourses possible. As both swarms have fundamentally different orientations in relation to the Other, they express fundamentally different aesthetics. The white swarm has the coercive capacity to evoke terror and impress the unassimilated subject with a sense of lack. It can achieve sublimity by appealing to a transcendental aesthetic. The black battery of signifiers, in contrast, can evoke what Hartman calls the "terrible beauty" of disorder in which "the senses are solicited and overwhelmed."[445] Terrible beauty can achieve sublimity of a different sort. Instead of being achieved through contact with the transcendental Other, this is a sublimity achieved by

[443] Ibid., 208.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid., 18.

remaining unrecognizable and thus beyond the scope of transcendence. It is a difference between an absolutely ordered mass that desires nothing, and a totally disordered crowd with desire firing off in all directions. The former promises the stasis of non-being, and the latter holds "the promise of insurrection, the miracle of upheaval" and the potential "to become an ensemble, to incite *treason en masse.*"[446]

The reciprocal nature of these two racialized swarms parallels the mirroring of the two racialized spirituals as the property of racialized fugitive figures who use it to 'remember' or testify to the conditions of a racialized antebellum South. The white/black spiritual, the white/black fugitive, and the white/demonic South mirror one another in terms of their function within fantasy, their articulation of the relationship between desire and subjectification, and their orientation in relation to the transcendental aesthetic. In short, the white object of desire presents the cut of subjectification as a source of privilege and the experience of pleasure in exchange for enjoyment. The black object of enjoyment, on the other hand, emphasizes the possibility of resisting the cut of subjectification. It intensifies enjoyment and desire in exchange for social legibility and privilege. This mirroring, I suggest, speaks to the different ontologies of whiteness and blackness as persistent racial signifiers with distinct genealogies after the master and slave discursive dialectic. Lacan offers a powerful critique of mastery that can provide insight on American whiteness as a condition of post-mastery. However there is an epistemic blindspot built into Lacan's general understanding of the ontologically barred subject which leaves S_2 undertheorized compared to S_1. Fred Moten's object oriented critique of blackness as being rooted within performances of the "resistance of the object" or scenes of "objection to subjection" is a useful intervention for understanding the difference between the (white) human

[446] Ibid., 19-20.

subject who both subjectifies and desires subjectification and the (black) human object who knows better.[447]

Moten's understanding of white "scenes of subjection" (in reference to Hortense Spillers) in relation to "black performance as the resistance of the object" aligns with Hortense Spillers's distinction between the body and the flesh.[448] In correspondence with Lacan, Spillers understands the subject position of the slave as an extension of "undecipherable markings on the captive body," or the "lacerations, wounding, fissures, tears, scars, openings, ruptures, lesions, rendings" that remain as a "kind of hieroglyphics" on the flesh of slaves.[449] For Spillers, this distinction between the individuated body of the master and the scarred deindividuated flesh of the slave is "the central one between captive and liberated subject-positions."[450] "Before the 'body,'" she writes, "there is the 'flesh,' that zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment."[451] Whereas the "scene of subjection" of the master marking the slave represents Lacan's starting point, Spillers identifies a prior condition of fleshy indistinction to the dialectic of mastery.

Lacan's symbolic cut of signification on the body of the master and Spillers' material cut on the flesh of the slave are linked in an iterative chain. If, as Lacan suggests, the master signifier S_1 is a subject bearing a mark of distinction by the Other, Spillers helps make it clear that one way that S_1 maintains the illusion of sovereignty is by exercising the right to cut, brand, scar, or otherwise mark the flesh of his slaves, S_2. To be a slave according to Spillers is to bear a scar – physical, social, or psychological – made by a master who cuts into the flesh around him in order to exert mastery and disavow his own prior condition as a mere enfleshed object. In this regard, we can see that if Lacan's dialectical unfurling of the master/post-master discourses

[447] See Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).
[448] Moten, *Black and Blur*, 33.
[449] Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* vol. 17 (no. 2, 1987): 67.
[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid.

begins with the mark made by the Other, it is also the case that the slave only becomes envoiced as a slave after being marked by a master. Without theorizing how the marked signifier S_1 reproduces the cut on the flesh of S_2, Lacan's four discourses can only provide a partial account of discourse.

Alexander Weheliye draws from Spillers' distinction between the body and the flesh in his critique of dominant theories of modernity as a condition of subjectification by white European philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault.[452] He contends that these two philosophers overemphasize the centrality of the violent reduction of the human to biostatistical or bare life. Agamben and Foucault offer ways of criticising the white spiritual fantasy for failing to recognize that the cost of becoming the Other's subject is the vulnerability to being reduced to nothing by the apparatus of the state. But insofar as subjectification even momentarily delivers on its offer of distinction under the Law, privileged subjects wield the authority to turn indistinct others into what Weheliye calls "racialized assemblages."[453]

George Pullen Jackson captures the difference between these two subject formations in a rare acknowledgement of antebellum slavery. Songbook compiler James P. Carrell, Jackson explains, named his son as the inheritor of his slaves in his will. This demonstrated, according to Jackson, his moral goodness:

> His attitude towards his slaves is indicated by the paragraph of his will which designated that his son Charles take "the control and management of my farm and slaves, treating the slaves with all the forbearance that circumstances may permit; and if any of them should become unmanageable, that they should be sold to some master that they select, provided he will pay a fair price for them."[454]

[452] Foucault, Biopolitics; Agamben, Homo Sacre.
[453] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
[454] Jackson, *White Spirituals in the southern Uplands*, 37-38.

By imploring his son to treat his slaves with “all the forbearance that circumstances may permit,” he gives Charles the authority to dispose of his slaves if they became burdensome. At the same time, he granted them the circumscribed privilege of choosing their next master. Both Charles and his slaves were marked in his exchange, but in fundamentally different ways. Charles was granted the distinction of becoming a master while remaining subject to a modest set of interdictions. One of these interdictions granted his slaves the limited privilege of choosing their next master in certain circumstances. The limitation on the ownership rights of the son marked him as a subject of distinction of a greater authority, while the new (but unrealized) ‘right’ of the unnamed slaves merely affirmed that they were now the property of their former master’s son and would spend the rest of their lives as slaves.

To say that the distinction between white and black spirituals parallels the distinction of the body and the flesh is to say that they articulate two different ways of organizing the tensions between oppression and liberation, pain and pleasure, and desire under the Law. On the one hand, the white spiritual articulates the grievances held by the white Southerners whom Davidson aptly calls the “immovable bodies” who refuse to forget their ancestral rights is based on an interpretation of lost privilege as an injury.[455] This is related to the condition that Jackson calls the white spiritual “struggle for existence” during which “for a hundred years the fasola and dorayme folk struggled for their tonal existence against the ‘round-heads’ and other natural but tangible enemies” including the centralization of the Christian church and the emergence of mechanized music culture. Under modernity, two new “intangible and hence apparently invincible” forces added pressure to the survival of the tradition. The first being “the complete ignoring of the entire rural song activity by all excepting those directly participating in it, and the

[455] Donald Davidson, *Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States: The Attack on" Leviathan"*. (Routledge, 2017).

second was “the progressive invasion of the country by the city.”[456] As a body, the survival of the white spiritual depended upon being recognized and protected under the law.

From the perspective of Jackson and Davidson, the white spiritual was an object of discipline. The white spiritual tradition was not only inherited. It was learned through disciplined study and performed at organized singings and conventions. The network of singing schools established by William Walker, its ‘fa-sol-la’ solmization technique, and its basis in literary (rather than purely oral) transmission distinguished it from the negro spiritual tradition which it claims to have preceded.

However, the condition of being ignored and unseen is at once the white body’s oppression and the condition of black flesh’s possibility. As Nathaniel Mackey demonstrates, the untranscribability of slave music in Charles Pickard Ware, Lucy McKim Garrison, and William Francis Allen’s *Slave Songs of the United States* (1876) originally forced its compilers to acknowledge the limits of the Western staff in capturing the essence of the slave spiritual. They acknowledged their failure to “unravel a thread of melody out of this strange network” of the ring shout and the “slides from one note to another and turns and cadences not in articulated notes” using conventional notation.[457] Alexander Weheliye suggests that W.E.B. Du Bois latched onto the inarticulable and untranscribable quality of the spiritual when he mixes melodic fragments of spiritual tune with lyrical fragments of classic poetry in the opening of each essay in *The Souls of Black Folks*. Weheliye posits that Du Bois used the aurality of the spiritual as a way to reframe the scopophilic rendering of black bodies as “fractured, due to the way white subjects look at them.”[458] Rather than thinking of blackness as either a wholesome or fractured totality, Du Bois invokes the spiritual to locate the slave and the fugitive outside the gaze of the master

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[456] Jackson, *White Sprituals in the Southern Uplands,* 421.
[457] Mackey, Nathaniel. “Other: From Noun to Verb.” *Representations*, no. 39 (1992): 53; Original quote from *Slave Spirituals in the United States*, xvii.
[458] Weheliye, “In the Mix: Hearing the Souls of Black Folks,” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* (2000): 540.

discourse entirely. What the master discourse sees as a fractured body is really the phonographic 'fugitive line' as it cuts in and out of the master's listening ear.[459]

Conclusion

Though it is unclear whether Tate believed Davidson's assessment of the possibility of restoring white Southern identity, he certainly recognized that Davidson desired to be at the center of an inflorescence of white Southern cultural production that would help prepare the region to resist the northern pressure to desegregate. In truth, however, it effectively marked the end of the white spiritual movement. George Pullen Jackson died the following year and Charles F. Bryan would pass away in the summer of 1955, roughly a year after the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling realized Davidson's fears of a national injunction on white hegemony in the South.

Davidson was the only member of the core Agrarian group to support Massive Resistance in Tennessee. Ransom and Warren were especially uncomfortable with their earlier contributions to *I'll Take My Stand*, and became vocal critics of segregation in the South. Ransom wrote to Warren on April 14th, 1955 that though he was uncertain about the execution of the desegregation, "if I have to have one sympathy strong and decisive, [I am] on the side of deseg."[460] In September of that year, he wrote again to Warren praising his book *Band of Angels* for "show[ing] the 'peculiar institution' of slavery from many angles, all of them unhappy ones." He went on to state:

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[459] Jennifer Lynn Stoever introduces and develops the notion of the 'listening ear' to describe the process that audible information becomes racialized through a filter or racial stereotypes in *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York University Press, 2016).
[460] John Crowe Ransom to Robert Penn Warren, April 14, 1955. *Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 375.

> I never stopped being surprised by remembering that the settlers, North and South, came to this country for liberty, and immediately they were withholding it. – the North by Puritan codes, the South by buying and keeping slaves. And Hell to pay for either crime. But slavery was the worse, the more explicit and elemental.[461]

Allen Tate was more ambivalent about integration and maintained a lifelong belief in the natural inequality of the races. However, Tate, too, encouraged Davidson to moderate his rhetoric and grew repulsed by Davidson's willingness to incite racial antipathies in defense of the indefensible Jim Crow legal regime. It should be noted that these developments seemed to come from a criticism of the white Southerner's investment into the Lost Cause myth. All three of these Agrarians continued to speak and write from the discursive position of the analyst, which made it ever more difficult to support Davidson's hysterical investments.

Davidson responded to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by becoming a co-founder of the Tennessee Federation for Constitutional Government, which Numan Bartley describes as "a Snopesean perversion of the aristocratic agrarian tradition."[462] Davidson's efforts with the Federation were, however, largely ineffective compared to its counterparts in the Deep South. Niel R. MacMillan observes that the group was largely run by the Tennessee intelligentsia and never included any politicians of influence or repute. "Davidson's message," MacMillan writes, "served only to underscore the frustrations of the resistance movement in Tennessee's climate of comparative racial moderation."[463] Though ineffectual, Davidson's political activism combined with his unwavering commitment to the agrarian myth made him a darling of the postwar conservative vanguard. In 1957 Russell Kirk published a paean to Davidson in the *National Review* where he deemphasized the regionalist affinity that largely defined his career up to that point. Instead, he described Davidson as an important member of a new conservative movement, calling him "one of the unmachined, still carrying on the fight

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[461] John Crowe Ransom to Robert Penn Warren, September 1, 1955. *Selected Letters of John Crowe Ransom*, 376.
[462] Numan Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance: Race and Politics in the South in the 1950s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), 99-100.
[463] Neil R. MacMillan, "Organized Resistance to School Desegregation in Tennessee," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* Vol. 30 (No. 3, 1970): 315-328.

against the triumph of technology."[464] Ironically, Davidson's refusal to interrogate the Southern agrarian mythology he perpetrated brought him out of sync with the white Southern intellectual and literary tradition that was defined largely by a struggle to reconcile a desire for mastery with the burden of guilt over slavery. Instead, he became a Southern-inflected member of a national conservative intellectual vanguard assembled by Russell Kirk's column "From the Academy."

I have made the case in this chapter that Davidson's *Singin' Billy* and other writings on white spirituals were an extension of Jackson's original scholarship on white spirituals rather than an aberration, and they anticipated such a reactionary response to the Federal order to desegregate. From their conception, white spirituals represented a segregationist dismissal of the testimony articulated by black spirituals of the inseparability of slavery and the agrarian romance of white mastery. Though the white spiritual researchers did not leave as great or lasting a mark on the modern academy as they wished, their failure only intensified and foregrounded their desire over time. The white spiritual retained its millenarian associations within fantasy by promising to displace difference and eradicate desire in the process of restoring Eden.

White spirituals, like the agrarianism of *I'll Take My Stand*, tied together a number of strands in white conservative thought in the two decades between the publication of *White Spirituals in the Southern Uplands* and the staging of *Singin' Billy*. They evoked the Southern church's role in "conjoining [Confederate] identity with the peculiar institution, southern honor, manhood, and evangelicalism."[465] At the same time, they simplified the contradictions and contestations within Southern religion that made slavery a source of discourse and anxiety among even proslavery southern evangelicals who struggled to balance the absolute rights of slave masters with the New Testament's household ethical values. Instead, they swept the question of slavery under the rug by reducing the vast ethical and social consequences of

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[464] Russell Kirk, "From the Academy," *The National Review* (June 8, 1957): 550.
[465] W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2004), 41.

slavery into a technical discourse of the white versus black origin of the spiritual tradition. The ability to believe in the racial purity of white spirituals relied on believing in the efficiency of the slave system to separate the races and regulate cultural transmission. The white spiritual, then, spoke to the church's role as W. Scott Poole describes it as "maintaining an ordered polity in the antebellum upcountry" and maintaining "good order between slaves, masters, and the larger social order."[466] It was the object form of the disciplinary function of the church with its theology filtered out. One did not need to be religious to see value in the white spiritual fantasy. One only had to identify with the region whose social order was once protected by the paternalist ideology and folkish affinity of the country church. The white spiritual was a secular object that used backcountry Christianity as a metaphor that helped imagine the tyranny of racial segregation as a positive experience of joy and racial belonging. In spite of its appeals to history and memory, the white spiritual actually offered white Southerners the ability to replace the real memory of the past with a fantasy of the possibility of restoring a lost order which never existed in the first place.

[466] Ibid.

Conclusion

Imagining, and Forgetting, the Musical Imagination of the Other

> I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
> Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
> The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
> The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
> The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
> The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
> The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
> The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
> Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
> The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
> Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.
>
> - "I Hear America Singing," Walt Whitman

In his poem "I Hear America Singing," Walt Whitman asserts a correspondence between 'listening' and 'imagining.' He leaves it to the reader to imagine the music in the tapestry of songs that represent a tapestry of American experiences, and as such the affective power of the poem relies on the reader's ability to conjure the voices of boatmen, wood-cutters, and mothers. And if successful, the reader is left with the impression of having musically imagined the nation. The song, in this regard, composes a vision of the nation as what Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community" existing in "homogeneous, empty time."[467] America, as conjured in this poem, is a nation of everyone singing all at once.

Published in 1860 at the cusp of the Civil War, the poem's musical coherence also requires the reader to limit or repress their imagination. By invoking certain voices, it silences others in order to prevent the "strong melodious songs" from becoming a cacophony in the

[467] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso), 2016.

reader's mind. An undisciplined or particularly imaginative reader of the poem might imagine a nation of noise and chaos that is neither homogeneous nor empty.

The end of the Civil War and the enshrinement of biracial citizenship just a few short years later made it so that it was more difficult than ever to limit the reader's imagination and prevent it from invoking the presence of non-whites in the sonic tapestry of the nation. This dissertation has been about how music entered the university as a response to a crisis in faith over the other's ability to repress their musical imagination. It was not enough for John Powell, Harry Rogers Pratt, Daniel Gregory Mason, Lamar Strignfield, George Pullen Jackson, or Donald Davidson to imagine the euphony of white America singing. They had to imagine that others were also imagining the same composition. They could not, so they turned to the university music department.

This paranoia towards the imagination of the other is the crisis that made establishing music departments seem not just prudent, but necessary. From its introduction in the decades after the Civil War through well past the end of World War II, academic music study was a field for composing a white musical imaginary. It did this, in particular, by helping white students both inside and outside of the university imagine themselves as inheritors of a musical birthright, whether it be in the form of the Western art music tradition, Anglo-Saxon folk music, or the hymnody of the Second Great Awakening. This inheritance was presented as a gift of wealth and consciousness, but it was also a poison that narrowed the ability of whites to see their own experiences and identities reflected in the music and sociality of non-whites. It stunted the invention of new cross-racial affinities and ways of hearing the syncopated, dissonant, recursive, and repetitive musical structures that gave order to the multiracial cacophony of modernity.

White Music as Property, Inheritance, and Debt

To be sure, the relationship between white racial identity and property rights has been well-explored within whiteness studies. Cheryl Harris, for example, argues that the symbolic status of whiteness has historically been grounded in exclusive property rights and identifies several domains of racialized property rights, including the "rights of disposition," the "right to use and enjoyment" and "the absolute right to exclude."[468] The case studies examined in this dissertation both affirm this and open the door for additional questions. Music schools indeed helped create and institutionalize a discourse that fashioned music into a type of property that was exclusively inherited along lines of racial affinity. They did this by focusing their attention on creating music discourses, rather than musical performances. These racialized music discourses invested more in encouraging whites to imagine themselves listening to music than in teaching them to play or perform music. Music itself, the most immaterial of the arts, was too material to accomplish the music school's goal of composing a coherent national consciousness; the apotheotic moment of ecstatic musical becoming while listening to a folk tune, for example, could never materialize. However, by allowing white people to imagine such an experience, they helped manufacture a desire for the kind of coherent racial identity that was also the imagined endpoint of eugenics, Anglo-Saxonism, and Neo-Confederate nostalgia.

In all of these configurations, however, whiteness is not just a type of property; it is an inheritance yet to be collected. Reconstruction split and diminished these property rights in both imagined and real ways. The "absolute right to exclude" was no longer absolute, and the "right to use and enjoyment" was substantially removed from the letter of the law. It was, of course, still possible to assert these rights by passing the jury-rigged set of laws that produced the Jim Crow regime, or by exercising the de facto right of performing extralegal violence with impunity.

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[468] Harris, Cheryl I., "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* Vol. 106 (No. 8, 1993): p. 1707-1791.

In their idealized and absolute form, however, the property rights of whiteness could only be exercised in an imagined past.

American national whiteness has indeed always been imaginary. Even the antebellum plantation patriarch was forced to navigate a web of legal and social realities in order to exercise his right to use and enjoyment through slave ownership. However, the imagined absolute sovereignty they enjoyed allowed even propertyless whites to imagine themselves one day exercising the property rights tied to whiteness. Sylvia Wynter observes that the material alienation from this imagined sovereignty was then, as is now, the instigator of white supremacist violence. Before the codification of biracial citizenship, however, this violence was the expression of an "imitative quest to occupy the Place of the Norm."[469] After, it became more recouperative than imitataive. The descendents of even poor whites were encouraged to desire the sovereignty that they imagined their ancestors enjoyed.

This dissertation has made the case that music contributed to this shift from whiteness as property to whiteness as due inheritance in particular ways. First, it helped provide American whites a sense of themselves as inheritors of a centuries-spanning civilizational ethos. It posed the poor musical literacy of white Americans as a symptom of a more general failure to recognize the value and importance of Euro-American civilization. Learning to appreciate the music of Western civilization would bring Americans back into contact with their familial counterparts in Western Europe. At the same time, it latched onto the Western European fascination with folk music as an ethnicized artifact to identify a canon of folk music that could reify white U.S. nationalism. The mechanics, carpenters, and masons of white America were not only imagined to be singing boisterous melodies; they sang Anglo-American folk tunes.

Thirdly, music schools encouraged whites to reconstruct their memory in order to absolve themselves of either guilt or responsibility in the past. White spirituals, for example, dispossessed African Americans of their most recognized musical possession by framing Negro

[469] Sylvia Wynter, "Sambos and Minstrels," *Social Text* (No. 1, 1979): 153.

spirituals as a type of musical property stolen by human property. In reclaiming the spiritual, however, the white spiritualists transformed a music that signified the joy of imagining freedom into one that signified the pleasure of deindividuation.

This last scene encourages another shift in the understanding of whiteness as property/inheritance towards thinking of whiteness as a type of uncollected debt owed by dispossessed human property. Donald Davidson's figure of the "white fugitive" of modernity that Jackson transposed into his identification of a "lost tonal tribe" of shape note singers gives frustrated whites an object to repossess from African Americans. In doing so, both figures insist on maintaining the hegemony of white over black America by imagining the loss of slave ownership rights as an injury that needed to be repaid. As an imaginative field, the academic music department helped give shape to this fantasy of whiteness as a state of grievous injury to be made whole through repossession.

Notably, the act of listening was never as important as the act of imagining the other in a state of ecstatic musical recognition. To compose white America in the decades following Reconstruction, it was no longer enough to imagine white America singing. It became necessary to imagine others imagining white America singing the same tune, and, in this homogeneous, empty musical experience, relishing the joy of a debt repaid, made whole and forgetting of the debt white Americans still owed.

The Rat Man's Unpayable Debt, or Forgetting Whiteness

In Jacques Lacan's 1953 lecture "The Neurotic's Individual Myth," he revisits Sigmund Freud's case study of the "Rat Man," a lawyer who became obsessed with a story he heard of a gruesome torture method to theorize the relationship between symbolic debt and neurotic

obsession. He argues that the Rat Man's neurosis was a rearticulation of an inherited unpayable family debt that his father owed a vanished friend. He makes the case that the mythic structure of the Rat Man's neurotic fantasy bears the imprint of the irresolvable split in the neurotic subject, writing that "everything happens as if the impasses inherent in the original situation moved to another point in the mythic network, as if what was not resolved here always turned up over there."[470]

The "Rat Man" case study can provide insight on the grievances of white America after Reconstruction as they manifested in fantasies of subjectifying racialized musical experiences. In both cases, an unpayable debt owed by the father reasserts itself, erupting into a plague of paranoid and obsessive fantasies. This dissertation has explored a number of musical scenes haunted by an owed and unpayable debt, each producing a desire for racial wholeness that is impossible to attain yet easy to imagine. Just as the "Rat Man's" fantasies never meaningfully offered a way to repay his inherited debts, the idea that music appreciation courses, folk music institutes, and white spirituals could repair the split in white America is easily disregarded today. However, the ability to cut through a fantasy that no longer makes sense today does not necessarily bring us closer to settling the debt carried by white America.

The fantasy is only an irruptive symptom of a more systematic and sustained repression of black life. Denise Ferreira da Silva's monumental critical manuscript, *Unpayable Debt*, explores how an unpayable debt is not just an inheritance of the father's unresolved obligations, but an imposed and perpetual condition of indebtedness upon Blackness. Black life, too, bears the burden of obligation, according to da Silva, in the form of a "debt someone owes but is not hers to pay."[471] The debt of blackness, according to da Silva and in contrast to the debt of the "Rat Man," is not symbolic, but juridical. Whereas the "Rat Man's" debt was the source of a

[470] Jacques Lacan, "The Neurotic's Individual Myth," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (1979): 415
[471] Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Unpayable Debt* (London: Sternberg Press, 2022), 14.

grand obsessive myth, black debt is itself a juridical fiction that renders Black existence as property.

Thinking about these two accounts alongside one another reveals a relationship between white grievance and unpayable black debt: the source of the unpayable, unowed debt imposed on black life is the same source of the musical fantasies of racial wholeness examined in this dissertation. What da Silva identifies as the "condition of possibility" for Black existence—its juridical reduction to a debtor position— takes the form in the white imaginary of a neurotic demand for reparations.

Indeed, this dissertation has argued that the music school is an ideal site for seeing how the white imaginary creates the conditions of possibility for black life. If the music school is, as this dissertation argues, an apparatus for translating lack into fantasy, it also offers a way for refiguring the relationship between white and black national identity. Just as black life is conditioned by an invented debt, the post-Reconstruction music school produced imaginary scenes of reparative racialized listening in order to defer recognizing what Fred Moten calls the "phonic materiality" of black life.[472] In contrast to the imaginary construction of the white listening subject, this way of thinking about the relationship between sound and racial being is grounded in real practices of resistance, improvisation, and the "socialization of the surplus."[473]

While it would be unfair to suggest that university music departments have continued to serve as apparatuses for the imaginary production of whiteness, they have struggled to redefine their purpose in the present day as global capital continues to destabilize the symbolic value of whiteness. They have not replaced the theory of identity once endorsed by Daniel Gregory Mason, John Powell, and George Pullen Jackson. The originary violence, the founding debt of the white imaginary, however, continues to haunt its corridors. The apparatus has slowed, but it has not yet to be radically reconfigured. This is evident because whiteness is still recognizable

[472] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 1.
[473] Ibid., 12.

as a category of existence defined by symbolic lack, imagined injury, and demands for reparation.

Although this dissertation has focused on forming a critique over offering solutions, I want to conclude by suggesting that understanding the interplay between the white musical imaginary and the phonic materiality blackness offers a way forward. Indeed, my critique of whiteness is indebted to theorists of blackness such as Moten, da Silva, Wynter, Saidiya Hartman, Alexander Weheliye, Hortense Spillers, Katherine McKittrick, and others, whose understanding of blackness as a lived condition of dangerous possibility, fleshy surplus, and disaggregated desire has helped shed light on whiteness as an imaginary apparatus that produces, but not is, race.

Just as the “Rat Man’s” unpayable debt only existed because he saw himself as the inheritor of his father’s symbolic wealth, whiteness can only free itself from the impulse to imagine its own coming-into-being by forgetting itself. This forgetting does not need to be a disavowal or a re-membering, but a dismembering that relinquishes all the lines of attachment, all the discursive strands, that gave form to the imagined white listening subject of this dissertation. Only after dis-membering whiteness can the musical school realize its potential as a site for refiguring identity by inventing new affinities, new modalities of being, and new ways of listening to one another.

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